

## **A Missionary's Companion...**

**“Heh Brother! What’s all this Stuff about Religion Anyway?”**

### **Straight Talk about Religion**

by Steven Marquis (exceptions noted) 5/8/24 1AM

The plain and simple gospel truths  
explained plainly and simply!

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## Preface

Dear Friend,

If you are trying to understand some principle that you intend to teach, you have the right order of things! This collection of short essays may well help you in that endeavor. Over the course of my lifetime, young people and occasionally some not so young, have posed some interesting gospel topics that I had to think and ponder carefully on. I prayed for enlightenment as I tried to capture each of those thought exercises in short easy to digest essays. A few of the essays, written by others, were so profound that I could do no better than to simply include them as noted in their titles. The results of these short studies on topics that have perplexed and unnecessarily divided whole religious communities evolved into this collection.

Up to now, I had only given the evolving manuscript to departing LDS missionaries, as a sort of missionary pal. Missing are very many stories and anecdotes common to many books. That might have been suitable if this was a book centered on a particular topic, but the modus operandi of this compilation is to take a subject, simplify it as much as practical to the salient core of the matter. I felt that if a religious topic can't be handled in only a few pages, then I will have failed.

Most folks have a hard time finding time for a whole book devoted to one topic yet they have many gospel questions. I reasoned the reader may be able to find a few minutes to digest one topic at a time.

Lastly as to style, I try to write in plain occasionally pithy language if doing so gets your attention to the point of the matter. Some might take offence at any jocular comment when discussing a serious topic about our Savior, but I remind them of my motive and the plain fact that God Almighty must certainly have a sense of humor as he made you and me! OK if you had trouble with that line, stop reading now!

A note about how I sign my name: After a few decades working in the youth ministry, I found that when the youth became young adults it was very hard for them to transition from the more formal Brother Marquis (last name being a common Mormon cultural norm of this century) to the informal 1<sup>st</sup> name basis expected as adults. That being the case, I thought it might be easier if they called me by "Brother Steve" as youth. Time will tell if the transition is easier, but in the meantime, it suits me. One inscription unlikely to find its way to my headstone would be "He was the same"

To you a Fellow Seekers of Truth, my best wishes and may God truly bless you and keep you his.

*Your Brother, Steve*

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# 1. What's all this "Arguing" about anyhow?

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Jesus once said.

**DC 64:8** My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

Jesus really spoke quite little about details of theology and he definitely would not approve of unpleasant arguing or animosity associated with preaching the gospel. He further declared that it was only through the Spirit that anyone learns or is convinced of anything; so don't be too concerned about how sophisticated your presentation is. I remember a story of a college professor, who had entertained several sets of missionaries over some time, but it was a tongue-tied but humble Idaho farm boy that brought such a spirit to his office that his heart was finally touched.

**Math 16:15** He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said; Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

**1 Cor 2:3** Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

**D&C 50: 14** To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth.

This was really brought forth to me with clarity once on my mission to the people of Norway. We had invited an elderly couple to Sacrament meeting one week and I recall being somewhat concerned what they would think about our rather noisy meetings (you know the rambunctious two year-olds and dazed parents). Afterwards, I hesitantly inquired as to their experience. The gentleman replied, "That was the noisiest church service I have ever attended," now here's the cool part, "but I definitely felt the Lord's Spirit there". Shortly thereafter the couple was baptized! This and other similar incidences had taught me that the Lord makes up the difference for our weaknesses.

**Ether 12:27** [To those who have] faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

**D&C 133: 58** To prepare the weak for those things which are coming on the earth, and for the Lord's errand in the day when the weak shall confound the wise...

Remember even Moses had his companion, Aaron, to help. What is important is to bring the Spirit of love and peace with you. This comes of how you live your life before you share the gospel.

**D&C 42: 14** And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the spirit ye shall not teach.

I remember an interesting story of Joseph's early-married life where he had had some argument with his wife, Emma. He had left off to proceed with translating the Book of Mormon and found he was entirely bereft of ability to discern the characters. He received understanding from God that he should first be reconciled to his companion. This he immediately did and subsequently proceeded with the translation somewhat wiser for the experience. This reminds me of Jesus' advice:

**Math 5:23** Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Remember one other important covenant that you made at baptism; that you are to be a witness for Him. If in your conversations, an individual is willing to hear the truth or at least have an open hearted dialog, then great. If on the other hand, the individual only wishes to have a battle of wits, then you might not want to burn the energy.

**D&C 43: 15** Again I say, hearken ye elders of my church, whom I have appointed: Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

Now you can't pore water from an empty vessel. Even Jesus, in his ministry frequently quoted from existing scriptures memorized in his youth.

**D&C 11: 21** Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.

**D&C 11: 22** But now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto.

I don't think he is asserting that you have to digest everything that he has ever said before he will reveal more to you, but I do believe he expects an effort to try and learn from the written Word.

While the accompanying articles in this compilation of essays are designed to give plainspoken explanations and support for true principles of Christ's doctrine, God has admonished us to leave place in our communication for His inspiration. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to write out a talk, but that's probably not the best approach in interpersonal communication.

**D&C 124: 97** Let my servant ... be humble before me, and be without guile, and he shall receive of my Spirit, even the Comforter, which shall manifest unto him the truth of all things, and shall give him, in the very hour, what he shall say.

**D&C 100: 6** For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.

**D&C 84: 85** Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.

**So, I leave the reader with this comforting thought; the Lord is in this thing!** That the church is one if not the fastest growing major religious movement on earth is not the remarkable thing. It's that its missionaries are many times ignorant and inexperienced; the speakers preaching on Sunday are seldom polished presenters. The sometimes chaotic meetings are anything but the band playing, entertainment extravaganzas of song and dance some of our Christian neighbors might be used to— yet they keep coming and joining themselves with us. Truly this is His work and it is a marvelous work to behold!

**D&C 65: 2** The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.

**Isa. 29: 14** Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

PS:

One final note: Each man walks his own path and only God is his final judge. Do not be dejected if you fail to see immediately the fruits of your proselytizing efforts. It is our job to live the gospel and to teach and invite. It is God who converts and the convert who accepts.

**1 Ne. 14: 7** For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other—either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds.

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## 2. What's all this "One True Church" stuff anyhow?

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**Jesus was being questioned by Pilot and uttered these famous words;**

**John 18:38** Jesus answered, ... for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is **of the truth** heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, **What is truth???** (emphasis added)

Pilate's sarcastic rejection of the very concept of absolute truth is echoed by many in today's society. As a pluralistic society, the influence from God's adversary has, in the name of tolerance of differences and promotion of "diversity", trained up a generation with the inability to judge *anything*. The adversary would have us believe that there is no absolute right and thus, no absolute wrong. This is the basis for the wave of moral relativism sweeping the western world.

It is actually becoming common to hear someone talk of "true for me" as opposed to simply declaring, "this is what I believe". You might think this is splitting hairs, but it is a significant distinction. Some people indoctrinated in the religious school of diversity really believe that all systems of religion and culture are equally valid. Jesus didn't think so. The God of the Old Testament clearly didn't think so as He commanded the Hebrews to destroy inferior heathen societies in the "promised" land. "True for me" implies that there is no standard for truth. It thus implies there is no God; no reference that man may depend on.

The scriptures speak rather harshly about anyone knowingly preaching false doctrine - implying the importance of truth:

**Gal 1:8** If any ... preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

**2 Pet. 1: 20** Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Certainly, people will argue about what they believe, but to maintain that any arbitrary system is equally true implies that one reject even attempting to search out God and His wisdom. The 11<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith declares:

"We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may."

Notice that we respect the individual's right to believe without "respecting" the retrograde beliefs themselves. There is right and there is wrong. This does not mean that one should flaunt one's knowledge and denigrate others in the name of God. One should always be very careful to not offend one's neighbors.

Jesus spoke to this non-confrontational attitude when others, even in his own time, began setting up churches in his name:

**Luke 9:49** And John answered and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us." And Jesus said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

Some folks get hung up on the "One True Church" kind of language because they apply a meaning of exclusivity not intended. The saint's testimony of the restored Kingdom does in fact assert a bold position. It declares that the whole truth and God's authority, power and direction exists through its living Prophets and Apostles. It does NOT assert that only our prayers are heard or that truth is not found outside our borders. It has to be clear, for example, that when one church claims you must be baptized to be saved and another claims a canned prayer does the job, that both cannot contain the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I was raised, in my early years, a member of another faith and I am grateful for the testimony of Jesus and the truthfulness of the Bible I received therein. Subsequently, I have come to know, by experience with the spirit, that God has restored His kingdom to the earth. This is a powerful message to a world starving for direct guidance from God. We believe that one can sincerely pray to God about this restored gospel message and receive confirmation to that effect. That is why our missionaries seldom do Bible "bashing" or exhaustive scriptural expository and reasoning to "prove" the Gospel. I happen to believe, after fair study of other faiths, that it is much easier to support our understanding of Gospel principles from the Bible than any other faith, but I did not come to my conviction about the restored gospel from an intellectual sparring session; it came via prayer and experience with the Holy Spirit. I do not believe this is an exclusive opportunity.

I'd have to say one of the most damaging heresies repeated in many an anti-Mormon tract cautions the reader to avoid praying about the theology, but to trust rhetorical arguments about what the Bible is claimed to say by one debater or another.

The scriptures, on the other hand, warn *against* depending on "man's" wisdom to crack this nut. Studying the scriptures is just not enough! After all, every religion has its' scholars. They are not dummies! Look what the scriptures teach us about using intellectual arguments to prove the faith:

**Proverbs 3:5** ¶ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

**2 Tim 3 1-7** This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come...For men shall ...have a form of godliness, but [will] deny the power thereof: from such turn away. [They are] ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth

Remember, the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pharisees were very studied in the Holy Writ, yet failed to recognize the author when he stood yet before them. Jesus chided the scholars of His day and denounced their reliance on the written word as the source of salvation saying:

**John 5: 39** “Search the scriptures!; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: [but] they are they which testify of me!”

It's not that Jesus was denouncing reading the scriptures; quite the opposite as he was well schooled in the same. The problem is when the focus is so much on “the book” that when living oracles or even the Savior Himself is standing before you they are not recognized.

We believe that just as there was a falling away and loss of authority to act in God's name prior to Christ birth and that a new prophet was raised up (John) to prepare the way for his 1<sup>st</sup> coming, that after the death of the prophets and apostles called by Jesus that another falling away and loss of authority to act in God's name occurred. This falling away was prophesied as well as the final restoration in the last days.

**2 Thes. 2:3** Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first...

**Amos 8:11** Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find *it*.

History is pretty clear that from roughly 150AD through the “dark Ages” the surviving church hierarchy suffered as predicted. Please note that God did NOT force this, but in general, man rejected the truth.

**2 Tim 4:3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Note the prediction of people building up systems of thought that for whatever reason appeals to them. Paul also predicts that **they will not endure sound doctrine**. Many of the letters making up the New Testament were in fact written to counteract false doctrine and internal corruption. While Paul and others predicted a general apostasy, they also saw that a time of restoration would come to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ, just as John prepared it for the 1<sup>st</sup> coming.

**Acts 3:21** {Jesus} Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Some teach that one should not pray and expect any answer from God, but the scriptures teach quite the opposite, that dialog with God *is* the path to wisdom. In our time God did impart wisdom to a young man who was searching for truth. He read these words:

**James 1: 5** If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

**Amos 3:7** Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.



Brother Joseph was such an one who God used to restore the truths of the gospel and the power to act in his name. Lest anyone think that he has no need of the gospel to be restored, listen to the trump of an angel:

**Rev. 14: 6** And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

Clearly, the angel had something new to add. We testify that the “everlasting gospel” is exactly what was restored. I know it’s human nature to more readily accept miracles and prophets of ages ago rather than here and now. Even Jesus had the problem, because his own town’s folk could not believe that the local carpenter could be the great prophet much less the messiah.

**Mark 6:3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

This restoration was prophesied long ago. The restoration was indeed complete as the kingdom, as organized in Christ’s time, is upon the earth once more.

**Eph 1:10** ...That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

**Eph 5:5** ...One Lord, one faith, one baptism...

**11** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; ... For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ...

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

Brother Joseph was that prophet of the restoration. The Book of Mormon and the kingdom are some of the fruits of *that* Tree. The beauty of this is it can be tested like any good science experiment.

**1 Thes. 5: 21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

**Moroni 10:4** And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints doesn't claim to be the only church with truth in it, but it claims to be His Kingdom on earth in the last days and to be directly led by God. It is **not** a democratic conclave of like-minded individuals. It **is** the literal fulfillment of Daniel prophesy so long ago:

**Danial 2:45; D&C 65:2** The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.

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### 3. What's all this "Being Saved" stuff anyhow?

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First, let me be quite clear, by sighting Biblical scripture in this note, I am not trying to prove anything other than to point out that our doctrines are entirely consistent with the Bible and I think easier than most, we can present our doctrine readily there from. Other than being persuaded by sophistry, determining truth requires revelation from God, but that is another subject. (see [What's all this "Arguing" about anyhow?](#))

Most Catholic and Protestant believers trace roots of their theocracy from the Athanasia Creed dating from about 300 AD +. There is an almost comical phrase therein,

["...God the Father incomprehensible, God the Son incomprehensible, and God the Spirit incomprehensible, but not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible..."](#) [Link](#)

Now don't get me wrong here. The thing that's comical is not this drivel itself, but that the adherences of this creed could be so harsh in their judgments against the Mormons, who have by contemporary standards some unorthodox views about the nature of deity. If by their own platitudes, they have **no** knowledge about and don't think God can be comprehended, why be so harsh on a group that simply claims an opinion on the matter.

After all, anyone who has had more than a few conversations with different Christian will most likely have encountered several different views on just what God really is. Yet, at any of thousands of "get your salvation here" offers proffered by internet, TV shows and one sheet pamphlets, one will not see a long litmus test of one's gospel opinions on such matters as the price of celestial admission. No, for most folks it's usually a quite simple 3 or 4 step plan:

**Believe that Jesus died for your sins.      OK    ✓**

**Raise your hand and vocalize something like this phrase ✓**

**"I do now accept Christ as my personal Savior".      OK    ✓**

**(This one I really like) Seek out a Christian Church and – "say buddy, can you spare a dime?" double ✓✓**

The funny thing is that if you ever get a hold of an anti-Mormon pamphlet with a "Get out of hell free" script at the end, they usually add a few 'extra' clauses necessary to save a Mormon. They are apparently somewhat harder to save than the average sinner.

Three Steps? What ever happened to that slick *one* step "death-bed" salvation plan?

**Romans 10:9** "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart... thou **SHALT** be saved".

Again please notice that the Apostle uses the future tense, “shalt be”, placing salvation in the future. I like this analogy about salvation: You’re treading water in a shark-infested sea praying for help when a ship maneuvers near to you. The captain calls out to grab onto the life ring and hold on. You believe he speaks in your best interest and so when the life ring is tossed to you, you grab a hold for dear life and thank God for being saved. Are you in the boat yet? Could you decide you prefer treading water again and let go?

The bottom line in this analogy is that you can certainly declare yourself *saved*, but the scriptures are replete with the theme of enduring to the end. At very least, our rewards in God’s heaven, are somehow linked to a judgment about our works.

What then is the plan for obtaining salvation? Only Belief? Accept Christ? Join a Church? Pay dues every week?

Here are a few thoughts that may straighten out some of the confusion as members of God’s Kingdom converse with their Christian neighbors. Jesus and the Apostles spoke of many Mansions, and three different Heavens. Perhaps the discrepancy has to do with being saved to what? “Confess Christ with ones mouth may well gain one entrance to one of God’s kingdoms, but one’s works will justly determine which! One of those works, if you can call it that, is baptism. The Church of Jesus Christ teaches that the Celestial or Highest heaven requires baptism as a requirement, but to be saved from outer darkness requires only an acceptance of Christ.

Jesus spoke directly to the ordinance to Nicodemus:

**John 3: 5** “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Some who are ignorant that Paul’s frequent usage of “Works” or “Law” is really a reference to the “Law of Moses” will say that you cannot be saved by *any* works; therefore they would argue that you are not saved by being baptized in water. Since Baptism as the Christians practiced it was not part of the Law of Moses, these two subjects should not be mixed up. That is the fundamental mistake.

If you had trouble with my last argument, I suppose I might just sidestep the whole question by simply asserting that baptism is something that is *done to you*. All that you have to do is to receive it. The same is true with receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a gift! It is done to you. All you must do is receive. Are you doing a work if someone gives you a gift? If this is a work then the very act of vocally accepting Jesus as your Savior or the repenting of your sins could also then be considered works.

Baptism is quite a central theme. Paul records

**Acts 2:38** "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost".

Seems obvious to me that if you can't receive the gift of the constant companionship of the spirit until baptized then how might one count on living with God? (What is Heaven and Hell is elaborated in the essay ["Heaven or Hell"](#))

When I was a young man, I read a book that dealt with Christian dogmas in early American history. I remember in it reading the official catechisms of several prominent faiths. Several of them shocked me due to their remarkably uncharitable positions. One, I set to memory so long ago, said that the

["gates of hell are lined with the skulls of little children who died unbaptized"](#)

"Gosh," I thought, "can reasoning folk really believe God to be so obviously cruel???" I kind of dismissed this until I knocked on a door in Norway. The man who answered seemed dumbfounded that we would waste our time preaching to a "Christian" nation when, said he, "millions of Africans die and go to hell from lack of preaching."

You might similarly dismiss this as definitely fringe, rather than official as it once was, but I have to relate that many a "Christian" minister has taken the pulpit recently and even locally to warn their congregations of the hell waiting for the "un-saved" Mormons. The remarkable thing about such polar teachings is the incongruent assertion from many a sect that all Christian roads lead to Heaven, except that is ... the Mormon road; they are going to hell for sure along with heaps of Muslims, Hindus, atheists and other assorted agnostics!

Of those religions professing Jesus, it has been my experience that for most, the egalitarian position that all churches are equivalently acceptable stops short as soon as ones proselytizing efforts robs one congregation's coffers of parishioners (contributors). I suppose that may sound cynical, but Christ's sharpest critics and Joseph's as well were always those who stood to lose power and money. It truly is the Achilles heel of any religion led by a paid clergy. They are inherently unmotivated to seek truth beyond their own borders.

The Church of Jesus Christ teaches that God's judgments are fair, accounting for a man's desire and pursuit of truth and man's efforts in following his conscience. It teaches that to live in heaven in God presence, each man must ultimately come to accept Christ as Savior and that one of the significant missions of the church is to offer baptism, even vicariously, to those who have passed on awaiting the promised resurrection. Surely, this is a most benevolent teaching regarding universally offered salvation and rings true with the mercy claimed to be inherent in our God.

Remember that thief, who supposedly went to heaven for his last minute confession. Is that really what happened? Remember, 3 days later, when Mary discovered Christ, he declared:

**John 20: 17** Jesus saith unto her, "Touch me not; **for I am not yet ascended to my Father**; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and **to my God, and your God.**"

Clearly, the paradise Jesus referred to was NOT the heaven that His Father dwells in as He said he had NOT been there yet. Hmm, there's another one of those pesky references to real physical places and tangible beings! (see [An Anthropomorphic God](#)) Anyway, don't get me wrong here, I'm not even touching how this man was judged, but Peter did add some crucial insight into the fate of the disobedient and ignorant.

**1 Peter 3:18** For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit. By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison. Which sometime were disobedient... **4: 6** For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

But what's the point of preaching to departed spirits if they must be baptized to receive the fullness of God's kingdom? Again, the importance of the ordinance was underscored by Paul as he spoke to the Corinthians about vicarious baptism and the reality of the physical resurrection:

**1 Cor. 15: 29** Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?

**Most Christians don't know what to do with this passage, but it makes perfect sense when one reconciles God's mercy with his clear directives.** Really, this is a remarkable dichotomy. The "One true Church" preaches you need not actually belong to it to ascend the pearly gates **and carries out a massive effort to assist all to attain it**, while those who fain offence at the mere mention of the "One true" are quick to assign the freeway to hell to oh so many of God's **precious** children.

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## 4. What's all this "Extra Biblical" stuff anyhow?

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Rather than employing the brightest scholars to argue the high ground on interpreting ancient writings, the Church of Jesus Christ claims the literal restoration of Gods Kingdom, power and revelatory influence. When Joseph asked God which church he was to join, Jesus instructed that "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." Certainly, this is fulfilled as of various sects tremble at the thought of adding but commentary to the holy writ. None but God's anointed dare declare, "Thus saith the Lord". If anyone, like Joseph, did so, then that would mean the demise of many a cleric's profession. There is vested interest in NOT having structure and order in God's kingdom.

Many religions, other than the Catholics, knowing they have no special authority, focus on one translation or another of the Bible as their "authority". They do so seemingly oblivious that no two manage to actually agree on its' contents. They often claim one cannot trust prayer and they reject the idea of modern authoritative prophets. In Biblical times, though, the inspired writers and Christ Himself pointed out that it was not God's way to have a divided kingdom with divers doctrines.

**2 Pet. 1: 20** Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

**Mark 3: 25** And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

**Ephes 4:5** One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

**Ephes 11-14** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **Till we all come in the unity of the faith**, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

I'm saying all this to set the stage for the (hopefully obvious) need for current revelation. Who can argue that we have come to a unity of faith? Surely God can speak and he says here that he will through his servants as listed above.



Some get all hung up on the Idea of a growing canon of God's word, knowing little of how it came to be. First, we should know that the Bible literally means "Library" or "Books". It is a collection of small-unrelated books bound together. It is not a single narrative or monolithic book! Furthermore, there is no divine blessing ever recorded as to its veracity, or completeness save ironically in the Book of Mormon of all places! Numerous passages in the Bible refer to scriptures that were clearly considered authoritative and even worth memorizing, but are lost at this time. When scraps of the Book of Enoch began surfacing in this century, it became obvious that over a hundred passages from the lost work had been quoted in sermons and other writings of the New Testament authors. Clearly they thought this and other "lost" books of Old Testament times were very important and are mentioned and quoted from. Here is a partial list of the "Lost books" referenced by the remaining biblical authors:

Book of the Wars of the Lord, Jasher, Acts of Solomon, Samuel the seer, Gad the seer, Nathan the prophet, prophecy of Ahijah, visions of Iddo the seer, Shemaiah, Jehu, Paul's missing letter to Corinth ...Book of Enoch and numerous others.

Still those with a vested interest in having a free hand at interpreting the holy writ resist the Idea of real "Biblical" revelation and hang their hats on a few references found at the end of the compiled record.

**Rev 22:18** For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

This was actually a rather common way to end a message in a time where a scribe altering a copy was a very real problem. In the beginning of the 'Book' of Revelations, John is told,

**Rev 1:11** Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia;

John did send that 'Book' of Revelations to the seven churches and warned the scribes not to alter its contents. He did this long long before his letter ever was bound together into a collection. Funny thing is, compiled with other little books, the Book of Revelations is out of chronological order – not being the last to be written at all!

One can even find similar injunctions in the Old Testament:

**Deut. 4: 2 (2-3)**.Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

In fact, the only argument that makes any sense at all is that God directed the compilation process and embedded the rest of eternity's advice into its finite pages, finally sealing it with a divine self imposed gag order. Of course the idea of gagging God is baseless in the writ and is merely a faith statement on the part of sectarians who are personally bereft of real and current revelation.

There's always a heap of irony to go around in any discussions of these matters. I think the funniest is that the Book of Mormon is also one of the best books to misconstrue, by someone so inclined. On many subjects it contains by far the clearest declarations and explanations of key points of gospel doctrine one can find, yet like any written document, it can still be misunderstood. For example, the Church teaches that 'God' is plural with Jesus and his Father as separate individuals, yet the Book of Mormon is far and above the best source of classic Trinitarian phrases like "which is one God". While the Church teaches that fire and torture in the afterlife is figurative and in most cases of finite duration, the Book of Mormon has plenty of talk about unending chain rattling hellfire and damnation. It just goes to show you that just about anything ever written can and will be misconstrued and screwed up.

Now this is a long preface, but I wanted to set the stage for why it is ridiculous to assume that folks can read anything, without direct intervention from the author, and always get it right. If you are still not convinced, try reading the elaborate and almost impossible to understand legal mumbo-jumbo in even a simple business contract.

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## 5. What's all this "Heaven or Hell" stuff anyhow?

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The most common misconception saints have about the 3 degrees of glory is to equate the celestial kingdom exclusively with Heaven. Joseph mentioned something to the effect that "if man knew how glorious the least of God's kingdoms where' they would kill themselves to get to it. It has variously been popularized that if one was judged to a lower kingdom, that the soul so damned would be eternally miserable for the lost opportunities of a higher kingdom. I believe this is a mistake. Surely, each parent wants the best opportunities for our children, but in God's mercy, His judgments are intended to place us where we best fit and ultimately will be most happy. Damned is not equivalent to being tormented forever. It simply means 'stopped' or 'limited' as the word damned directly implies. Now, damned souls that are awaiting final judgment may indeed be tormented as the scriptures clearly illustrate with powerful language. I refer the reader to the story of Lazereth and the rich man in Luke 16:19 But for those who accept Christ's forgiveness, if only in the spirit prison, the days of their torment are numbered. Only those souls damned to outer darkness for rejecting God with a perfect knowledge thereof will be consigned the fate of Satan and his angels. Only they will be removed completely from any vestige of God's influence – hence outer darkness. No man knows how to describe this.

Despite the considerable enlightenment Latter Day Saints possess, since they focus their aspirations naturally on God's greatest blessing in the Celestial Kingdom, it seems a bit of confusion lingers about the fate of the damned and the lost. One issue is whether the damned who subsequently inherit a kingdom of glory must accept Christ as savior. Can a man through torments alone atone for his own sins? The Catholics have a whole theology about the concept of Purgatory. The nearest equivalent is the LDS "Spirit Prison"

**DC 19:16-17** For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

**DC 88:24** And he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory.

**DC 88:34** And again, verily I say unto you, that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.

**DC 88:35** That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore, they must remain filthy still.

This scripture makes it clear that to enter the Terrestrial Kingdom one must at some point accept the gospel and testimony of Jesus. Even your suffering only has the effect of bringing you to the feet of the savior. It does not in itself absolve you of your sin.

**DC 76: 81-89** And again, we saw the glory of the telestial, ... These are they who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus. These are they who deny not the Holy Spirit.

These are they who are thrust down to hell. These are they who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work.

These are they who receive not of his fullness in the eternal world, but of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial; And the terrestrial through the ministration of the celestial. And also the telestial receive it of the administering of angels who are appointed to minister for them, or who are appointed to be ministering spirits for them; **for they shall be heirs of salvation.** And thus we saw, in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding;

Here the Lord speaks of His efforts to reclaim, even after physical death, those who would not accept Him in life - that even those who suffered the pains of hell might yet be partakers of one of his mansions.

**DC 71:74** And again, we saw the **terrestrial** world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fullness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament. Behold, these are they who died without law; **And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it.**

This scripture next verse suggests that those who reject Gods messengers in **full** knowledge and seek not the truth are subject to outer darkness.

**DC 133:71-73** Behold, and lo, there are none to deliver you; for ye obeyed not my voice when I called to you out of the heavens; ye believed not my servants, and when they were sent unto you ye received them not. Wherefore, they sealed up the testimony and bound up the law, and ye were delivered over unto darkness. These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

There is notion that only one with some kind of super station and exceptional situation would be able to do a proper rejection of Jesus. This is referred to as denying the Holy Ghost. This next reference is somewhat long, but there is no better explanation.

**DC 76:31** Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—

**32** They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;

**33** For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;

**34** Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—

**35** Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame.

**36** These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels—

**37** And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power;

Note: This next verse points out that all others will be *redeemed*. **They do not earn their way to a kingdom.**

**38** Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath.

**39** For all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made.

**40** And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us—

**41** That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, **and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;**

**42** **That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;**

Note: This next verse points out that all but Perdition will be saved.

**43** Who glorifies the Father, **and saves all the works of his hands**, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.

**44** Wherefore, he saves all except them—they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment—

**45** And the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows;

**46** Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof;

Here are a few thoughts that may straighten out some of the confusion as members of Gods Kingdom converse with their Christian neighbors. Jesus and the Apostles spoke of many Mansions, and 3 different Heavens.

**John 14: 2** In my Father's house are many **mansions**: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

**2 Cor. 12: 2** knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

Paul describes the resurrection with three different bodies.

**1 Cor 15:40-42** There *are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. There *is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory. So also *is* the resurrection of the dead...

Perhaps the discrepancy has to do with being saved to what? “Confess Christ with ones mouth may well gain one entrance to one of God’s kingdoms, but one’s works will justly determine which of those rooms! Actually, when you put it like that, most, but not all, preachers will meet you on that point. There are just too many references to being judged by one’s works to reasonably conclude other than that ‘rewards in heaven follow works.’

**James 1:25** But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

One of those works, if you can call it that, is baptism. The Church of Jesus Christ teaches that the Celestial or Highest heaven requires baptism as a requirement, but to be saved from outer darkness requires only an acceptance of Christ. Herein is a key point lost on many; It is quite possible, even likely, to be “saved” in one of God’s kingdoms in heaven and yet be “damned” from Celestial glory and ultimately exaltation with God.

**Rom 8:16-18** The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

The difficulty that has vexed so many in trying to find total consistency in the Bible is that many of the words can have numerous meanings; God, heaven, hell, kingdom etc all require a clear context or in some cases divine clarification! Jesus spoke directly about “Kingdom” when referring to the physical ordinance of baptism to Nicodemus;

**John 3: 5** Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

When coupled with the many passages about being apparently “saved” by confession alone, this passage has so confused would-be-interpreters of the text that whole religious movements have split over it. For the saints, who have much more additional enlightenment from modern prophets, this passage presents no difficulty at all. It is indeed a work of sorts necessary for admission to the “Celestial” kingdom. I refer the reader to the essay on [“Being Saved”](#) for a more thorough study of this point.

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## 6. What's all this "I Am a Child of God" stuff anyhow?

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Generations of children have grown up singing songs that teach that we are of a common family. Songs like "I am a child of God" and "Jesus Loves the little children...they are precious in his sight" focus on our common heritage and intrinsic worth to God. Of the numerous Christian faiths, however, only one has any rational explanation for God's involvement in man's affairs. Why are we here?

One faith claims it's a great showdown – a demo, if you will, to prove a point. But this seems like a whole lot of pain and trouble ... besides, how many folks really learn from history anyway. So, that theory is pretty flat. No, most all religions just avoid trying to explain it at all. With no real reason to truly believe in the "brotherhood of Man" it's no wonder neighbors are oft treated as strangers, strangers as enemies and nations and cultures fodder for extermination.

While most Christian sects don't accept that God is going to clarify such questions personally any day soon, the existing writ, generally accepted as blessed by Him does, in fact, have a lot to say, both directly and indirectly. After all God's efforts to reveal himself to man, that Christian and Jewish sects could latch onto the idea that God is only formless spirit with no intrinsic interest in mankind has for some time mystified me. Here are a few of the comments addressing the matter in the Bible.

**Genesis 1:27** So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Note: The Bible is filled with truth. The simplest explanation is He meant what He said rather than try and turn everything into metaphors to be manipulated by the readers whim)

**Genesis 1:26** And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. (Note: Who is the "us" and "our" ? In the Hebrew text, God's name Elohim, as in the 'us' of Gen. 1.26, refers to the Mighty Ones)

**Exodus 24:9** Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and [there was] under his feet as it were a paved work. (Note: Seems God is going out of His way to demonstrate a real physical presence that has all the appearance of an exalted man. Is God trying to deceive us or reveal truth to us?)

**Acts 17:29** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (Note: Offspring is a pretty explicit term)

**Luke 3:38** Which was [the son] of Enos, which was [the son] of Seth, which was [the son] of Adam, which was [the son] of God. (Note: This is a physical Genealogy)

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Note: This was said of Adam & Eve. Whose Mother and Father were they to leave?)

**Rom 8:16** ... we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; ... (Note: Whether adopted or born, could this be possible if we did not share in His potential? Can a dog inherit his masters potential or be considered co-equal as in "joint-heirs?")



On that same line of thought we further read:

**Matt. 5: 48** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Note: Would God command that which we could never attain?)

**1 Jn. 3: 2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (Note: Not only shall we see God, but we shall do so because we shall be like Him. Like Father –like son)

The Jews at the time of Jesus, like so many Christian sects today rejected the truth that we were of God's race. Yet Jesus affirms this and uses their scriptures to prove it (paraphrasing):" Why are you making it out to be such a big deal that I called myself the Son of God when the scriptures you all preach from say that you yourselves are Gods?"

**John 10: 34** Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?"

**Psalms 82:6** I have said, "**Ye are gods**; and all of you **are** children of the most High."

This truth, that we are the literal descendants of God, is twisted and wrung by the philosophies of men until every kind of interpretation possible is squeezed out of it except the plain and precious truth.

Jesus really went the extra mile to demonstrate to the people that He, as a resurrected being had a physical body that was very special. He said;

**John 20: 17** Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father : but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

My point here is that he clearly has a very physical body. That is completely unambiguous. It doesn't really change the point here, but some translations read "cling to me" I do though like to add one more corroborating point that not only did he have a body at that moment, but that he did not jettison the cocoon so to speak on the way to heaven. Oh – by the way, did you catch that that heaven seems to be a place? So my extra bonus point here is that this body of his was to be presented to His Father 1st before ministering to the people and having them touch him – once again emphasizing something very important about a physical body in the resurrected state.

I can only offer that in the Westcott & Hort interlinear Greek to English translation; Word for word, it still reads clear enough"

(WH IGE) **John 20: 17** Is saying to her Jesus Not of me be touching, not yet for I have ascended toward the father...

And when he was resurrected and showed Himself to his disciples, they thought he was a spirit wherein Jesus took pains to disabuse them of such a notion by actually *eating* and letting them feel him;

**Luke 24:37:40** But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts

arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took *it*, and did eat before them.

The entire 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Corinthians is devoted to the physical resurrection. It wasn't until after the death of the Apostles that the Greek rejection of anything corporal took hold in the then leaderless Christian community.

What are the Negative Consequences of Mans Teachings about God? The philosophies of men teach that man has no real relationship with god. Our destiny becomes, then, much as the Greek mythologies teach - that we are the playthings or toys for the gods.

If we were truly created from nothing by an all knowing and perfect being, then that all knowing being must necessarily be responsible then for all the good and bad his creations bring about. It is no wonder with such a distorted picture of God that so many people have rejected him.

Why are these wrong philosophies promoted? The scriptures teach us that the evil one who having lost his chance to obtain the power and glory that a perfected and celestial being could attain, would out of anger and envy that none of Gods children attain that power and glory either. Nephi explains like this:

**2 Nephi 2:17** And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

In two grand attempts, Lucifer failed to foil Gods eternal plan for His children's exaltation. In the Garden of Eden, Lucifer petitioned Adam and then his wife Eve to partake of a fruit that would begin an inevitable destruction of their perfect bodies. He had some hopes of possessing the bodies Adam and Eve would create just as he had possessed the body of the serpent. But God put a shield between man and the evil spirits and foiled his plans at obtaining these bodies. Only those who freely give themselves could then be controlled by Satan. In rage and envy, he vowed mans destruction. Since no imperfection could remain in Gods Celestial existence, Adam and his posterity were relegated to this terrestrial sphere.

The devil, failing outright to foil Gods hope for all his children, has relegated his fiendish troops to damning us one at a time. If the devil can get us to believe that the physical is superfluous then we will not be motivated to take care of this physical body or temple that houses our spirits. Instead of learning to control the elements of this body by expanded faith, we might instead submit to control by it.

When God created the worlds he inspected the work to make sure that the will of his faith was faithfully obeyed by the elements. Our enemy has no desire for us to become like God

with ultimate powers over the physical worlds. If he can get us to reject God outright by making God out to be so incomprehensible that thinking people reject him outright, then he yet accomplishes his aim against mankind. (Remember the Nicene Creed “...not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible...”

I said in the beginning that I had been mystified that sects teach that God and man are ultimately only spirits and for this they hold us in open contempt. It's clearer now, I hope, why Lucifer and a host of confused parishioners want us to reject the true anthropomorphic nature of God and reject the simple truth; “I am a child of God”

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## 7. What's all this talk about Apostasy Anyhow?

- Did apostasy change the doctrines?

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It is clear that without Divine direction to the apostles and prophets harmony was replaced by dissention, distortion of doctrines, heated argument and even bloodshed. A few Old Testament verses speak to that point.

**Prov. 29: 18** Where *there is* no vision, the people perish:

**Amos 3: 7** Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

**Amos 8: 11** Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

The pattern of falling away and restoration was repeated several times and predicted to occur yet again by the apostles prior to their demise:

**2 Thes. 2: 3** Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

**Acts 20:29-30** 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.

(From <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11044a.htm>)

The year 325 is accepted as that of the First Council of Nicaea The emperor began by making the bishops understand that they had a greater and better business in hand than personal quarrels and interminable recriminations.

Note in this following excerpt how instead of divine revelation to answer disputes (as say recorded in Acts 10:14) committees, lobbying, argumentation and political influences are pressed into service to define the doctrines. Rather than God telling the people His doctrines through the prophets, the people tell God what they are going to believe via political intrigues.

**2 Tim. 4: 3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

Within a short span of a few hundred years many of the plain and precious gospel truths had been lost or distorted. At last only a few regions of the Christians championed by Arius maintained the doctrine of God as having a physical nature and having a distinct nature from His Son or the Holy Ghost.

(Again, see <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01707c.htm>)

Daily sessions were held and that Arius was often summoned before the assembly; his opinions were discussed and the opposing arguments considered. Arian is reported to have described the Son as "a second, or inferior God, standing midway between the First Cause and creatures; as Himself made out of nothing, yet as making all things else; as

existing before the worlds of the ages; and as arrayed in all divine perfections except the one which was their stay and foundation. God alone was without beginning, unoriginate; the Son was originated, and once had not existed. For all that has origin must begin to be.

The majority, declared themselves against the doctrines of Arius. In the end the council formulated the following creed:

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [*ek tes ousias*] of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father [*homoousion to patri*], through whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men and our salvation descended, was incarnate, and was made man, suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven and cometh to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. Those who say: There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten; and that He was made out of nothing (*ex ouk onton*); or who maintain that He is of another hypostasis or another substance [than the Father], or that the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change, [them] the Catholic Church anathematizes.

(Again, see <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01707c.htm>)

All the bishops save five declared themselves ready to subscribe to this formula, convinced that it contained the ancient faith of the Apostolic Church. The opponents were soon reduced to two, Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais, who were exiled and anathematized. Arius and his writings were also branded with anathema, his books were cast into the fire, and he was exiled to Illyria.

Finally the differences turned even to bloodshed, with whole Arian communities being destroyed and with them the secrets of temple oriented worship. Recent archeological finds in North Africa find Christian communities where large number of their dead are found buried in robes and garments that Mormon temple goers would find very familiar. Finally the apostasy was complete leaving a very strange remnant indeed. Far from the knowledge of God wherein Jesus says:

**John 17: 3** And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

By about 500AD, the new Christians profess God as a mystical and unknowable. The Athanasian Creed of about 500AD still guides most of the Christian sects.

**The following is the Marquess of Bute's English translation of the text of the Creed:**  
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02033b.htm>

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreate, the Son Uncreate, and the Holy Ghost Uncreate. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost

Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Uncomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almightyies but One Almighty.

If you found that bit linguistic gymnastics a bit hard to follow, don't worry, its not just you.

**1Timothy 4:1-3** NOW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

The good news for our time is that we live in a dispensation where God has once again, and in preparation for the second coming of Christ, restored the Gospel in its' fullness.

**Eph. 1: 10** That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

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## 8. What's all this stuff about "Seeing God" anyhow?

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This is one of those obscure religious topics that produces much hoopla. At first, it may surprise one that anyone would really care. What difference should it make anyhow? Is anyone's salvation at stake whether Moses saw God as an entity or some apparition or projection of His power into a bush? Maybe not, but then again, perhaps the Father of lies, might just have a stake in such an argument. After all, a 'unity of Faith' as the scriptures say is hardly in the devil's best interest. The scriptures preach that we are God's children. How better to destroy us than to attack our divine origin; and with that divine origin our divine potential.

Now, there are a lot of scriptures that can be brought to bear on this topic. There are a very few scriptures that on 1st inspection might support another view. Consider these two statements from the same author:

**John 1: 18** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

**John 4:12** No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

It's very seldom that the "as far as it is translated correctly" clause ought to be invoked, but this is one of them. The present translation of [John 1: 18](#) and [1 Jn. 4: 12](#) is misleading; for these seem to say that no man has ever **seen God**. Joseph's translation clarifies that "no sinful man hath seen God"

While most Biblical scholars today acknowledge that certain passages have been variously rendered and some mutated over time, many of the masses have been indoctrinated with the 'perfect Bible' doctrine and may have a hard time accepting that anything at all is amiss in the Holy writ. When presented with contradictions in the Bible and evidence of missing authoritative texts, such individuals will simply assert that that's obviously not important to God and that the important things (their favorite hobby horses) have survived intact. These individuals cannot be reasoned with on this level as they set themselves up as the arbiter of what is important and tweak the rules as the conversation progressed to maintain the desired outcome. Such individuals, however, usually allow the concept of taking all the scriptures as a compendium to build a proper understanding.

It's important to see the events and passages as a whole. For example in this next verse before and after is an understanding that the people would not be allowed in this circumstance to see his face, but other parts of God's physical being would be allowed to be viewed.

**Ex. 33: 20** ... for there shall no man see me, and live.

**Ex. 33: 23** ... And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.



The seeming contradictory position of can you see God or no; or you can see God, but just not his face, or you can see his face, but not now... just points out that God reveals Himself variously and as He chooses. To you He may reveal His face, but for me, I might wither from afar.

Noted scriptures state that there have been many who **have seen** Him and even that same apostle we just quoted declares that it is our standing with God that determines if one may see Him.

**John 14: 7** If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

**John 6: 46** Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Sectarians wishing to avoid the concept of a personal connection with God might interpret these scriptures to mean that only Christ can see God. Fact of the matter is, as long as there are two minds in the world, it will be possible to wrangle two meanings, but it is just as easy to see in these scriptures man's divine potential as to avoid it.

The understanding that man is a child of our Father in heaven and that we may become like him is like the red thread that runs though the fabric of Holy Writ. The scriptures promise that as His children we will see him because we shall be like him.

This is consistent with the many stories listed in the Bible where many men definitely saw God. The real irony here is that the same folks that obsess about not being able to see God are usually the same guys claiming that Jesus **is** God the Father – remember the Athanasian Creed! So two should be able play this silly game. If the claim is that 'God' can do the transformation thing to some form we can tolerate – like for Moses or the Prophet Steven, just before being Stoned to death, why not Joseph Smith indeed!

**Acts 7: 55-56** But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

The Bible is a testament to God because so many people in fact saw him and said so. How it is done, one can conjecture: in or out of the body etc, but that it is done can hardly be refuted. This next scripture says that a certain group of folks have as yet not seen the Father, but refers to the fact that He does in fact have a shape to behold.

**John 5: 37** And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

This next reference talks about being caught up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven and spoke of a concept that to do so as a mortal might entail actually leaving the body behind. Maybe the Children of Israel had good reason to fear seeing God in their state of unrighteousness – being concerned that they might just leave behind their mortal frame permanently!

**2 Cor. 12: 2** I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

There are references of being physically drained after encountering God.

**Moses 2** And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence.

**Moses 9-11** And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth. And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed. But now mine own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him.

While those scriptures were long ago lost from the Bible, the restored word gives one of the clearest pictures yet. Compare this experience with that of Joseph Smith:

**JS\_hist 17** ... When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

**JS\_hist 20** ...When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree,

Some religions take such umbrage over the concept of seeing God, when clearly He came and dwelt with us as the following scripture points out. It appears obvious that if God wishes to reveal himself to man, then God can figure out a way to make it possible. Maybe what really galls them is the fact that He appeared to young Joseph and not to them! Kind of reminds me of Samuel and Eli except Eli didn't reject the Lords visitation to Samuel.

**John 14: 9** Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?

**John 1:1-2** IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

**John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

That Jesus as Risen Lord indeed still had a physical body and that it was very important that he had one is demonstrated when Mary attempts to touch him.

**John 20: 17** Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

It was also very important that we knew he had a physical body. This is attested in the following scriptures and the whole 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Corinthians:

**Luke 24:36-45** And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? **Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.** And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them...Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

If he was only spirit, what of that charade? Jesus (God) said He had a body – not just an ethereal force. Is it so hard to just believe it? This would be my hope and prayer also, that the earnest seeker will find understanding in the scriptures. Perhaps the forgoing explanations may be of some help.

Sometime in the end, all the righteous will see their Father again. May we be counted amongst them:

**1 Jn. 3: 2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, **we shall be like Him; for we shall SEE Him as he is.**

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## 9. What's all this stuff about "One God" anyhow?

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Here's a topic that caused a lot of stir in the early Christian movement. Unfortunately for the cause of truth, the matter was solved by the point of a sword – Emperor Constantine's to be exact - long after Christ and the Apostles had been taken from the world. Two prominent bishops of the headless fragmented church fought for their respective understandings of Deity. The main proponent of the proposition that God the Father and Jesus were separate, but totally unified in purpose – thus "one God" was Arius. By 300AD however much Greek philosophy had crept into the teachings and in the Council of Nicea, the Greek ethereal god position prevailed. All the bishops save five declared themselves ready to subscribe to a mystical formula, of three and one and much linguistic charades that that entails. Yet the majority was "convinced that it contained the ancient faith of the Apostolic Church. The opponents were soon reduced to two, Theonas of Marmarica and Secundus of Ptolemais, who were exiled and anathematized. Arius and his writings were also branded with anathema, his books were cast into the fire, and he was exiled to Illyria"

Both the Bible and especially the Book of Mormon reference the concept that Father, Son and Holy Ghost represent one God. Really. the only question at hand is whether *that* one God is representative of their unity in purpose or unity in very substance. – Yes, I know this bleeds into the topic: [Does God even have substance?](#) – but one topic at a time!

To argue the latter, theologians hang their apologies largely on interpretation of John 1 where Jesus is referenced as being *with* God in the beginning and was God.

Ironically that very exposition is one of the stronger arguments that they were in fact separate in substance but collectively God; hence [Jesus] was with God and Jesus was God. Some scholars try to make some hay over nuances in the Greek - translating it a bit more literally as ... [Jesus] was with the God and Jesus was a God. (Reference Westcott and Hort) But either way you slice it, something more is going on here than just 'Jesus was God in the beginning.' (non-quote)

Really, to argue that God is not unity in purpose, but sometimes one and sometimes a separate and disassociated being is to make God into a schizophrenic deceiver. By about 500AD the new Christians professed God as mystical and unknowable. The Athanasian Creed of about 500AD still guides most of the Christian sects. The following is the Marquess of Bute's English translation of the text of the Creed:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02033b.htm> :For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreate, the Son Uncreate, and the Holy Ghost Uncreate. **The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible.** The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. **As also there are not**

### Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Incomprehensible...

So according to most sectarians who promote this, God is incomprehensible and unknowable. (The [essay on apostasy](#) might be consulted if you are trying to understand how anyone could come up with something like that) Jesus went out of his way to help us understand who God was and told us:

**John 17: 3** And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The following common passages in the Bible make such easy sense when you understand the Godhead as a unity of purpose. Conversely it requires considerable mental and linguistic gyrations to read these from the sectarian view.

**Gen. 1: 26** And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:

**Matt. 17: 5** While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

**John 16:25-30** These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Note in the forgoing how excited the disciples are that Jesus is speaking plainly and they respond plainly. Isn't it nice to just read the scriptures plainly? See how Jesus plainly addresses His Father in the next passages. Alternately, put your head through a pretzel machine to see how Jesus is really just speaking to Himself.

**Luke 23: 34** Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

**Mark 15: 34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

**John 5:19** Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

**Luke 23: 46** And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Sectarians have clumsy explanations for why the Bible isn't to be taken literally and simply, but it sure is a lot easier to do so. I believe God will witness this fact to the sincere seeker

of truth that God is the Father of us all and Jesus is His Son. Like Jesus said just before he ascended –

**John 20: 17** Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Now, do you really think he was trying to confuse us or do you think he could have simply been uttering easy to understand truths? I vote for the latter.

I am convinced that the reason the adversary has a stake in this discussion is simply that a mystical God seems unfathomable and unreachable. Go figure as to why the devil would want God to seem “incomprehensible.” Jesus and the apostles did their best while they were yet amongst us to make God our Father real.

**Acts 17: 29** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.

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## 10. Made in His image; the “Anthropomorphic God”

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### **Some are dissatisfied with the imperfect human condition**

Many people, when they experience the difficulties of this fallen human existence, think "if only we could be loosed from the shackles of this physical existence and exist in some purely spiritual plane. I suppose we are often like youth - tired of school with its tests and demands for performance. -- With but a few years of experience, bemoan as did Peter Pan " I don't want to go to school and I don't want to grow up!" Well this is only the wishful thinking of the ignorant and blinded. Those desperate to be loosed from pain or trouble are certain that the "grass must certainly be greener as a spirit on the other side of the veil." The savior reminded us, though, that the disembodied spirits hold up in a possessed man were so desperate to retain a physical embodiment that they would possess the bodies of pigs rather than be dismissed from the physical world entirely.

### **Why do so many reject Gods True Nature & His Relationship to Man?**

After all God's efforts to reveal himself to man, that Christian and Jewish sects could latch onto the idea that God is a spirit devoid of physicality and man's resurrection only a metaphor for some bodiless existence has for some time mystified me.

**Let's review some of the points of scriptural references where God has revealed his nature to man.**

**Genesis 1:27** So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Lets take the Bible on it's word)

**Exodus 24:9** Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10 And they saw the God of Israel: and [there was] under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone. (If it's so important for sectarians to argue that God is a disembodied spirit, then why is God going out of his way to show that he has a body?)

**Acts 17:29** Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (Offspring is a pretty clear word! Likewise, we ought not to think of God as a disembodied spirit either!) (Note also that an entity called the Godhead is referenced here)

**Luke 3:38** Which was [the son] of Enos, which was [the son] of Seth, which was [the son] of Adam, which was [the son] of God. (Note that this is a continuous physical lineage.)

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (This was said to Adam. Who was his Mother and Father?)

**Rom. 8:17** And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (If we are not of God's lineage, could we really inherit and be joint heirs?)

**Ps. 82:6** I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. (Who are we to argue with God?)



**Gen. 3:22** And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: (Who is this us God is talking about?)

**Luke 24:37** But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Why is Jesus going out of his way to verify the reality of a physical resurrection?)

**Heb. 12:9** Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? (A clear statement here of the dual nature of man. Can we not conclude the same about God?)

One has to do frequent and elaborate explanations and literally turn the Bible into a series of metaphors and lies to avoid the simple conclusion that we are God's children. The Bible is twisted and wrung by the philosophies of men until every kind of interpretation possible is squeezed out of it except the plain and simple truth that we are the literal descendants (offspring) of God.

### **What are the negative consequences of man's teachings about God?**

The philosophies of men teach that man has no real relationship with God. Our destiny becomes, then, much as the Greek mythologies teaches - that we are the playthings or toys for the gods. If we were truly created from nothing by an all knowing and perfect being, then that all-knowing being must necessarily be responsible for all the good and bad his creations bring about. It is no wonder with such a distorted picture of God that so many people have rejected him.

### **Why are these wrong philosophies promoted?**

I believe that these are philosophies promoted by that evil one who having lost his chance to obtain the power and glory that a perfected and celestial being could attain, would out of anger and envy that none of God's children attain that power and glory either.

Nephi explains like this:

**2 Nephi 2:17** "And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. **18** And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

In two grand attempts Lucifer failed to foil God's eternal plan for His children's exaltation. In the Garden of Eden, Lucifer petitioned Adam and then his wife Eve to partake of a fruit that would begin an inevitable destruction of their perfect bodies. He had some hopes of possessing the bodies Adam and Eve would create just as he had the body of the serpent. But God put a shield between man and the evil spirits and foiled his plans at obtaining these bodies. Satan, then, could control only those who freely give themselves. In rage and envy, he vowed man's destruction. Since no imperfection could remain in God's celestial existence, Adam and his posterity were relegated to this terrestrial sphere. Nephi

teaches that if we had remained in that state we would have become as the devil and subject to him.

**2 Nephi 9:8** "O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. **9** And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself;

The devil, failing outright to foil God's hope for all his children, has relegated his fiendish troops to damning us one at a time. If the devil can get us to believe that the physical is superfluous then we will not be motivated to take care of this physical body or temple that houses our spirits. Instead of learning to control the elements of this body by expanded faith, we might instead submit to being controlled by it. When God created the worlds he inspected the work to make sure that the will of his faith was faithfully obeyed by the elements. Our enemy has no desire for us to become like God with ultimate powers over the physical worlds. *If he can get us to reject God outright by making God out to be so incomprehensible that thinking people reject him outright, then he yet accomplishes his aim against mankind.*

As a historical note, the true nature of God was widely held by many of the Christians until about 300AD when the religion was converted from being persecuted to being sponsored by the state. ([see essay on apostasy](#))

I said in the beginning that I had been mystified that sects teach that God was a disembodied spirit and for this they hold us in open contempt. It's clearer now, I hope, why Lucifer and even some well-meaning but confused Christian followers want us to reject the true nature of God.

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## 11. How Shall We Understand the Holy Ghost?

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After Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, they began to till the earth and work at other tasks for their living. They had many children, and their sons and daughters also married and had children. Thus, spirit children of our Heavenly Father began leaving his presence to come to the earth as they had been promised. As they came to earth, the memory of their heavenly home was taken from them. But our Father did not shut them away from his influence. He sent the Holy Ghost to comfort and help and guide all of his spirit children.

**Moses 5:4-11** And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God....And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

An angel of the Lord came and taught Adam and Eve the plan of salvation.

And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son and to teach Adam and Eve the gospel.

Through the power of the Holy Ghost, Adam “began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God”. And because of the witness of the Holy Ghost to Eve, she said, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient”

It is evident in the first days of this earth’s existence our dependence on the Holy Ghost was vital and necessary.

But who is the Holy Ghost - Let’s look in John;

**1 John 5:7** For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 says that the Holy Ghost is a spirit that has the form and likeness of a man and that he can be only one place at a time, but his influence can be everywhere at the same time.

**DC 130:22** 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. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

Remember the account of Jesus walking on water or when the resurrected Lord appeared to the disciples in the closed room. Each time, Jesus had to convince them that He was in fact NOT just a spirit saying:

**Luke 24: 39** Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

Yet, without divine revelation to clarify these things, some have stumbled in their understandings of this. There are many facets of what we call God, but if we isolate just

one facet and presuppose that represents the entirety of God, we are going to err substantially. For example: even though we have just read how Jesus dramatically and emphatically declared that he was not just spirit, one need just flip to John to read:

**John 4: 24** *God is a Spirit:* (note: in this instance that the apostle does clarify in the next breath that) *they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

This is like the blind boy who encountered an elephant and 1<sup>st</sup> felt his long nose and concluded that the elephant must be like a snake. Unlike the Athenasian creed, memorized in theological seminaries the world over, which declares that God is quote "...not three incomprehensibles, but ... one incomprehensible," we declare, as the writer in John did, that God **is** knowable:

**John 17: 3** *...this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

We often use the term Godhead to describe the unified nature of God. Paul used this term when he wrote:

**Acts 17: 29** *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*

Jesus was very clear about this concept that he acted in complete concert his Father.

**John 5: 30** *I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*

This is also true of the Holy Spirit, a key member of the Godhead. Jesus said:

**John 14:16-17** *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;  
Even 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.*

So when Jesus uses phrases like,

**John 14:20** *"I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you,"*

it is the unity of the Godhead that makes that a sensible statement. Since the Holy Spirit acts, along with Jesus, in complete harmony with the will of the Father, the influence of the Holy Spirit in others extends this principle of unity even to angels and his prophets. He declared:

**D&C 1: 38** *... though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.*

In Revelations an angel appears to John, yet the angel speaks in 1<sup>st</sup> person as if he were the Lord Jesus. The nature of the Godhead has been variously revealed to man. To the Israelites exiting the pantheon of Egyptian and pagan gods, few such details were revealed. But to others, earnest seeker of truth, He is willing to reveal more of Himself.

**John 14:21** He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Only a few thousand ever saw Jesus; but a handful His angels, even fewer the Father. The Holy Ghost, then, is the principle means for the Godhead to influence man. He is the comforter in times of trial or sorrow. He is the light that inspires and is the revealer of hidden knowledge. He is the testifier of the Christ and the means to soften our hearts to accept Him as Savior.

We have a sure promise to all mankind who earnestly seek God, that through the power of the Holy Ghost, truth will be revealed.

**Moroni 10:4-5** And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

Just as Jesus promised Peter;

**Matt. 18:18** Verily I say unto you, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

He also promises us that when we enter into the covenant of baptism that he, through the laying on of hands, will grant a special gift of the Holy Ghost, where the striving saint may expect the Lord's influence as more than a fleeting experience, but as a daily indwelling of the Holy Spirit's influence.

**D&C 8: 2** Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

It is imperative that we maintain our lives in a state of striving for good and repentance, for the Almighty declared:

And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.  
**(D&C 1: 33)**

But this promise comes with a warning that:

A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him. **(D&C 130:23)**

Let us all ask ourselves, as Alma did to his people so long ago, this question and then act accordingly:

**(Alma 5:26-34)**

**26** And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?

**27** Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time ... that your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?

**33** Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.

**34** Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely;

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## 12. Love is an Inequality, Jesus' advice by the numbers.

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Jesus gave some advice that grates against our more common notions of justice. He said, for example, "Do good to those who despitely use you!" How can that make any sense? How is that fair?

A lot could and has been said about eternal justice and even "vengeance is mine", but consider this mathematical concept that might shed some light relating key human behaviors in a gospel context. **It begins with the basic concept of a desire for some fairness in some aspect.**

Listed are a few examples of where we commonly demand fairness, though the concepts are extensible to many others:

Remuneration (\$), Revenge, Forgiveness, Work or Chores, Favors ....

Fairness is another word for equality. Writing a "fairness equation" can be enlightening:

We begin by a simple inequality and then expand with more refinements that improve the modeling. Consider the following example with Chores (C) as the main variable. If you felt that each person should share an equal load, then as long as your(y) workload is less than or equal to others(o) then a sense of equity is maintained:

$$C_y \leq C_o$$

If you have a sense of Altruism(Ay) and are willing to do some percent of excess and still feel OK about the arrangement then we modify the equation as follows:

$$C_y \leq A_y C_o$$

For example if my Ay is 2 ie I am still OK working 2x as the other:

$$C_y \leq 2C_o$$

This means that as long as I am working no more than twice as hard as the other person, then I am still OK with that and my sense of equity is still maintained.

Then, (THIS IS KEY) we must acknowledge that the natural man often Perceives(Py) his own contributions in excess of actuality(> 1), whereas we can never know or Perceive(P) the real extent of others work. I, for example, can seldom appreciate all the work my wife does unless I was bird-dogging her all day long. Therefore my Perception(Po) of her work will always be less than 1. Therefore, *perceived* equity (from your perspective) is achieved when we modify the equation as follows:

$$C_y P_y \leq A_y C_o P_o : \quad \text{Where } P_y > P_o$$

This means that since your perception of your own work generally exceeds reality, you need to work harder than what you *perceive* to be equitable to in *actuality* just hold your



own end up. Conversely, since the other actually works harder than your perception could ever likely reveal, they would have to work far harder than would actually be equitable before you ever *perceived* them as pulling a fair share of effort. The ratio of Py, Po can be written as:

$$P_k = P_y / P_o$$

The actual relationship of Relative Perception defined by Px might easily have a Perception(k) value of 2-10; mine is probably around 5. Substituting above we get:

$$C_y P_y \leq A_y C_o P_o \quad ; \quad P_y = P_k P_o$$

$$C_y (P_k P_o) \leq A_y C_o P_o$$

$$C_y P_k \leq A_y C_o$$

$$C_y \leq (A_y / P_k) C_o$$

As an example:

If my perception ratio Pk is 5 and my Altruism factor Ay is 2 then:

$$C_y \leq 2/5 C_o \quad \text{then}$$

$$C_y 2.5 \leq C_o$$

If you are not much for the altruism part you get:

$$C_y 5 \leq C_o \quad \text{or} \quad C_y \leq C_o / 5$$

This Reads like: You "feel" equitable when Chores(Your's) is no more than 1/5 of the Chores(others)! YIKES!

This means that the other person would have to actually work 2.5 – 5 times harder than me before I ever likely *perceived* that they were pulling their fair share!!!!

Consider the implication for forgiveness. This means if the same ratios held, you'd have to forgive the other person 5 times more than seems 'tit for tat' before *actually* achieving equity. No wonder Jesus told us not to judge, forgive without limit etc.

### Useful References:

[1 Cor 13:12 \(AMPC\)](#) For now we are looking in a mirror that gives only a dim (blurred) reflection [of reality as in a riddle or enigma], but then [when perfection comes] we shall see in reality *and* face to face! Now I know in part (imperfectly), but then I shall know *and* understand fully *and* clearly, even in the same manner as I have been fully *and* clearly known *and* understood [by God].

[Math 5:44](#) Doing Good despite fairness, [See Mathew 7](#). Beatitudes

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### 13. “The Evidence of Things Not Seen” by Robert Millet

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Brigham Young University-Idaho Devotional

January 27, 2004

Robert L. Millet

Some time ago I sat in my home ward and listened with much interest as four children moved to the front of the chapel and in turn bore their testimonies. The first one could not have been more than seven years old, and yet she spoke with a confidence that one might expect from a seasoned adult member of the Church. She said, essentially, “I want to bear my testimony that I know that the Church is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is our living prophet today.” She then shared some personal feelings and sat down. I pondered on her words, on the depth of sincerity evident in her voice, and I wondered: Does she know? Does she really know? How much could she know? Later during the day I reflected on the experience and had affirmed to my mind and heart that little children can come to know the things of God, by the power of the Spirit of God, ([1 Corinthians 2:11-14](#)) and can speak words of truth and wisdom, just as their adult counterparts can ([Alma 32:23](#)). A testimony is not something you either have or don’t have, but rather an impression of the Spirit as to the truthfulness of eternal things, an inner awareness that ranges along a spiritual continuum from a simple peaceful feeling to a perfect knowledge.

It has wisely been observed that the strength of this Church lies not alone in the powerful witnesses of the fifteen men we sustain as prophets, seers and revelators, but rather the deep reassurance and resolve that rests in the souls of individual Saints of the Most High from Alabama to Zanzibar. A testimony may begin through trusting in and relying upon the witness of another, of one who knows for sure; to believe on the faith of another is indeed a spiritual gift, a gift that can lead to eternal life ([Doctrine and Covenants 46:13-14](#)). And yet surely each one of us desires to possess our own witness, an independent knowledge of the reality of God our Father, the redemptive mission of Jesus the Christ, and the divine call of Joseph Smith and the work of the Restoration.

It was President Heber C. Kimball that warned us of a test to come, a test that would separate out those who professed membership in the Church but did not possess a personal testimony sufficient to see them through hard times.

*“The time will come when no man or woman will be able to endure on borrowed light,”* he said. *“Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?”* (Orson F. Whitney, [Life of Heber C. Kimball](#) Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973, 446, 449-50).

**Faith in the Unseen**

A few years ago a Baptist minister friend and I were driving through Boston in an effort to get to the LDS Institute of Religion at Cambridge. As has been my custom most every time I have been to Boston, I was absolutely lost and had no idea where we were. We stopped several times for directions, and each helpful person would point to us the way and say with much assurance "You can't miss it." After having heard that phrase five or six times, I asked our seventh helper for directions and began my question with "Please don't say you can't miss it, because I assure you that we can, for we have done it again and again." During our scavenger hunt of sorts, we chatted. My colleague commented on a matter that we had discussed several times, namely the idea that Latter-day Saints are more prone to rely upon feelings than tangible evidence for truth of religious claims. In response, I asked: "Do you believe in the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ?" The look he gave me was similar to that which a sixteen-year-old would give to someone who had asked what the teenager felt to be an inane question. "Of course I believe in the resurrection, Bob; I'm an ordained minister." I followed up: "Why do you believe in the resurrection? How do you know it really happened?" He answered: "Because the New Testament teaches of the resurrection of Jesus." I shot right back "But how do you know that the New Testament accounts can be trusted? How do you know the Bible can be trusted? Maybe someone just made all of this up. Maybe the Bible is a giant hoax."

"No," he said, "There is strong evidence to support the truthfulness of the Bible." "Like what?" I asked. "Well, there are archaeological, historical and cultural evidences that what is being described actually happened." I then queried. "And so that's how you know the resurrection is real?"

"Yeah, I suppose so," he said. At this point my mind began to race. And I found myself saying something I hadn't planned to say. "You know, I feel a great sense of sadness right now." My Evangelical friend was surprised and asked "Sadness? Why are you sad?"

"I was just thinking of a good friend of mine, an older woman in Montgomery, Alabama." My partner asked: "What about her?" I then said, "Well, I was thinking of how sad it is that this wonderful and devoted Christian, a person who has given her life to Jesus and studied and memorized her Bible like few people I know, a woman whose life manifests her complete commitment to the Savior, is not really entitled to have a witness of the truthfulness of the Bible."

"Why is that?" he followed up. "Well, she knows precious little about archaeology or languages or culture or history or manuscripts, and so I suppose she can't really know within her heart that the Bible really is the word of God."

"Of course she can," he said. "She can have her faith, her personal witness that the Bible is true." I pulled off to the side of the road and stopped the car. I turned to him, smiled, and stated: "Do you mean that she can have the power of the Holy Spirit testify to her soul that her Bible is completely trustworthy and can be relied upon as God's word?"

"Yes, that's what I mean." My smile broadened as I added: "Then we've come full circle."

“What do you mean by that?” he asked. I said: “You’re telling me that this good woman, one who has none of the supposed requisite background or knowledge of external evidence, can have a witness of the Spirit, including deep personal feelings about the Bible and that those feelings are genuine and heaven-sent.” At that point my friend looked into my eyes and he smiled. “I see where you’re going with this.” We then engaged in one of the most productive conversations of our time together as friends. We agreed between us that it is so easy to yield to the temptation to categorize and pigeonhole and stereotype and even demonize persons whose faith is different than your own. It is so easy to overstate, to misrepresent, to create “straw men” in an effort to establish your own point.

We agreed that “traditional Christians” and Latter-day Saint Christians both base their faith upon evidence—both seen and unseen. While saving faith is always built upon that which is true, upon an actual historical moment in time, upon something that really existed in the past, true believers will never allow their faith to be held hostage by what science has or has not found at a given time. I know, for example, that Jesus fed the 5,000, healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed the storm, and rose from the dead—not just because I have physical evidence for each of those miraculous events (because I do not), nor even because I can read of these things in the New Testament, which I accept with all my heart. But I know these things actually happened because the Spirit of the Living God bears witness to my spirit that the Lord of Life did all the scriptures say he did, and more.

A prominent historian of religion, Randall Balmer, has written:

*I believe because of the epiphanies, small and large, that have intersected my path—small, discrete moments of grace when I have sensed a kind of superintending presence outside of myself. I believe because these moments . . . are too precious to discard, and I choose not to trivialize them by reducing them to rational explanation. I believe because, for me, the alternative to belief is far too daunting. I believe because, at the turn of the twenty-first century, belief itself is an act of defiance in a society still enthralled by the blandishments of Enlightenment rationalism. . . .*

*Somehow, I don’t think Jeffrey [who asks how he can know there is a God] wants me to rehearse the ontological, the teleological, and the cosmological arguments for the existence of God. . . . So instead of dusting off the teleological argument, I think I’ll remind Jeffrey about Karl Barth, arguably the most important theologian of the twentieth century. Toward the end of his life, after he had written volume after volume on the transcendence of God and the centrality of Jesus, Barth was asked to sum up his work. The good doctor paused for a minute and no doubt looked out the window and played with the stubble on his chin before responding with the words of a Sunday school ditty: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so” (Growing Pains: Learning to Love my Father’s Faith (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2001), 34, 61-62).*

Many years ago, on a Sunday morning I opened the door and reached down to pick up the morning newspaper when I saw beside the paper a plastic bag containing a paperback book. I brought both inside and laid the newspaper aside as I browsed the paperback. The cover was a lovely picture of a mountain stream, but the title of the book revealed to me

what in fact the book was all about—it was an anti-Mormon treatise. Many of the arguments in the book against The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were old and worn-out ones, dead horses that have been beaten since the days of E. D. Howe. Latter-day Saints had responded to the issues posed scores of times, but they continued to crop up. One section of the book did prove, however, to be of some interest to me. Let me paraphrase what was essentially said about 130 pages into the text. The author pointed out that eventually two Mormon missionaries would come to the reader's door. If they do come, he pleaded, don't let them in. If, however, you do let them in, then don't listen to them. If they are allowed to tell you about their message, about Joseph Smith and angels and golden plates, they will ask you to kneel and pray about the truthfulness of these things. Whatever you do, don't pray! The writer then made this unusual observation: In ascertaining the truthfulness of a religious claim, there are three things a person can never trust: (1) your thoughts; (2) your feelings; (3) your prayers. I was all ears at this point, wondering how we could ever know anything. I didn't have to wait long, for the writer then noted that the only thing that could be trusted was the Holy Bible itself. I shook my head and felt a deep sense of sadness for the author, for I wondered how indeed a person could even know of the truthfulness of the Bible if he or she could not think, feel, or pray. I had a collage of feelings at that moment. As indicated, I felt sad for the writer, for it was obvious that he could not see the blatant inconsistency and irrationality of his own words. I tried to put myself into the place of a reader who was not a Latter-day Saint and wondered how I might feel upon reading such things. To be honest, I would feel insulted, knowing that I could not be trusted enough in my pursuit of truth to rely upon my mind, my heart, or even the most tried and true method of obtaining divine direction—prayer itself.

An Evangelical Christian colleague, Craig Blomberg, once observed:

[“You know, it’s ironic: The Bible considers it praiseworthy to have a faith that does not require evidence. Remember how Jesus replied to doubting Thomas: ‘You believe because you see; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.’ And I know evidence can never compel or coerce faith. We cannot supplant the role of the Holy Spirit, which is often a concern of Christians when they hear discussions of this kind.](#)

[“But I’ll tell you this; there are plenty of stories of scholars in the New Testament field who have not been Christians, yet through their study of these very issues have come to faith in Christ. And there have been countless more scholars, already believers, whose faith has been made stronger, more solid, more grounded, because of the evidence—and that’s the category I fall into” \(Cited in Lee Strobel, \[The Case for Christ\]\(#\) \(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan\) 1998\), 52-53\).](#)

In writing of faith in the unseen, a Roman Catholic New Testament scholar, Luke Timothy Johnson, explained:

[“Belief in the existence of God is already an act by which one ‘entrusts’ oneself to a world that is not entirely defined by what can be seen and counted, heard, and accounted for.” Further: “Christians need to begin by insisting, first of all to themselves, then to each other, and finally to the world, that faith itself is a way of knowing reality. They need to insist that faith establishes contact with reality in a way different from, but no less real than, the very limited \(though, in their fashion,](#)

extremely impressive) ways of knowing by which the wheels of the world's empirical engine are kept spinning." As an illustration, "If religion can hold as true only what is 'within the bounds of reason,' and if 'reason' is defined in terms of the empirically verifiable, then the resurrection is excluded by definition. But if the resurrection is excluded, why should Christians continue to revere Jesus, who is then only one of many figures from antiquity worthy of attention and honor?" (The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 45, 101, 180).

True believers will always be challenged by those who refuse to see. In a very real sense, believing is seeing. No member of the Church need feel embarrassed when they cannot produce the golden plates or the complete Egyptian papyrus. No member of this Church should ever feel hesitant to bear testimony of those verities that remain in the realm of faith, that are seen only with the eyes of faith.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has written:

"It is the author's opinion that all the scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, will remain in the realm of faith. Science will not be able to prove or disprove holy writ. However, enough plausible evidence will come forth to prevent scoffers from having a field day, but not enough to remove the requirement of faith. Believers must be patient during such unfolding" (Plain and Precious Things (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 4.).

Similarly, President Ezra Taft Benson pointed out:

"We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it. The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ."

"We are not required to prove that the Book of Mormon is true or is an authentic record through external evidences—though there are many. It never has been the case, nor is it so now, that the studies of the learned will prove the Book of Mormon true or false. The origin, preparation, translation, and verification of the truth of the Book of Mormon have all been retained in the hands of the Lord, and the Lord makes no mistakes. You can be assured of that." (**A Witness and a Warning** (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988))

President Gordon B. Hinckley put things in proper perspective when he taught:

"I can hold [the Book of Mormon] in my hand. It is real. It has weight and substance that can be physically measured. I can open its pages and read, and it has language both beautiful and uplifting. The ancient record from which it was translated came out of the earth as a voice speaking from the dust. . . .

"The evidence for its truth, for its validity in a world that is prone to demand evidence, lies not in archaeology or anthropology, though these may be helpful to some. It lies not in word research or historical analysis, though these may be confirmatory. The evidence for its truth and validity lies within the covers of the book itself. The test of its truth lies in reading it. It is a book of God. Reasonable



individuals may sincerely question its origin, but those who read it prayerfully may come to know by a power beyond their natural senses that it is true, that it contains the word of God, that it outlines saving truths of the everlasting gospel, that it came forth by the gift and power of God.” **(Faith: The Essence of True Religion (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 10-11.)**

We place a great deal of emphasis in this Church—as we should—upon the singular role of the Book of Mormon, of its vital place in our own witness of the overall truthfulness of the restored gospel. In the meridian of time, the resurrection of the Master stood as the physical evidence for the Savior’s divine Sonship, the tangible witness that Jesus was Lord. Either he rose from the dead, as he said he would, or he was a fraud and Christianity was a giant hoax. So, with our own dispensation: the Book of Mormon stands as the tangible evidence of a spiritual reality—that God has spoken anew in our day; has made known his mind and will and purposes through Joseph Smith and his prophetic and apostolic successors; that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in deed and in fact the kingdom of God on earth.

Recently President James E. Faust told the story of a Latter-day Saint lecturer at London University, Joseph Hamstead.

Brother Hamstead once spoke to a group at the university of the LDS faith, including its youth and family programs. One of those in attendance responded as follows: “I like all of this, what is being done for families, etc. If you could take out that bit about an angel appearing to Joseph Smith, I could belong to your church.” Hamstead retorted: “Ah, but if you take away the angel appearing to the Prophet Joseph, then I couldn’t belong to the Church because that is its foundation” **(Personal correspondence to James E. Faust; cited in Faust, “Lord, I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief,” Ensign, November 2003, 19-20).**

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has written:

“To consider that everything of saving significance in the Church stands or falls on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, the Prophet Joseph Smith’s account of how it came forth is as sobering as it is true. It is a ‘sudden death’ proposition. Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is, or this Church and its founder are false, a deception from the first instance onward. . . . Joseph Smith must be accepted either as a prophet of God or else as a charlatan of the first order, but no one should tolerate any ludicrous, even laughable middle ground about the contours of a young boy’s imagination or his remarkable facility for turning a literary phrase. This is an unacceptable position to take—morally, literarily, historically, or theologically.”

Elder Holland went on to explain:

“If Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon as a work of ancient origin, then I would move heaven and earth to meet the ‘real’ nineteenth-century author. After one hundred and fifty years, . . . surely there must be someone willing to step forward—if no one else, at least the descendants of the ‘real’ author—claiming credit for such a remarkable document and all that has transpired in its wake. After all, a writer that can move millions can make millions. Shouldn’t someone have



come forth then or now to cashier the whole phenomenon?" ([Holland, Christ and the New Covenant \(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997\), 345-47.](#))

With this in mind, perhaps we can better appreciate why Joseph Smith stated simply:

"Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none" ([History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 vols., ed. B.H. Roberts \(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957\), 2:52.](#))

While we seek to make friends and build bridges of understanding with persons of other faiths where possible, we do not court favor, nor do we compromise one whit on what we believe. Some doctrines, like the doctrine of "only true and living church" ([D&C 1:30](#)), by their very nature, arouse antagonism from those of other faiths. Would it not be wise to avoid or at least downplay such divisive points? Perhaps, some say, we should consider focusing on matters we have in common and put aside, for the time being, the distinctive teachings of the Restoration. Elder Boyd K. Packer declared:

"If we thought only in terms of diplomacy or popularity, surely we should change our course. But we must hold tightly to it even though some turn away. . . .

"It is not an easy thing for us to defend the position that bothers so many others. But, brethren and sisters, never be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Never apologize for the sacred doctrines of the gospel. Never feel inadequate and unsettled because you cannot explain them to the satisfaction of all who might inquire of you. Do not be ill at ease or uncomfortable because you can give little more than your conviction. . . .

"If we can stand without shame, without hesitancy, without embarrassment, without reservation to bear witness that the gospel has been restored, that there are prophets and Apostles upon the earth, that the truth is available for all mankind, the Lord's Spirit will be with us. And that assurance can be affirmed to others" (Conference Report, October 1985, 104, 107).

### **The Significance of a Matter**

In the end, the only way that the things of God can and should be known is by the power of the Holy Ghost. These things are what the scriptures call the "mysteries of God." Another way of stating this is to suggest that the only way that spiritual truths may be known is by the quiet whisperings of the Holy Ghost. How did Alma the younger know? Was it because he was struck to the ground by an angel? Was it because he lay immobile and speechless for three days while he underwent a confrontation with himself and his sinful and rebellious past? No, Alma knew as we know: he may have undergone a serious turnaround in his life through the intervention of a heavenly messenger, but the witness that drove and directed this magnificent convert was the witness of the Spirit. In his own words,

"Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I say unto you

[they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me” \(Alma 5:45-46\).](#)

On the other hand, we can come to sense the significance of a spiritual reality by the loud janglings of opposition it engenders. For example, what do the following locations have in common: Portland, Dallas, Atlanta, White Plains, Nashville, Denver, Stockholm, and Ghana? Clearly in each of these places the announcement that a Latter-day Saint temple was to be built there brought opponents and even crazed zealots out of the woodwork. If I did not already know by the quiet whisperings of the Spirit within me that what goes on within temples is true and is of eternal import, I just might sense the significance of the temple by the kind of opposition that seems almost to flow naturally from those who refuse to see.

Consider another illustration. Why is it that so many people throughout the world write scathing books, deliver biting addresses, and prepare vicious videos denouncing the Book of Mormon? What is it about black words on a white page, all of which are uplifting and edifying, that invite men and women to come unto Christ and be perfected in Him, that would arouse such bitter antagonism? Once again, if I did not already know, by the quiet whisperings of the Spirit, that the Book of Mormon is truly heaven-sent and indeed Another Testament of Jesus Christ, I would recognize its significance—its power to settle doctrinal disputes, touch hearts, and transform men and women’s lives—by the loud and hostile reactions people tend to have toward it.

Hugh Nibley, one of the greatest minds of this dispensation, a defender of the faith throughout his life, stated:

[“The words of the prophets cannot be held to the tentative and defective tests that men have devised for them. Science, philosophy, and common sense all have a right to their day in court. But the last word does not lie with them. Every time men in their wisdom have come forth with the last word, other words have promptly followed. The last word is a testimony of the gospel that comes only by direct revelation. Our Father in heaven speaks it, and if it were in perfect agreement with the science of today, it would surely be out of line with the science of tomorrow. Let us not, therefore, seek to hold God to the learned opinions of the moment when he speaks the language of eternity”](#) [\(The World and the Prophets \(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M..S., 1987\), 134\).](#)

### **Conclusion**

I have learned a few things as I have learned a few things over the years. I thank God for the formal education I have received, for the privilege it is (and I count it such) to have received university training. Education has expanded my mind and opened conversations and doors for me. It has taught me what books to read, how to research a topic, and how to make my case or present my point of view more effectively. But the more I learn, the

more I value the truths of salvation, those simple but profound verities that soothe and settle and sanctify human hearts. I appreciate knowing that the order of the cosmos points toward a Providential Hand; I am deeply grateful to know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that there is a God and that he is our Father in heaven. I appreciate knowing something about the social, political, and religious world into which Jesus of Nazareth was born; I am deeply grateful for the witness of the Spirit that he is indeed God's Almighty Son.

I appreciate knowing something about the social and intellectual climate of nineteenth-century America; I am grateful to have, burning within my soul, a testimony that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith in the Spring of 1820, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is truly the kingdom of God on earth. In short, the more I encounter men's approximations to what is, the more I treasure those absolute truths that make known "things as they really are, and . . . things as they really will be" ([Jacob 4:13; compare D&C 93:24](#)). In fact, the more we learn, the more we begin to realize what we do not know, the more we feel the need to consider ourselves "fools before God" ([2 Nephi 9:42](#)).

Those who choose to follow the Brethren, believe in and teach the scriptures, and be loyal to the Church—no matter the extent of their academic training or intellectual capacity—open themselves to ridicule from the cynic and the critic. Ultimately, doctrinal truth comes not through the explorations of scholars, but through the revelations of God to apostles and prophets. And if such a position be labeled as narrow, parochial, or anti-intellectual, then so be it. I cast my lot with the prophets. I am one who sincerely believes that education need not be antithetical to conversion and commitment; it all depends on where one places his or her trust. "True religion," Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified,

["deals with spiritual things. We do not come to a knowledge of God and his laws through intellectuality, or by research, or by reason. . . . In their sphere, education and intellectuality are devoutly to be desired. But when contrasted with spiritual endowments, they are of but slight and passing worth. From an eternal perspective what each of us needs is a Ph.D. in faith and righteousness. The things that will profit us everlastingly are not the power to reason, but the ability to receive revelation; not the truths learned by study, but the knowledge gained by faith; not what we know about the things of the world, but our knowledge of God and his laws" \(Conference Report, April 1971, 99\).](#)

I know, as I know that I live, that God lives, that he is our Father in heaven, that he has a body of flesh and bones, and that we are created in his image. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. I know that through genuine, godly sorrow for sin, we can have our garments washed in the blood of the Lamb and enjoy peace and happiness here and eternal glory hereafter. I know that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, a covenant spokesman for Deity, the preeminent prophetic revealer of Christ and the plan of salvation, the one called to stand as the head of this final gospel dispensation; through his instrumentality, precious doctrinal truths and divine, saving authority have been restored to the earth. Further, my witness is current. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley stands in the shoes of Brother Joseph, that he holds the keys of the kingdom of God in their fulness, and that it is our privilege to live at a time when prophets and apostles walk the earth. This Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints is in the line of its duty, and it is preparing a people for the second coming of the Son of Man.

These things I know. I have come to know them by the same means and in the same manner that Peter knew that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God ([Matthew 16:16-17](#)). My knowledge of things spiritual, like all true faith, is based on evidence that is not seen. I chose to believe, and in the process I came to see, to know. At the same time, I possess what the apostle Peter called a reason for the hope that is in us ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). That is to say, my witness is as satisfying and stimulating to my mind as it is settling and soothing to my heart.

God grant that you and I, as a peculiar or a purchased people, may cleave unto Him who is the Truth; that our total trust, our complete confidence, and our ready reliance will always be in Him; that our lives will reflect more and more what we know and believe; and that we will “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)).

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**Speech by Robert L. Millet**

## 14. “A More Sure Way to Heaven or ...”

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### **To those who struggle; a word of advice and warning:**

Those who leave “the fellowship of the ring” often followed same “7 Step plan for misery”.

1. Something was not going well; extended bad health or traumatic injury, their occupation wasn’t working out, troubled finances, some interpersonal relationship gone awry, their pride was hurt or someone failed them, disappointed or annoyed them who was in an ecclesiastic leadership capacity. Church attendance did not seem to fix the problem right away and represented a significant effort.
2. They began to look for fault in church members or church leadership, historical or doctrinal anomalies.
3. They may begin to look after some (any) alternate secular life philosophy or religious direction.
4. Then, they may toy with, then embrace destructive habits or lifestyles that dull the mind but temporarily gratify the body.
5. Too often, they lose their spouse/family.
6. Painfully common, some or many of their children follow that lead, lose faith and with that moral direction leading to alcohol, drugs and lawlessness ...or their children abandoned them for their own betterment.
7. Lastly, the promise of exaltation with God slips away.

There is but one straight and narrow road. All others lead to hell starting with the one of our own making.

Jesus said to take up your cross and bare it for his burden is light.

He did not say there was no burden, but it is definitely light by comparison to Satan’s “balloon plan.” The Devil’s burden seems light, as a hot air balloon, until he pops the bag leaving his hapless followers to crash – and great is their fall.

For those who are hoping that God is a Sugar-Daddy doling out on our schedule good times for good behavior, I might recommend a review of the prophet’s lives. Paul’s wife died when he was yet a young man. Numerous prophets were stoned to death for their efforts, Lot’s wife so loved the sinful environment of her community, she turned back to her destruction even while God was leading her out to safety. Joseph Smith endured trial after trial from sources external and even close to home.

If that sounds like – “Then what’s the point?” it is this, even in trial if your heart is at peace, if you can find clarity of mind and heart, then you can endure about anything. Trials endured well bring about a peace that as the scriptures say, “surpasses all understanding” and that leads to Life more abundantly – even everlasting Life with the Father and Son.

It is not always clear to man as to the mind of God. He only expects us to plod on his path, doing our best with what we have rendering 10 fold or 50 or 100 fold depending on our

several abilities, but not comparing our success with another's. Recall the story of Zion's Camp when the Lord told Joseph to rescue the embattled saints in Missouri that they marched under harsh, harsh conditions some 1000 miles to come within striking distance of their enemy only to be told to return home. Some were furious and questioned God and the Prophet. Some rejected one, others both; why after all would God command us to do such an arduous journey only to fail? But many grew in strength from that effort, became refined from the trial, grew in faithfulness and became the key pillars of leadership that held the church and brought the kingdom to safety in the west after the prophet's death.

I am reminded of a family who really struggled with failures. The husband sometimes struggled as a breadwinner and their large family of children were almost all catastrophes, choosing bad friends, lawless behaviors, drugs and sex over God. I worked with some of her kids and I can tell you sometimes they were a plague. In the time frame I knew this family, one child was actually murdered by a deranged boyfriend and several were in and out of jails; then they moved. Some years later I received this note:

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Dear Friends,

In our hearts you will ever be our friends! For so many years we shared with you our never-ending catastrophes and continual crisis-but undying testimony. Now, we want to share our good fortune, unbelievable blessings and still undying testimony.

After we moved to Idaho we got involved in the business of working with teenagers who have A.D.H.D and who are struggling with life. We have a year-round outdoor program and a year-round residential academic program for these teenagers. We also do foster care in our home. The rewards are so great as we see families reunited and lives put back together again.

We have witnessed these very same things in our own family. Our oldest son... was re-baptized this summer. He and his wife are planning a temple sealing this next summer... They are both Psychology majors. Our next three oldest sons are all currently serving missions [around the world]. We only have four children left at home; ...

Yes, all of these children that were the source of our greatest sorrows are now the source of our greatest joys. We think that even [our daughter's] death was part of the plan. Because, now, we are so dedicated to helping other families, so dedicated to sharing the gospel, and so dedicated to the work of the temples.

She concludes:

It is heaven on earth to us. We hope that it is the same for you...With much love and best wishes for you and your families.

Stay the course, keep the faith, finish the race. That is what God requires. That is what will bring us peace and in the end exaltation. We cannot do wrong and feel right. We cannot turn from the light that God has given us and see but darkness. Even if we cannot see the whole way, yet walk within the short patch of light at our feet. Stay, hold to that light.

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## 15. Common Practice of Profanity (lite) in Mormon Culture?

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In actual practice, Latter Day Saints have more compliance with God's lifestyle commandments than is generally the case in "Christian" societies. This is born out in such studies as *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, by Oxford University Press.... Their demonstrated goodness, relative to the world, which surrounds them, creates a stark contrast. Yet generally LDS people eschew accolades to that effect; being taught to avoid the appearance and actuality of pride and personal comparisons. So it is that some LDS may be tempted to brush with, but not indulge in, off color language or behavior to avoid, perhaps subconsciously, the "dread" label of 'Molly Mormon' or the like. Generally, Mormons have a reputation for eschewing all forms of profanity, but I believe a growing minority of saints have begun a dalliance with what I'll call profanity-lite. It hurts the individual and damages the churches reputation.

In the category of off-color language, "c..p" would have to be the favorite tolerated language of those Mormons who indulge followed closely in popularity by various profane modifiers such as "Holy c..p." For the most part this kind of profanity is not seen as such by those who use it. Yet, when Mormons are taught and take a moment to address the topic few would argue *for* its usage nor would they likely use such language in the presence of respected Church leaders.

When comes the usage of forms of expletives? To emphasize a point, people who lack other linguistics means, might use some out of context word from one of two categories; Extreme regard and/or Extreme disregard. In the category of "Regard" you typically find to reference to God, Religion and/or Mother. A few examples are; Holy Smokes, Jesus, Holy Mother of God etc (note below: Holy is one of God's names) In the category of Disregard you find references to Hell, Damnation, sexual impurity, excrement etc.

For the most extreme emphasis or outright shock value, the clever user of profanity will directly juxtaposition words from both categories. Mormon version: Holy C..p. NonMormon version: Holy S..t.

Certainly more benign, but rooted from a common vein are found other people who also lack better linguistics skills, but whose moral upbringing precludes the more extreme proscribed language. These have developed a whole vocabulary of curse-lite word; words that sound very similar to the "forbidden" words;

friken, flippin, dang, dag blasted, shoot etc.

In some cases the words are oh so close to their more shocking counterparts, where as others are safely removed from the true curse words they may have derived from so as to be generally acceptable.

From my read of the Scriptures, it appears that God does not want us to mix into our daily speech any such profane speech. Rather we should use language to precisely describe things as they are. I.e. If we are hurt the response is "Ouch" or such. Likewise, the only time to use language such as c..p is when we need to explain what we are scraping off our shoe.



Listed below is some of the doctrinal basis for avoiding profane speech:

**Lev. 21: 6;** They shall be **holy** unto their God, and not profane the **name** of their God

**Lev. 20: 3;** And I will set my face against that **man**, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath ... profane[d] my **holy name**.

**Moses 6: 57:** Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, **Man of Holiness** is his **name**.

**Math 5:33** Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

**34** But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

**35** Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

**36** Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

**37** But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Lastly the 13<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith declares that Latter Day Saints should be pursuing lovely and virtuous things. So I leave that datum as the standard to judge against. If your language or actions can pass that muster, then I'm sure you are in good shape. If not, then quit making excuses and find some other way of expressing your thought. – or maybe – just maybe don't express it at all for as our mothers used to say, "If you cant say something nice, then don't say anything at all!"

**Article of Faith 13:** We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured **many** things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

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## 16. So, What's So All-Important About Baptism anyway?

Sermon given by Steve Marquis at the baptism of Hiram Morrell 11/5/05

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### **When announced, Enter Wearing mud caked - filthy overalls & cowboy hat**

To Latter Day Saints, baptism is central, the gate to the Celestial Kingdom with God.

It's waters symbolize a washing – a renewal where we enter the waters to be cleansed of sin and emerge a new man.

**3 Nephi 27: 19** And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

### **<Remove filthy overalls and position laid out on the ground with your hat>**

Baptism can be likened to a washing where we shed the filth of our sinful tendencies and replace them with a determination to follow Christ, strengthened in our resolve to do so by His Holy Spirit.

Do you recall the death of a loved one or perhaps even a pet: The waters of Baptism are always at ground level such that Baptism also symbolizes death; in this case the death of the sinful tendencies. Then, when we are raised out of the water by a man ordained of God we then see therein the future resurrection of the body and also the creation now of a new man - free from any desire to sin.

**Romans 6:3** Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? **4** Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: **6** Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. **7** For he that is dead is freed from sin.

My baptism into this Church was one of the highlights of my life. My family had just converted to the Church, but I was not quite 8 yet so I had to wait a few months. I remember the day of my baptism vividly. To be baptized, I went to the old Stake Center, as our building was just being constructed and the font was not completed.

As I looked around the room at the people gathered, I was surprised to see a classmate from school – also dressed in white and also my teacher from school. I came to know that day that I was joining the Kingdom of God and that I would not be alone on this journey.

Nevertheless, I also came to know that the journey was not like an effortless bus ride to the pearly gates – more like a Mt Climb with encouraging companions. Like any climb, to end up on the right peak, you have to start out on the right trailhead. Baptism, in the right place, by someone representing the Lord. is the gate to that trail. Climbers on the Lord's

trail carry rope so that if someone amongst them stumbles and falls, he can be caught before he really hurts himself. Each one of us promises that we will bear each other's burdens.

**Mosiah 18: 8** ... as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

**9** Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.

**10** Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

**11** And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts.

We had done an activity at the Morrell home some time back where I let Hyrum dangle from a rope slung over some rafter beam and then let the whole family try and hoist him in vain, but when he could climb a ladder, then the family could take up the slack and protect him- this of course spoke to our individual duty and efforts on the one hand for our own salvation and on the other our duty in the kingdom to support our brothers.

### **<Cut off a small section of climber's rope and give to Hyrum>**

This is to remind you that this journey requires effort and desire – you cannot be pulled and dragged into heaven. The church and fellowship is there to help you but you have to do the walking and it is equally there for *you* to be able to help others.

Now, my father, who had been baptized just a few months before, had recently been ordained a priest and was able to baptize me. One of the folks baptized that day was not totally immersed, and so the ordinance was repeated. This was necessary because, as we just read, **"baptism symbolizes cleansing, death, burial, and resurrection and birth, and this only can only be represented by immersion."**

The Savior also taught us that all men and women must be born again. Nicodemus, one of the rulers among the Jews, asked Jesus what should one do to inherit life with God.

**John 3:2** "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

**3** Nicodemus was bewildered and asked: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

Jesus explained that He was talking about being born spiritually. He said:

**4** "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

So Baptism also represents the birth of a new creature. From this day forth you will not be the same – your eternal life was bought at a price – hence you are not your own but willingly follow a master who we will serve all of our lives – not out of force, but out of our desire to be like Him.

**Alma 5:14** And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

A story is told of the son of King Louis XVI of France. As a young man, he was kidnapped by evil men when they dethroned the king. For six months he was exposed to every filthy and vile thing that life had to offer, yet he never buckled under the pressure. This puzzled his captors, and they asked him why he had such great moral strength. His reply was simple: "I cannot do what you ask, for I was born to be a king" (see Vaughn J. Featherstone, "The King's Son," *New Era*, Nov. 1975, 35).

You were born to be a son of a King. By being baptized, you have been promised the blessings of royalty. Knowing who you really are should make a difference in your determination to realize that destiny.

When my son, Jared, your old Sunday School teacher, was about to depart for war, his commander spoke to the departing soldiers and their families saying, "The thing that will get you through this is your faith in God and the training we've given you."

You have goodly parents and loving friends and church leaders who will give you the training to prepare you for the battle. And the battle is very real for the hearts and souls of men. It is being fought right here at home at your school and in our community, The Lord needs strong men and women to stand up and be counted. That is what being called a Christian is all about – not shrinking from the fight, but defending Christ with boldness in word and deed.

May your faith grow and carry you safely and victorious.

In Jesus' Name – Amen **Brother Steve** [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## 17. Does God Wear a White Coat?

A silly silly response with a serious message.

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I work in a high tech industry where a fellow coworker posted a Doonesbury cartoon which sarcastically dressed down President Bush for questioning the religion of the left (science mingled with pseudo-science).

It's an interesting anachronism, considering it's origins embraced "Question Authority" but thinking a bit more, it occurred to me that all the left has done is to replace God as The authority with a community of 'the' intellectuals; trading the white robes for white coats as it were. When the Oracles speak we must all bow or be branded heretic or worse 'for those who worship their own intellect' a simpleton.

When Reagan correctly pointed out that the lion share of summer haze was due to trees and natural vegetation decay, the sarcastic hoot and holler of "Cut me down before I kill again" dismissed any serious discussion and that - followed up by rounding up anyone else spouting such *nonsense* to the public flogging.

There were no 'Doubting Thomas's' amongst The Union of Concerned Scientists as they demanded without proof that the "linear" model for radiation exposure be the "faith statement" of the pious and unbeliever alike; Booming from the media pulpit, "better to pay a tithe of high energy prices to men in white coats than risk the ultimate damnation of death by cancer" - The parishioners shudder and pay the dues to the deacons of non nuclear society.

Global Warming is prophesied as the just torment of the careless -- damned to roast in bare cracked deserts of their own making. Heretic scientists (doubters in

sheep's clothing) are burnt at the media stake for noting that Mars and even Pluto are showing similar climate change in sync with the sun's vacillating displeasure. "Silence ye fiends!" or worse "Ye ignorant fools."

The evolutionists hold the seer stones to the past - conjuring up estimates of ancient carbon concentrations to be held as sacrosanct as life itself... Ahhh changed daily. Yes well, after all, the Theory of Change *is* Law and in due obeisance no "Physics Today" article would be proper without beginning with the catechism, "This changes our fundamental understanding of..."god hath spoken it! and who should doubt his word - spoken even by his mouthpiece, Professor Aaron of the Holy Order of the White Coat.

The parallels between the new faith and the old are astonishing. But sadly, the new religion beats on the consciences of the new parishioners with the same old rod - fear; the former with fear of eternal death or damnation and the latter with near term death and disease.

But at least in the former, man had an eternal destiny and importance. With the "New" faith, man is reduced to complex reactive action potentials (C.R.A.P.). Oh dear, I sense a Columbine coming on from one of the new faith believers - but, don't worry; after all, even your worry is just C.R.A.P. You'll get over it and then you'll S.T.O.P. (Systems Terminated - Offline Permanently).

Then praise them, those valiant Oracles in White Coats. May they function long as they search for the Rosetta stones certain that in the finding they will finally be able to decipher the ultimate meaning of S.T.O.P.

Oops time to go. I hear the university bells announcing 'call to meeting'.

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## 18. Being a Dad in the Good Old Days Sermon

by Steve marquis 6/18 2006 Snoqualmie Congregation.

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(Holding up the scriptures) The words of our forefathers captured in this writ tell poignant stories of relationships of fathers and their sons. I have written many letters to my own sons – one day maybe they'll let me publish them – You see. that's what much of these scriptures are – and the most memorable ones are like good campfire stories; trouble, conflict and resolution sometimes happy and sometimes sad. You can be assured of one thing – there is nothing new under the sun.

Few if any of us, rich or poor, escape this life without trials and **if its** commiseration you want – you'll have good company snuggling up to this for bedtime consolation.

Take Lehi for instance – the perhaps eccentric, definitely visionary prophet with at best begrudging - tentative respect to extremes of life-threatening rebellion of his older sons.

And then there's old Eli – You remember the High priest with his two rascals for sons who would shake down the temple goers. Can you imagine that instead of blessing the sacrament, if the Bishop's son, and his gang would rough you up in the hall lift your tithing envelops and womanize instead of worship at the Temple grounds?

Or what about Abraham – some members of this congregation, sadly, may have had some part of their life injured by abuse of one form or another. Abraham's apostate dad tried to have him offered up as a blood sacrifice. That's some serious abuse.

And then there's Joseph – starting off married life with the potential embarrassment of an out of wedlock pregnancy and personal betrayal who nevertheless stepped up to the role of step dad.

It's so easy to excuse our own struggles raising children and at once be critical of some figure whose whole life story is condensed to a few pages. Old Eli is a great case. He is best known in the scriptures as the High Priest that failed to reign in his sons. He is the favorite whipping boy for permissive parenthood. I got some taste for the complexity of these matters when as a 15 year old, my son took my truck past our private road to joy ride up Lake Alice. Coming down, he lost control and totally destroyed the truck and knocked himself silly. To claim with insurance the loss of my new truck meant I'd have to file with the police a stolen car report against my son – which I did not do. Suddenly Eli's dilemma, where his sons lives could be forfeit, took on new dimensions; a complexity that merits some empathy.

I do agree with the classic "lessons learned" that settings standards and sticking to them is imperative, but now I am less likely to rush to judgment against another parent with troubled teens. Raising children is a complex business and while there are definite effects from the nurture environment, I have every reason to conclude that much of our children's response is innate and God's judgments on our children will not be flawed due to a parent's imperfection.

Does it make sense that Mr. Joe Visitor's eternal destiny is dependent on how well Brother Marquis preaches today. If anything, these stories teach us is that if someone is going to



go bad, it will not matter how good the family environment. Likewise, some will overcome all no matter how bad the circumstance. Like cream in fresh milk from the cow – some children just rise to the top – aka Abraham who became the great prophet and patriarch. Conversely, I've often wondered if God doesn't send sometimes his most head-strong cases to certain homes to truly give them the best shot.

In engineering, there is a concept called the natural response. To determine the natural response you drive the system with an impulse function. This is exactly how a tuning fork works. You whack it with an impulse and it rings **as** its own natural frequency response is revealed. (Whack tuning fork)

While in any Gospel Doctrine class you are sure to hear Eli get a drumming of critique, I had struggled for some time feeling that Lehi could have done this or Lehi could have said this or why did he roast Lamien and Lemuel publicly – couldn't he have--- what if he had spoken privately, what if, what if.

The fact of the matter was that all Lehi & Sariah's children got basically the same loving environment but some chose a different path. The opening line speaks volumes. *"I Nephi having been born of goodly parents."*

I learned some wonderful things from Dad like patients in adversity, duty to God as exemplified in Scouting and dedicated care to others. Was he perfect; of course not – sure he was human, but I can say he really tried to do right by us and 4 of 5 children are married to this day in the temple and all his children's children are active in church, still married and love the Lord. Shall I stand in judgment because of my one prodigal brother or just maybe I should dispense from playing God and shew forth mercy and hope knowing God Loves all his children.

Back to Lehi; those campfire stories told of events of their lives; getting the plates, constructing and sailing a ship, struggling for food etc were all impulse functions as God tested the metal of their characters. Those stories show that the prophet was a man with esome faults and weaknesses, but they also show that God's hand is outstretched **individually** to each of His children and **individually** each man or woman will walk though those pearly gates and stand before God to answer.

Standing there blaming some mistake your parents made won't mitigate the judgment because God's mercy will already have accounted for life's innumerable handicaps.

So the take away here is to stop blaming your hardships and rise like the Cream God intends and claim your salvation and exaltation with God and Christ.

What I learn from this whole complex is that God is the judge. All will be taken into account in the judgment. Neither our children's salvation nor their exaltation is in our hands – they are in the hands of our Lord Jesus. Only our own salvation and/or exaltation is under our direct choice.

God expects each one of us to do our best to be good parents or goodly children. We will be judged on our works, but one needed fret over a son or daughter's heavenly reward –

**My children's future is in God's capable hands. Remember he is the father of us all and that should provide peace.**

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## 19. Can a Christian be a Democrat or a Republican?

A follow-up letter and additional commentary regarding a sermon delivered by Steve Marquis Dec 2005 Snoqualmie LDS Congregation.

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Dear Friends

My comments and testimony last month inspired some questions afterwards in the hallway. Let me 1<sup>st</sup> try and refresh what I intended to convey. Don't hold me to order; it's tough enough to remember the content!

- Our political institution is uniquely God inspired. This makes involvement in politics a matter of saintly duty.
- I related my recent involvement protesting the ex-president's negative effect on our nation's morals and admonished the saints to be involved to the extent they were able, not necessarily to my extreme, but to do something.
- We should be actively involved in the process as Mosiah implored. He taught that it is not common for the majority of the people to choose evil, but if they do, then amen to that society.
- Recent significant elections have been decided by only a single % point in many states. This general statement can be applied to many congressional and senate races. It was also true in the election of the presidency. The God inspired genius of our regionally elected system gives the states power to elect the president, *not* the popular vote. This is analogous to the regional power of the senate. Numerous state elections turned on 1 or 2 % points, which in turn decided the national elections. My point? – Your single vote counts!
- While I made no mention of a particular party, I implied that *good* barely outvoted *evil* in recent elections. Resolving that vagueness is left as an exercise for the student. (This claim would definitely not be true if applied to WA state elections)

Now that's all I said, and I stand by those comments as within the scope of the stated teachings of the brethren. My comments were intended to provoke our thoughts and hopefully action to the cause of public righteousness.

If you would like to explore the questions about party affiliation posed in the hallway, I've prepared an outline and brief of my thoughts. If not – simply toss the next few pages and this note should be considered the end of my response.

**Church and State**

Let me get to the root of what I gather may have been the concern. I didn't couch the questions in this clarity when I spoke, but one brother inferred them - so let's examine them.

- Can a faithful Christian be a member of the Democrat party?
- Can a faithful Christian be a leader or elected representative in the Democrat party?
- Can a faithful Christian vote for a Democrat?

**Before I address these specific questions, let's gather a little bit of background on the church and politics.**

In the Mormon churches' early days in Kirkland, Missouri, Illinois and Deseret, the saints tended to vote, publicly so, as a block. Among other things, this caused a great deal of consternation on the part of the political parties. Switching from one party to another did not alleviate the problems, as neither party trusted the Mormons to be in their pocket. In other words, they were not easily manipulated as they took their major influence from the church hierarchy – not the party bosses. This explained much government-sponsored persecution aimed at breaking the church as a theocracy.

With Utah becoming a state, the church wanted to avoid the previous criticisms and assured that a 2 party system would succeed. They literally had bishops designate the left side of a congregation to one party and the right side to the other party!

The 1<sup>st</sup> senator from the state of Utah, an apostle, was refused a seat and sent packing back to Utah – elected or not. The next election, Reed Smoot, son of polygamists came to Washington. With Roosevelt's help and the famous speech from a fellow Senator ("I would rather sit with a polygamist who won't polyg than with a monogamist that won't manog"), he retains his seat.

From those days and true until the 1950s or so, issues of morality did not play any significant role in state or national politics. Differences were largely confined to fiscal and international policies. In the 50's and 60s the Democrat south was largely against civil rights for blacks. The civil rights act of 64-65 was proposed, promoted, and carried by the majority Republican support.

President Johnson, a noted racist, suddenly got Civil Rights religion and determined that by offering handouts he anticipated generational fealty to his party. By creating dependency, the former slave class would willingly join their plantation! By the end of the 1960s and into the 70s, the Democrat party swung radically to embracing social politics of dependency. This scheme began to build a new dedicated voter block. If a group could be identified and justified to be one that Government \$ can be funneled, then a circular dependency was exploited.

I bring this "dependency" point up in this context because a key unique LDS doctrine comes into play. The Democrat party preaches that society should guarantee (control) the outcome of all personal behavior (unless you are in the communal elite). Therefore, any personal failure of an individual becomes an indictment to the process that (by their way of thinking) should have educated, monitored and controlled that individual's behavior. Everyone is a victim in need of the party's protection.

This is, in fact, one of the fundamental differences between what I call the social-crats and the conservatives; individual responsibility, VS the communal control. This expresses itself in a variety of issues from fighting tort reform, attack on the second amendment to our military situations like the Abu Grad prison. It should not be lost on a student of LDS philosophy, that the Mormon understanding of Lucifer is one who wanted to guarantee that none would fail. His process would assure to that. Naturally, to accomplish that - all power, authority and glory would be invested in him (the devil) or the ELITE.

The most important dependency cycle of all is the control the public schools by fighting all forms of competition (vouchers). The Democrats have enjoyed the fruits, across the nations, of the unionization of teachers. They also affect the teaching of major issues via the NEA. Influencing the next generation to be sympathetic to Democrat Party issues is crucial for party survival. But just what are those Democrat Party values that touch on moral issues? Examining them one by one, it would be exceptionally difficult to claim that the Democrat Party platform in any way aligns with church teachings.

But rather than party labels, often the best approach is to examine each issue. But sometimes even that suffers. I've met LDS persons who voted Democrat because they supported access to abortion! Their logic was distorted and far from church principles – largely suffering from a classic plague called 'lack of proportionality.' In this case, it was acceptable to kill 10s of millions of babies to save discomfort of perhaps a few thousand incest victims. This distortion of the virtue of empathy is rampant in the ranks of politics. Despite repeated warning about Pride and Government, way too many LDSs voted for a dead end candidates or even an avowed socialists because – Pride. The current president was not sophisticated and was sometime annoying in speech and did not have the praise of France and Hollywood. Like rooting for a team they wanted to “feel” like a winner. I can't tell you how many people spoke about how poorly they thought EU felt about the president...They were really speaking about how they thought that popularity reflected on them...That's the Pride Cycle the Book of Mormon repeatedly warned about and many of our people could not even see that they were speaking about us in our time! (See essays 64, 68, 83)

***Nevertheless, at least these questions should be examined carefully for any candidate:***

***Public Acknowledgement of Deity***

*10 commandment displays  
National Motto – In God we Trust  
National Anthem  
US supreme Court call to order*

***Prayer in schools***

*Football games, Commencement*

***Prayer in public***

*Military colleges  
Senate - City meetings*

***Homosexual (or alphabet soup) “Rights”***

***Defense of Marriage Amendment***

**Abortion policy**

*Notification of Parents*

*Permission of Parents*

*Medical Disclosure requirements*

*"Cooling off" requirements*

*Infanticide (Partial Birth abortion)*

**Pre-marital Sex****Pregnancy prevention**

*Condom distribution in schools*

**Death Penalty****2<sup>nd</sup> amendment rights (the right that guarantees all the other rights)****Government dole****Pornography**

*Library policy*

*Internet filtering*

**Women in combat****Women in the workplace****Other issues???****So – back to the key questions.**

- Can a faithful Christian be a member of the Democrat party?

Certainly. A classic political scheme is to vote in primaries for the better (or occasionally - deliberately for the worst) of two candidates and then to vote in the final election for a member of the opposite party. Many LDS people feel they can affect some good – especially at the local level by staying involved in both major parties. It is harder to avoid, though, the appearance of association with evil given the current Democrat party platform. This is a tough one of late as the parties have begun to strongly align themselves on moral issues. There has begun to be crossovers/defections in both directions. The ability to appoint goodly judges has been substantially hurt this last few years by one stealth republican defecting to the democrats.

- Can a faithful Christian be a leader or elected representative in the Democrat party?

In the traditional Democrat south and religious communities like Utah – yes. The support base is so strong that national political \$ cannot oust popular officials, but make no mistake that key leadership position and party dollars will not be available to such a rare non-party line Democrat. Looking at the record of various key telling votes, there are precious few such examples.

- Can a faithful Latter Day Saint (or Christian) vote for a Democrat.

Certainly, if the alternative was worse or the Democrat in question fit the rare mold outlined above.

As I have tried to point out, times have changed and the parties have taken clear positions on moral issues that LDS people should take special note of. The church recently commissioned a poll of LDS folks to determine our level of involvement in the voting process. It was determined that if we (1) actually voted and (2) voted for a common cause or candidate, our numbers were sufficient to swing elections.

Now I am perfectly aware that there are some Republican scoundrels and some Republican party positions that do not represent the moral positions as squarely as I would like, but this pales with the moral turpitude espoused by the vast majority of Democratic candidates and codified by a party platform that could only be inspired from the depths of hell.

Lastly, there are some fringe candidates who have no chance of getting voted into office that I could cast my vote for, but I have to decide if I want to be able to effect the situation and how best to do that. Perhaps in the South or Utah, there may be some rare shining light in the Democratic sea of darkness worth elevating to office, but in most states, the moral distinctions are so clear, that to vote for a Democrat for anything higher than dog catcher is to deny one's faith. The Catholic bishops have it dead right when they announced recently that elected officials supporting abortion in their policies should not be granted communion. Multiply that by the dozen or so other moral issues, where the Democrats align with the dark side.

So, if you detected an inference to a particular party in my testimony, I can only hope that you were not alone and that God pricks the hearts of all those good men and women who have in times past simply done nothing.

**When you consider affiliating with a party, remember that you are known by the company you keep.**

*Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## 20. What's all this stuff about not being Christian?

by Steve Marquis.

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One of my young friends once lamented about how his Christian friends at school berated him for belonging to a church which they insisted did not believe in Christ. "I explained that we did believe in Jesus," but his friends were not persuaded by his argument that the Church is named after Jesus.

I have long been of the conclusion that the LDS success as a evangelical organization is at the root of this stubborn opposition. These opponents feign offence at our bold assertions regarding revelation and priesthood authority and are quick to condemn our knowledge so derived. While claiming no revelation for themselves, they take a stance that our Christ is not THE Christ (as they define him) and therefore we are not "Christians." This is all the more ironic considering the expressed lack of understanding and definition offered by their own ranks.

Most Catholic and Protestant believers trace roots of their Trinitarian theocracy from the Nicene Creed dating from about 300 AD. Consider the base catechism espoused by nearly all Catholic and protestant derivatives.

**“...God the Father incomprehensible, God the Son incomprehensible, and God the Spirit incomprehensible, but not 3 incomprehensibles, but 1 incomprehensible...”**

By their own “clear” catechism, these folks claim *not* to be able to comprehend God. For a group to be so offended by another’s opinion of the God Head while spouting off such is astounding hypocrisy. This is all the more troubling in light of Jesus’ own pronouncements of the importance of knowing him.

**John 17: 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**

The Church of Jesus Christ declares that Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of mankind, who took upon him the sins of the world and in a miraculous experience we call the atonement experienced our troubles in a way that allows him and him only to transform our lives so that when we see him we will be like him. The cleansing of our sins is not just a whitewash, but a transformation where we no longer have desire to sin – else heaven would be populated with evil smuggled in behind the cloak of Christ.

**1 Jn. 3: 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is**

The Church of Jesus Christ further declares that each person is entitle to his own revelation as to the Godhood and mission of Christ and his kingdom on earth which is led by Prophets and Apostles who receive His word for the governance of the Church and the benefit of mankind.



**Math 16:15** He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said; Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

The Church of Jesus Christ furthermore takes the same stance toward our fellow Christians as our master espoused long ago in Jerusalem. Jesus spoke to this non-confrontational attitude when others, even in his own time, began setting up churches in his name:

**Luke 9:49** And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against us is for us.

With that charitable attitude, we fight against none but those who espouse evil and invite all to come and learn about Christ and experience His salvation and join in building up His kingdom on earth.

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## 21. Keys to Temple Preparation

by Steve Marquis. [Back to Top of the Document](#)

Dear [Friend]

I was thinking about you and felt impressed to write a note to you, not as a church leader for which I am not, but as a brother.

I was talking to my sons in Family Home Evening about the temple and how we often talk about going to the temple as 'an event'. Sometimes we may be tempted to think of our activity in general in God's kingdom as checkboxes ✓ - "well done that! What's next?" I wanted to help them understand that the gospel and in particular, the temple is even more so a place of learning, communion with God and Covenant making; a place where God in turn grants us an endowment of knowledge, power and ultimately exaltation with Him.

This endowment is alluded to in D&C 132: 19 (abbreviated)

And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife...by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise...it shall be said unto them—Ye shall ...inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then ... it shall be done unto them in all things ...in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

And referenced again in DC 121:45:46

...then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

Among other things, the temple covenant and associated endowment involves the basic lessons taught by the prophets of old.

[The Law of the Gospel](#) teaches us Love and Repentance and Forgiveness.

[The Law of Chastity](#) teaches us the sacred nature of the creative powers and to reserve it strictly for within the covenant of Temple Marriage.

[The law of Sacrifice](#), as taught in the old testament for instance, (like the story of Abraham and Isaac) teaches us to be willing to give all to God; to put Him 1<sup>st</sup> above all things. I would like to elaborate somewhat on this point. Consider the Apostle's response to the call of Jesus.

**Matt. 4:19-22** And he saith unto them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

**Luke 9:59-62** And he said unto another, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." And Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Joseph Smith once said that "a religion that does not require the sacrifice of its members will not have the power to save them." In an age where imposters clothed in black robes with folksy drum and rhythm bands promote 'microwave salvation' and 'drive up window communion', the Kingdom of God preaches the simple message of repentance, sacrifice and through priesthood ordinances sets the people of God on the road to salvation and exaltation.

This is very much in contrast to what the world teaches us – especially our young women; The idea that you can "have it all". The reality is, in life, there are always trade-offs. Sometimes we have to leave one good thing to reach for that which is more excellent.

**DC 10:10** And verily I say unto thee that thou shalt lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better (part).

**Mathew 6:32-33** (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Notice that in one sense we learn to put God 1<sup>st</sup>; Football, Rock climbing, etc, even education and jobs come a distant 2<sup>nd</sup>. Yet we learn that putting our striving for God 1<sup>st</sup> does in no way leave us destitute as to our physical needs and desires. When we put God truly 1<sup>st</sup>, He in turn blesses our lives immensely. For all their sacrifice and efforts in the Kingdom, the saints are in general much better off in their family life, occupation and education than those who do not know God. It seems it is very hard to out-give God. Even when the early Utah Pioneers were in desperate need to lay up food for the winter, Brigham Young admonished that if ever they needed Gods blessings, it was now and they should worship on the Sabbath and leave off from the fields that day.

What sometimes happens, though, as we clutter up our lives, one new commitment at a time, with "wholesome" activities, that suddenly we discover that we have no time or physical energy to put God 1<sup>st</sup> during the week and even His Sabbath gets overrun with

leftover activities and occupations best left for another day. **For the adversary to win he needn't get us to overtly choose evil, he merely needs to get us engaged in one pursuit after another until we are too worn out to serve God.** Remember that sacrifice in the days of old meant giving up something desirable; the best lamb, the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits. The apostles left their nets to follow Him. Jesus in turn called his disciples His friends. To be labeled that by God is a blessing indeed.

To the saints of his time, Alma challenged them to examine their standing before God. This is something each one of us needs to do throughout our lives. His words are provocative:

**Alma 5: 26** And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?

The Gospel is a lot more than just the challenge of new set of things to do. The center is not activities; the circumference is neither leadership nor the path - a set of check boxes. It is Love in your heart and a feeling of desire in your heart to seek God with all your might mind and strength. (See [Mark 12:30](#)).

Life has a way sometimes of creeping up and obscuring our perspective on what is truly important. On the job, the field or one social commitment or another, we so easily conceive of ourselves as indispensable. "How can XYZ go on without me?" This is a classic problem with folks like myself. Wisdom teaches, though, that the world will go on and the sun will rise with or without us and the **only** place where one cannot be replaced is in one's family and the family of God. There are so many things I wish I could devote myself to, but when circumstances hedge up upon me such that I cannot serve God and Family, then I occasionally have to regroup and bridle one aspiration or another – then refocus on God's will. Even Jesus himself said, **"father, not my will but thine be done"**.

Well, [Friend], you are one of God's great children. May he bless you and keep you on your journey and search for His will in your life.

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## 22. A letter to a Dear Friend [Catholic]

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Dear Friend

I must say, I have quite enjoyed getting to know you and am always impressed with people like yourself who seek. After all, Jesus, said, “Seek and Ye shall find”

I hope it's ok that some of your gospel questions were shared with me. I felt you would be kindly disposed to hear a few thoughts from a fellow sojourner. Some years back as a missionary, I was an ordained minister of our Lord and had many opportunities to explain the gospel and testify about our Savior and His Kingdom on earth. This Kingdom is ‘the Church’, you hear about so often. So when one of the LDS youth says something like “I know ‘the Church’ is true.” That’s ‘Mormonese’ for a lot of things bundled together. He is saying, “I know that Jesus is my Savior and is the head of this Church and Jesus guides it directly through his living prophets and perhaps much more. Personally, I like the detail of someone’s testimony as I find “the Church is true” can be a bit vague, but I generally understand it to mean they believe this is Gods Kingdom on earth and contains the fullness of the gospel – thus “Is True” rather than just contains truth.

In today’s pluralistic society, the socialcratic influence from Gods adversary has in the name of tolerance of differences trained up a generation with the inability to judge anything. The adversary would have us believe that there is no devil. This is the basis for the wave of moral relativism sweeping the western world. There is right and there is wrong. This does not mean that one should flaunt ones knowledge and denigrate others in the name of God.

I think you have seen that in a church setting our people share and strengthen one another in word and deed, but in the community are very careful to not offend or put down our Christian or non-Christian neighbors. It is after all the **11<sup>th</sup> Articles of Faith** which declares:

“We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

Jesus spoke to this non-confrontational attitude when others, even in his own time, began setting up churches in his name. He said:

**Luke 9:49** And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against us is for us.

I myself was raised, in my early years, a member of another faith and I am grateful for the testimony of Jesus and the truthfulness of the Bible I received therein. Subsequently, I have come to know, by experience with the spirit, that God has restored his kingdom to the earth and this is a powerful message to a world starving for direct guidance from God. We believe that one can sincerely pray to God and receive confirmation to that effect. That is why our missionaries seldom do Bible bashing (Study) to “prove” the Gospel. I happen to believe after much study of others faiths, that it is much easier to support our understanding of Gospel principle from the Bible than any other faith, but I did not come to my conviction from an intellectual sparring session; it came via prayer and experience with the spirit. I do not believe this is an exclusive opportunity.

We believe that just as there was a falling away and loss of authority to act in Gods name prior to Christ birth and that a new prophet was raised up (John) to prepare the way for his 1<sup>st</sup> coming, that after the death of the prophets and apostles called by Jesus that another falling away and loss of authority to act in Gods name occurred. This falling away was prophesied as well as the restoration in the last days.

**2 Thes. 2:3** Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first...

**Amos 8:11** Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find *it*.

History is pretty clear that for a substantial time corresponding roughly from 300AD to the end of the “dark Ages” that the Church Hierarchy suffered as predicted. Please note that God did NOT force this, but in general, man rejected the truth.

**2 Tim 4:3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Then, as predicted, a time of restoration came to prepare the world for the second coming, just as John prepared it for the 1<sup>st</sup> coming.

**Acts 3:21** {Jesus} Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

**Amos 3:7** Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

You may find this quote interesting:

### **A Catholic Utterance**

In a pamphlet entitled *The Strength of the Mormon Position*, the late Elder Orson F. Whitney, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, related the following incident under the heading "A Catholic Utterance":

Many years ago a learned man, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, came to Utah and spoke from the stand of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I became well-acquainted with him, and we conversed freely and frankly. A great scholar, with perhaps a dozen languages at his tongue's end, he seemed to know all about theology, law, literature, science and philosophy. One day he said to me: "You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Catholic Church. The issue is between Catholicism and Mormonism. If we are right, you are wrong; if you are right, we are wrong; and that's all there is to it. The Protestants haven't a leg to stand on. For, if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, since they were a part of us and went out from us; while if we are right, they are apostates whom we cut off long ago. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."

I know it's human nature to more readily accept miracles and prophets of ages ago rather than here and now. Even Jesus had the problem, where his own town's folk could not believe that the local carpenter could be the great prophet much less the messiah.

**Mark 6:3** Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

**Eph 1:10** ...That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

See also **Eph 4: 5, 11-14**



Brother Joseph was the prophet of the restoration and the Book of Mormon and the kingdom are the fruits of that Tree. The beauty of this is it can be tested like any good science experiment.

**1 Thes. 5: 21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

**Moroni 10:4** And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

I hope this wasn't too long. I thought I'd just touch on the big picture. May your search be fruitful.

Your Friend,

Ps Check out the Church web sites:

[Lds.org](http://Lds.org)  
[scriptures.lds.org](http://scriptures.lds.org)  
[mormon.org](http://mormon.org)

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## **23. When God reached out to one of His Sons (of my coming to Christ)**

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Dear Young Sister,

Normally I'm kept quite busy in my ministry to the youth with only our young men, but occasionally I feel impressed to share a word or two of encouragement to a young lady. From the 1st time we met, I felt there was something special about you. It's more than your amusing wit and good-naturedness. I think God has some special things in store for this young lady. Generally, you'd have to be on a Mt peak somewhere to hear about my conversion, but I felt impressed to share my testimony with you my young friend by letter.

Not too long ago, when I walked the trail you now tread, I questioned whether the faith of my fathers was more than just a good feeling. I was inundated as a young man with the theology of Darwinism, promoted as the State religion. In my biology and physiology classes it was proclaimed loud and trumpeted from the hilltops as truth and 'science', yet the unavoidable conclusions of the state's official theology left me empty - a life void of any meaning.

Surely there was more? Was I really just a complex of electro-chemical reactions doomed to vanish, never to have consciousness apart from this brief spark. "I think, therefore I am", a philosopher once mused. I contemplated; Doctors have found the command centers in our brains, but have they found the commander? It was so confusing; was it just dross and empty nothingness or eternal progression and trails of glory. If only the God of Heaven would come and speak to me! How could others claim they knew and it be so dark and murky for me?

I worked for a 24/7 gas station at the time to pay the bills. It was owned by a Mormon fellow, but on a Highway corner, we all took turns manning the post on Sunday. Now at that time of my life, Sunday was another time to spend with my girlfriend at church (that was the purpose, the girl, not the God) and I just noticed this one Nigerian exchange student I worked with was never ever scheduled for a Sunday shift. Frankly I was envious and curious. So I asked him, how he managed it. What he said makes me chuckle even today, "Oh, no man. I no work'n Sunday. Its 'gainst ma religion man" "Huh? Its against everybody's religion!", said I. He again repeated the same thing with even greater emphasis. So now he had me super interested; Islam, what? I asked, "So what is your religion?" What he said flummoxed me, "Beer wine and women, man", nodding his head in self-approval, "beer wine and women!"

That funny exchange got me to serous thinking – He was obviously more committed to that religion – so called - that I was about mine! So what did I believe? That odd conversation set me on a journey – a quest – I had to know.

The public school's theology of Darwinism left me empty - a life void of any meaning. Was I nothing more? Was I really just a complex of electro-chemical reactions doomed to vanish, never to have consciousness apart from this brief spark. If only the God of Heaven would come and speak to me!

Frankly, in the bustle of life as a teen, I had all but forgotten miracles small and large my own eyes had seen. I had all but forgotten His interventions. Looking back, I now remember that moment of vision where I saw a high-speed collision about to transpire in a blind intersection. It was early 5:30AM while delivering the morning newspapers in my dad's car. In the residential district, I was racing 60MPH through a totally blind 4way stop. Instantly, I saw in my minds eye another young driver entering the intersection at equal speed from my left. I 'knew I had only one chance by slipping to the right to save our lives. In a blink of the eye I slipped right as I entered and by that same small margin I had slipped, we missed each other! I had maneuvered my car blindly to cheat an early grave from my reckless driving.

I had forgotten only a year later that I was 'impressed' one day to step back from where I had just stood working on Mom's car as a branch silently but deadly came crashing down from a hundred feet above to where I had just stood.

I had forgotten the sudden healing I received at the hands of my newly ordained father when I was but 8 years old when I had a major concussion from a bad fall at school, but I did remember the inner warmth of singing a hymn...

This may seem odd, but miracles both small and large that I had experienced did not in themselves drive me to any conclusion and my lifestyle was definitely taking me in another direction making it increasingly easier for me to dismiss former convictions. . I think it was our Seattle Patriarch Bateman who said:

"People go one of two ways: they either make effort to conform their lives to their convictions or they abandon their convictions to conform to their actions. We cannot long tolerate a significant disparity between our actions and our convictions."

### **Math and a little inspiration A thought experiment with two possible and startling conclusions.**

At this same time, I was in college during a time when nuclear war with Russia was a serious possibility. It occurred to me to run a thought experiment where I postulated the end of the earth when all are suddenly vaporized; what then is left to supply meaning or significance to any of the activities before the terrible end?" I could find no significance whatsoever. In fact, a microsecond later it was as if the earth and its inhabitation and all that had transpired there had never existed at all. I was also studying calculus at the time and using some of the proof methodology for limit theorems I iterated my variable of time and deduced that no matter how far back from that grand event – the end conclusion of meaninglessness never changes. It was thus proven that **"If life means nothing at infinity, it means nothing today....."**

The proof restated is:

- 1) Given - we mean nothing at infinity+1
- 2) Does anything transpiring at infinity-n change the 1<sup>st</sup> axiom?. No.
- 3) Letting n -approach infinity. brings me right back to today with that same unavoidably depressing conclusion.

But then a spark of enlightenment; I think the Almighty inspired me with this small but critical epiphany. I reversed the corollary to an equally profound axiom, that **“If life does means something at infinity, then of necessity it means everything today!”**— a revelation, if you will, that “if we did have significance at infinity, then we must have significance now.”

This couplet is what led me on a quest to earnestly find God; who was also claimed to exist outside of the constraint of time. If I could only somehow touch the “existing one”, outside of time, then I would know that life did have significance. Now, that brighter conclusion, that our lives might mean something beyond electrochemical reactions, certainly seemed desirable but that desirability was by no means proof.

I came to some crux in that 18<sup>th</sup> year, where I could no longer live with the schism between my actions and my former convictions.

**Autobiography excerpt 1975:** “So it was that I found myself alone in my apartment; free from anyone, wondering is this all there really is? In this quiet moment, I remembered the words “prove me herewith”, “ask and ye shall receive”, “trial of your faith”, “if it is a good fruit”, “...with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of all things”, “if you lack wisdom”.

So I did. Steeped in the rules of scientific investigation, I knew that conclusions with no experiment were just opinions. I took the challenge laid out by the ancient prophets, James’, Alma’s and Moroni’s and read their writings with open and real intent. I followed the procedure, even fasted and each night for several weeks I spoke to the heavens. When I got so far as to read 2 Nephi 33, I was impressed.

2Nephi 33:3 But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry.

I was struck by a compassion he had for others that I had never known and remembering the story of King Lamoni’s plea, “Oh God, if there is a god....”, I uttered something to that effect – but not flippantly, I was intrigued by the man Nephi’s passion and compassion for others – how does anyone have so much concern for others. I didn’t have it, but I could see the value of having purpose and vision. My question was sincere and I was willing to hear. Perhaps more importantly I was willing to respond.

“the scene opened to my ‘eyes’ where I saw through his (Nephi’s) eyes and felt what he felt for his people with such impact as I had never imagined. That evening I experienced something lifechanging. Vision, dream? It was very real. I knew what love meant.

Then in this experience I found myself on a trail that crossed a stream. I slipped and was swept into the fast-flowing stream. The banks were slippery with mud and the water dark, filthy and cold. I reached for the only stable hold and found it an iron rod. Even with one hand clinging it was not enough and I realized I had to hang on with both hands. So, I held on for all my strength as the current buffeted and dragged at my body.

I came to myself and ‘knew’ that it was people like me Nephi was weeping over and the ‘filthy water’ was the life that was sullying my future. I understood that if I was to survive, I’d

have to hang on to the words and commandments of God with both hands and place both feet on the path.

**Continuing:** Somehow God had reached down to speak to one of His. Overnight, I had a new heart and conviction to follow the iron rod leading to life. I was born again as a new creature with compassion for others and a clear vision as to the trail I would walk. I sought out the bishop of our church to clear the stumbling blocks and set my life in order. I asked my folks if I could return home as I prepared myself to serve God. I think that was quite a surprise, but Mom let me know that I'd have to help out and follow the rules. That was never going to be a problem again.

I have never looked back except to with clarity to see God's hand in reaching out and preserving His son. I used to wonder, "Come on, how could individuals have experiences with God and blow it off", but hadn't I done the same? I came to know that only those who want to know, who seek truth with all their hearts, will find it.

One thing I did have going for me was that the girl I was dating was supportive and really relieved that I was taking a new direction in my life and our relationship. We had been together so long that I really didn't know whether this was "the" girl for me or whether it was just *habit*. I was in a rut. That I wanted to serve God at this time worked out well to resolve that question. They say it only takes 4 weeks to break a habit. For sure 2 years would do the job. I told her that I was going to go on a mission for God and that she **should** see other boys while I was gone. If we still thought each other Mr. & Mrs. Right when I came back - then great. After all Jesus had said:

**Mark 10:29** Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

The young lady honored God as well and bid me well. There is nothing so strengthening to a man as a Godly woman and nothing that will tear a couple apart as disunity in faith. Believe me, if you can't start out marching in the same direction, you certainly won't end up in the same direction. ( ps. I did write often and keep her picture on my desk while in Norway and Oh Yes, that young lady is now my dear wife)

Your Friend,

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## **24. A Different Jesus? The Christ of the Restoration by Robert Millet BYU**

[See this Link https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/jesus-christ-son-god-savior/8-different-jesus-christ-restoration](https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/jesus-christ-son-god-savior/8-different-jesus-christ-restoration)

**Robert Millet** Dean of Religion BYU

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## 25. Is God by any other name still God?

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In the previous essay, [“What’s all this stuff about ‘One God’ anyhow”](#) we discussed the classic Trinitarian concepts of God and introduced the doctrine of the godhead as an answer to the confusion. We should not be too hard on the doctors of religious philosophy though as God has revealed his nature variously and his followers, prophets and translators of the written word have not always been too careful to elucidate on the various terms used.

To make matters worse yet for the student of the word trying to navigate Father, Son, Lord, Jehovah, Elohiem etc, these word can and often are used in one context or another to describe each or all of the members of the Godhead. It should be noted that that word is only used three times in the new testament by writer who left so little explanation that scholars wrestling with the same topic 2000 years later.

The introduction of the Book of Mormon at one look extensively uses the language of Trinitarians, such as on the title page, that “Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God”, and in the 3 witnesses testament, “to the **Father**, and to the **Son**, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God.” Uniquely and true to the character of many of the Book of Mormon prophets, they break the ice, to some extent, and explicitly describe why Jesus might in some contexts be called the Father and in other places “the Son.”

**Mosiah 3:8** And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of **God**, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.

Note that he uses the term Father, but then follows up with Creator

**Mosiah 7:27** And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was **created** in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was **created** after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—

**Mosiah 15:1** And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

**2** And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

**3** The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—

**4** And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

Frankly, this is only partially helpful, but the key takeaway is that the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are clearly allegorical or at best contextual. As a grandfather, I am still also son of my father. In engineering business, I could be considered the father of designs and programs; so we try and understand the context of such broadly available terms.

One of the doctrinal gems brought to life from the Joseph Smith vision was the obvious separateness of the members of the Godhead. In other writ, such as

[Matt. 27: 46](#) ... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?



From ‘Why hast thou forsaken me?’ we can logically deduce their separateness.

It is yet more explicit when Jesus is baptized and a voice from Heaven attests –

**Mark 1:10** And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

**11** And there came a voice from heaven, saying, **Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**

In the Joseph Smith Vision, he sees the Man of Holiness behind the voice “this is my beloved son” and speaks with the risen Lord.

**JS\_H 1:17** When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—***This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!***

He later cleared up all doubt:

**D&C 130:22** 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. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

Of course this all makes a lot of sense, with his calling us his sons, and Jesus being called the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits of many brethren and Adam being listed in the genealogy record as the Son of god in a long line of Son of’s. It really is amazing how the truth sets us free to understand easily what has baffled the scholars for so long.

Do I wish that our present understanding and clarity of usage was prevalent and consistent amongst the ancient writing – you bet, but at least I have the knowledge God granted us about his nature to go back and better understand what the ancient prophets were trying to communicate. In some cases, it is just not possible to tell which member of the Godhead is being referenced, but as many of these writers declare – it is after all “One God.”

Lastly and principally, there are those who pray to Jesus, and there are those who pray to the Father of Jesus. Jesus said this:

**John 16: 23** ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. ... **26**...I will pray the Father for you:

**See also 3rd Nephi** to see how Christ interacts with the people and then in turn prays to the Father in their behalf.

Some, often make such a to-do over the directive to pray to the Father that they forget that they are really praying Jesus to bring their petition to the Father and that it will be the Holy Ghost who will in all likelihood bring the word of the Father or the healing influence of their advocate, Christ back to them.

**1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 2: 1** My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

It was after all Jesus who hung on the cross and suffered in Gethsemane and it is He, through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, that heals you.

**Alma 7: 12** And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels

may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, **that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.**

I pray that Jesus through the Holy Spirit can heal you and bring your petitions to the Father; that in so doing you may indeed have a personal relationship with Jesus our Savior. It will not be academic, it will be personal as it is he through the Holy Spirit which He sends that heals you and knows your troubles, the physician that knows you like no other and has the right healing balm for your soul.

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## 26. Society's Interest Promoting Marriage strictly between Man and Woman

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While it is true that some individuals have always deviated from the familial pattern (man & women) established by God, it is the only pattern blessed by Him.

It is a great and magnanimous society that tolerates the sinner. Jesus famously dined and communed and showed social kindnesses with sinners. That is the example he set for us; for we all sin and come short of the glory of God. That was one of Jesus' points, yet let us not forget His follow-on admonition, "Go and sin no more!". While all of us sin, only a fool promotes sin. [What society sanctions, society promotes.](#)

Society has a legitimate interest in promoting the kind of family relationships it thinks are best for society's long term interest. Marriage, then, is a system of laws bundling privileges and responsibly for the promotion of the kind of stable family units that it deems most conducive for nurturing children.

That is why divorce may be made deliberately cumbersome or why states may outlaw plural marriage. [Society gets to choose how best to promote it's own future.](#)

If folks want to commune together, they can. IF they want to set up partnerships, joint accounts and mutual living wills and powers of attorney, they can. The law does not interfere. However, if it is to be argued that society has neither interest nor right to promote through its laws human behavior and relationships, then how can any conceivable or inconceivable relationship be disallowed? Why not 2 men and their 3 wives? After all they seem loving and committed! (BTW this is not ridiculous slippery slope logic; polygamy lawsuits are already before the courts)

The constitutional provision of freedom of association does not require a universal and arbitrary approval and promotion. The society of man is not a free-for-all with no limits. Those limits come from God. If we are just electro-chemical reactions, then dog eat dog, we could blow it all up tomorrow, Columbine, so-what, if there is no God nor eternal soul in man, then it's just noise in the cosmos. [But, there is a God, and He established what is right and what is wrong even if we can't see the meaning in it and that is the only justification for any civility and order we enjoy. This is in no way establishing a religion to acknowledge that our justification for right and wrong, mercy and justice derives from that revealed knowledge.](#)

We must not promote what God has forbidden. We must not send the message to our land that such a massive departure from God's pattern for families is an acceptable "alternative". It is not.

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## 27. What do the scriptures say about sexuality?

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(All scriptures are KJV unless noted otherwise)

The Bible is not an authority unto itself. It is the "Manufacturers Operating and Maintenance Instructions" and "Warranty" that is provided to us for the care and maintenance and successful operation of our bodies, including our minds.

The authority lies with God who created us and gave us the Bible as instructions and as a recorded example of what happens when we do "right" by his standards (and receive blessings and eternal life) or do "wrong" by his standards (and receive cursing and eternal death)

**(Deu. 30:15, 19).** See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; **16** In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. **17** But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; **18** I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.* **19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

All specific mention of homosexuality in scripture shows it to be condemned by God. The first is the account of Sodom and Gommorah, (from which became known "sodomy") and in this account it is the only "sin" mentioned.

**Gen. 18:20** And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

**Gen 19:4-7** But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: **5** And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. **6** And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, **7** And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

In the middle of a list of sexual sins including incest, adultery, fornication, bestiality, and child sacrifice by burning them alive, it is specifically condemned in Leviticus 18

**Leviticus. 18: 22** Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. **23** Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

The penalty *in the days of Moses* was death:

**Lev. 20:13** If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be upon them.*

It is also condemned in Deuteronomy.:17-18,

**Deut 23:17** There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel. **18** Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog,

into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.

(the "price of a dog, in the context of "the hire of a whore", refers to male prostitution).

It is also mentioned as "wickedness" in Judges 19-21:

**Judges 19:22** Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

**23** And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

It is called "sodomy" in 1 Kings 14 and is referred to as an "abomination" associated with idle worship and orgies (groves).

**1 Kings 14:23** For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

**24** And there were also sodomites in the land: *and* they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

Asa is declared righteous for "taking away the sodomites out of the land" (killing them or driving them out) and for putting an end to idolatry, 1 Kings:

**1 Kings 15:11** And Asa did *that which* was right in the eyes of the LORD, *as* did David his father.

**12** And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

Lesbians appear to be included in the term "sodomites" as seen in 2 Kings 23:

**2 Kings 23:7** And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that *were* by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

Paul, a prominent teacher of Christianity, shows that both homosexuality and lesbianism were still condemned after Christ's death and resurrection, Rom.

**Rom. 1:22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

**23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

**24** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

**25** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

**26** For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

**27** And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

**28** And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;  
**29** Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,  
**30** Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,  
**31** Without understanding, covenant-breakers, **without natural affection**, implacable, unmerciful:  
**32** Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

He also mentions it in a list of sins in 1 Timothy:

**1 Tim. 1:9** Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,  
**10** For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

Those who do not repent of these sins shall not inherit the kingdom or eternal life. 1 Corininthians:. 6:9-10

**1 Cor 6:9** Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God..

There are some "churches" and some "ministers" who accept homosexuality. Some refer to certain scriptures regarding David and even regarding Christ and express their opinion that these men had homosexual relationships with others. This requires reading meaning "into" the scriptures. It also requires that one ignore all the above scriptures as they cannot be explained away.

Please note that we are not condemning anyone here. Nor suggest any unkindness but an outreach in love. Every man or woman condemns himself by his own wrong choices. This expository details what God has said through His prophets. We didn't write The Book, we just point out what God made obvious. We are all free to choose blessing or cursing, life or death. We encourage everyone to choose eternal life with God's blessings.

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## 28. In Plain English, God Speaks about Sexuality

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The Bible is very clear on the subject of sexuality and in particular, homosexuality. In Leviticus 18:22 it reads

[Do not practice homosexuality; it is a detestable sin.](#)

But why is it a sin, one might ask? Answer -Because it's an eternal aspect of our being. The intelligent spark that makes you you, is an eternal thing; not created but manifesting in one's spirit and now in the flesh. Satan desired to destroy those in the flesh and to degrade their experience while here and frustrate God's familial plan as he's outlined it. What better way than to get one to live for the moment while undoing eternally significant opportunities!

I'm sure by now you've heard people using the excuse for their sexual desires as "being born gay". Let's address that right now. Sometimes they challenge is launched as, "Why would God create a person with homosexual desires when his laws call for death because of it? 1<sup>st</sup> its not certain they are born with these tendencies any more than another is born to be a philanderer. If not inbred, then where do these feeling come from?" Let's look to the Scriptures.

**Romans 1:21-24** reads:

["They knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and confused..."](#)

So God let them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their heart desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. You see that sin causes these unnatural feelings within us. You must stay close to God to overcome these feelings!

**1 Corinthians 10:13** reads:

["Remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what other experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it."](#)

I urge anyone struggling with Homosexuality to go to the Scriptures for guidance. God is very clear where these feeling come from. Pray for forgiveness, for God can and will forgive you. IE help you change both behavior and the feelings behind the behavior.

**Hebrews 8:12** reads:

[I will forgive their wrongdoings and I will never again remember their sins.](#)

And if you're wondering what will happen if you choose not to follow God's word, read

**1st Corinthians 6:9-10**

[Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals... none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God.](#)



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## 29. The Heart of the Gospel; the Cause of Zion

Letter to our youth Sunday school class,

We often hear and sing of Zion as “the kingdom” but today I want to discuss the underpinnings; the key that makes Zion possible, Zion - the pure in heart. I’d like to talk about another form of heart health and I promise not to collapse in a heap during the discussion!

**Moses 7: 18** And the Lord called his people **ZION**, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them. **19** And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even **ZION**.

I recall a church leadership meeting where someone spoke something very hurtful to me. I took immediate offence at the cutting remark, but somehow managed to bite my tongue as I recalled Jesus’ advice for just such an occasion:

**Math 5:23** Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; **24** Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

This individual and I had a long friendly association and I was determined to not lose him over this slight. So right after the meeting I corralled him and told him how that comment had hurt me. I did not rail at him, I just told him how I had been wounded by that comment but that I valued him too much as a friend and brother to let something like that fester and damage our relationship. I suppose if he had been a lesser man he could have rubbed it in even more, but instead he profusely apologized and begged my forgiveness. We continue to value that friendship.

From Enoch (and again in 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi) I learned of large groups of people that did achieve on a sustained basis this utopian principle in human unity. It doesn’t mean there are no conflicts, but it does mean that folks learned to disagree without being disagreeable and forgiveness was tendered to each other as oft as it was requested of God and even when not requested. We know then that it is possible and achievable and Jesus gave us simple guidelines, though I will readily admit easier said...

This striving to be one then is central to the “cause of Zion”. God declares as much:

**D&C 6: 6** Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion;

**D&C 82: 14** For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

What then is referred to by “her beautiful garments?” I think he is referring to the outward effects, the visible effects of a Godly life. How we treat each other – those we interact with on a daily basis. Like the study of chemistry – it’s the nearest neighbors that count in the reactions. What kind of reactions are we engendering?

**D&C 82: 19** Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

**D&C 38: 24-25** And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.

**DC 38:27** Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

**If we truly believe that we are God's children then we see each other as worth saving; our squabbles worth resolving and our friends and family worth redeeming.** We have all seen or at least heard of neighborhood squabbles; the noisy dog, the fence line 6" off the mark etc and how these disputes often turn into long term animosities that never are resolved. Why? Because, we do not esteem our neighbor as ourself. **The relationship is abandoned as seemingly not worth the investment.** That is the crux of almost all failed marriage relationships and friendships. This simple principle admonished by Jesus is at the root of every convict – even international wars.

Even pious men of God on one level can fall prey to this all too human flaw:

**D&C 64: 8** My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

Jesus showed us by example how his arm was ever extended to recover the sinner. We should be as anxious to recover our friends and family and even our enemies.

I shared a mission story of a gal I met at a doorstep who spoke with some bitterness how she as a new 17 year old convert had been unjustly accused of stealing a purse at a branch activity. She was so wounded and embarrassed that she left the church association and for 10 years lived a difficult life in the world. I am reminded of the Lord's counsel:

**DC 82:21** And the soul that sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it, shall be dealt with according to the laws of my church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

I told her that I could arrange for a church court to air this grievance against this branch president, but advised that the court is a court of love intended to reconcile the offender and that a prerequisite would be her willingness to forgive this man's insensitive and unjust rebuke. If she could do that I would arrange the court. She stood stunned for a moment and then tears welled up in her eyes and she just shook her head, "Neh, Det blir ikke nudvendi" (No, it won't be necessary.) She returned to fellowship and brought quite a few friends and relatives with her including her mother who later became the Relief Society President.

**Colossians 3:12** Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity,

which is the bond of perfectness. **15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

It is key that we not abandon our friends and family over disagreements, anger and disputes. Can we so easily claim kinship with God as His son or daughter and yet discard others when they offend or do not measure up to our view and standard? Jesus cautioned:

**DC 82:23** Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay. Peace be with you; my blessings continue with you.

**Math 7:1** JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. **2** For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

He reminded us again of the God like characteristic of forgiveness in his famous prayer:

**Math 6:9** After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. **10** Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. **11** Give us this day our daily bread. **12** **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.** **13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

We need to see these admonitions in light of our divine potential as the literal children of God and recognize that to claim that birthright God would have us receive of His Spirit which gives us the inner strength to express to our family, friends, neighbors and even our enemies those Godlike attributes:

**Math 6:14** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: **15** But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

**Math 5: 43 ¶** Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. **44** **But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:** for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. **46** For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? **47** And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? **48** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Notice, my youthful friends, that what appears at 1<sup>st</sup> to be some magnanimous outreach on your part is at one level the spark of Divinity that God wishes you to cultivate, but on another level it is just good, even selfish advice that allows you to live in greater harmony, to retain your love ones, friends and neighbors as though they are all your very flesh and blood. Imagine that? Actually, treating those around you as if you really believed God that we are all his children.

Imagine.

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PS – a small historical tidbit

*"According to the account given by George A. Smith, while the Saints were in Far West, Missouri, 'the wife of Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Harris concluded they would exchange milk, in order to make a little larger cheese than they otherwise could. To be sure to have justice done, it was agreed that they should not save the strippings (to themselves), but that the milk and strippings should go all together.....Mrs. Harris, it appeared, was faithful to the agreement and carried to Mrs. Marsh the milk and strippings, but Mrs. Marsh, wishing to make some extra good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings. A quarrel arose, and the matter was referred to the home teachers. They found Mrs. Marsh guilty of failure to keep her agreement. She and her husband were upset and, 'an appeal was taken from the teacher to the bishop, and a regular church trial was held. President Marsh did not consider that the bishop had done him and his lady justice for they (that is, the bishop's court) decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved, and that the woman had violated her covenant.*

*'Marsh immediately took an appeal to the High Council, who investigated the question with much patience, and,' says George A. Smith, .....'Marsh.....made a desperate defense, but the High Council finally confirmed the bishop's decision.....This little affair,' Brother Smith continues, 'kicked up a considerable breeze, and Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife even if he had to go to hell for it. The then President of the Twelve Apostles, the man who should have been the first to do justice and cause reparation to be made for wrong.....went before a magistrate and swore that the 'Mormons' were hostile towards the state of Missouri. That affidavit brought from the government of Missouri an exterminating order, which drove some 15,000 Saints from their homes and habitations..... What a very small and trivial thing--a little cream over which two women quarreled. But it led to, or at least was a factor in, Governor Boggs' cruel extermination order which drove the Saints from the state of Missouri.' ("Ensign" Magazine, May 1984, p. 83.)*

## 30. Forgiveness and the Power of the Atonement

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### Abstract:

Many, perhaps even most individuals, both contemporary Christians and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints deduce the atonement in terms of payment - "He paid for my sins" or "He paid the price for my sins". This common approach taken by itself, as it is often done, might be viewed as making the Savior out to be a smuggler of sorts; running interference before God the Father to smuggle us "saved" sinners into heaven. A common phrase has "God seeing Christ's righteousness rather than our filthy rags which is expressed by the lamentation in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 64:6** But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities,

Can simply declaring Jesus make you compatible with a heavenly existence? If sinners, subject as we are in our current state, do so easily fall short of the glory of God, and yet we retain our agency then how can we ever be brought to live in God's presence without making an instant hell out of it? Some describe the Atonement in terms of payment made as if to a real entity with an accounting sheet (justice must be satisfied!) Rather than reconciling some grand sin debt account, another voice addresses the concept of Jesus Atonement (at one ment) as making you "one" with Christ Jesus. In other translations it might be rendered, to remove or wipe out the sin or difference – suggesting then ...becoming compatible with God.

### Consider that Heaven is not filthy.

Paul clearly denounced as futile any claim at living the human condition sinlessly save Christ only.

**Romans 3: 23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Nephi corroborates this view and notes that God's existence is fundamentally incompatible with sin. Lest heaven become hell, things that are filthy must remain in another place, Jesus called it outer darkness, others - variously hell.

**1 Nephi 15:34** But behold, I say unto you, the kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God; wherefore there must needs be a place of filthiness prepared for that which is filthy.

John shares this view seeing also in vision the glorious end state of the justified and the sorry state of the damned:

**Revelations 22: 11** He that is unjust let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

### Judgment in terms of scales; your Good vs. Bad deeds

It takes little self- introspection to be appropriately concerned – even alarmed at the rigorous standard and the obvious conclusion that none can measure up; everyone will be found wanting. I say obvious, but in the early days of Christ's Church in Jerusalem, Paul

vigorously contended with the common notion that one's good works would be weighed against one's sins and a judgment cast based on the tip of the scales. Perhaps this stems from God's past dealing with Israel such as with Saul, David, and Tekel where clear judgments were cast based on specific performances.

**Daniel 5:27** TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

Lest one be tempted to argue that New Testament understandings regarding the judgments of God deviated from Old Testament views in accounting for the works and deeds of man, notice John's clear vision:

**Revelations 20:12** And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works.* (Emphasis added)

It must be appreciated that "dead" may be all dead or the spiritually dead (those who do not know Jesus), but the point here is that it is hardly without precedence in the cultures of both Jews and Gentiles to see God's judgment in terms of scales. However, Paul of the New Testament, pointed out that since no one can fully keep the commandments, the individual was left in a state of some sin and as such unable to attain the perfection needed to dwell with God in heaven. One can assert that "Jesus has you covered, so your good!" But that glib reply seems to simply redefine sin as non-sin, You are sinning but not to worry, you are not a sinner.... So we see this brings us right back to the problem of retaining our agency, how can we retain our very self, without simply being turned into a robotic automaton incapable of sinning?

Exploring the very old debate of faith and works and reconciliation, for all his clarity of the importance of the *expressed* faith, James also backs up Paul's contention of our fallibility vs. the rigorous standard of perfection.

**James 2:10** For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Many Christian movements, including my own faith, reject the scales of justice notion arguing that your good does not cancel the bad but they fail to entirely leave behind the "scales" concept. Instead, they simply assert that while justice must be paid, only the sinless Jesus could pay it!

### **Judgment in terms of scales; Jesus' Righteousness vs. Your Efforts**

There is a curious line in a popular movie where the protagonist implores to the officer, "I really really would like not to go to jail" to which comes the reply "Someone's got to go to jail!" (National Treasure) This notion, carried in the religious discussion, sees the atonement as paying off a debt to some cosmic sin account to wit that 'the eternal scales of justice' remain in balance.



Contemporary Christians as well as some Latter Day Saint circles often paint the atonement as this grand scale of justice wherein Jesus “makes up the difference.” One book, “Believing Christ,” – tells a story about a child desiring to purchase a bike. She comes up well short of the price but the remainder is given freely by her father. This allegory is intended to show God’s mercy – making up the difference, balancing the scales;

“Someone has to pay...”.

### **But does that really work?**

If, I commit a crime, shall the law be satisfied if they hang my brother, if he be willing to sacrifice? What of the debt – the scales of justice; are they balanced? Am I reformed? What then is important; reformation or payment of a sin debt to a real or abstract keeper of “Justice” or both?

Alternately, consider the concept of the royal whipping boy. It was likely argued that the young prince would have mercy on the boy abused on his account and would alter and improve his behavior out of his sense of mercy for the scapegoat. That is a rather weak concept, though, as primary mechanism for how “by his stripes we are healed” ...

This is a conundrum and some of the greatest theologians and apostles have wrestled with finding a suitable allegorical approach to explain the atonement concept. In this next passage Amulek gives it his best shot and concludes “therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.” ([Alma 34:11](#)).

10 For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice.

11 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.

12 But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.

It is clear that Jesus’ suffered for our sins, but perhaps the allegory we strive for to explain how that reconciles us is flawed. He is correct that it was infinite and comprehensive but did anything really get “paid off?” We were all taught that ‘two wrongs don’t make a right!’ Yet here Amulek at first agrees with that maxim but then appears at 1<sup>st</sup> read to figuratively put his hands in the air and suggests (my words) that therefore nothing but an infinite amount “of wrong” (punish the wrong person) will make it right! (absolve the sinner) I’m afraid he left too much for the student to figure out in the sweeping “therefore it must be infinite!” I’m not saying the man of God was wrong, Its infinite all right but what did he mean?

If we need an analogy, for our finite minds to grasp the infinite, perhaps try this. A soldier in battle may be called upon or even volunteer for some great deed to save his comrades or a battle. In many cases that sacrifice, the punishment rendered to his body is fatal, but its effect is to save, to win the day. He was not punished to win the day, but he went through ‘punishment’ and even hell to bring his friends through to safety. *When the Israelites were*

*sacrificing animals and spilling their blood, many missed the point that that final sacrifice it pointed to was not a punishment for sins but a punishing event because of sins to save and recover us FROM sin.*

We will again return to that “therefore” shortly but however the “therefore” worked, most all writers in our scriptural collection hasten to make this key point that there is an expectation of reformation and improvement from the heavenly influence.

If then an “infinite atonement”, does that leave us free to sin or at least committing sin, whats the point? “[God forbid](#),” exclaims Paul.

“[How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?](#)” ([Romans 6:2](#)).

His dead to sin might imply it has no effect or perhaps we have no desire to deliberately sin....another exercise for the student!

But we can find plenty of other statements from the inspired writ that God’s grace is not carte blanche to ignore the damage done by our sins. Christ’s Atonement in capacity is infinite, but conditional.

“[And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name... and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.](#)” ([Alma 34:15](#)).

Christ requires that His disciples believe on Him and repent – which includes the desire to set right the wrongs they’ve caused. “[Go and sin no more](#)” was Jesus’ subsequent command.

But what about ‘call on his name and be saved?’ Is heaven like the story of Alibaba, “open sesame” and the treasure mountain door opens. Is that all? Speak the name of Jesus and the pearly gates swing open?

## **Faith VS Works?**

This struggle with explaining Jesus’ atonement as a payment of a sin debt is at the root of the whole faith vs. works debate that has occupied theologians and whole religious movements.

[Romans 3:24](#) [Being justified](#) freely by his [grace](#) through the [redemption](#) that is in Christ Jesus:

[Romans 3:25](#) Whom God hath [set](#) forth to be a [propitiation](#) through faith in his [blood](#), to declare his righteousness for the [remission](#) of sins that are past, through the [forbearance](#) of God;

Seeing the atonement as simply or exclusively a payment to balance the books, as it were, can lead some to the view that no outward expression of faith has any bearing on salvation.

The debt payment view, taken by itself, is at odds with many of Jesus’ pronouncements about one’s walk. Clearly the action of the atonement, *if* it is effective, changes the man. Rather than argue Faith-vs-Works, a unified approach proposes a concept of “Faith *that* Works”. This concept is sometimes called sanctification and is a keystone.

## What is Personal about “Being Saved?”

Paul argues that when one truly believes, his heart is given over to God and while his members might yet sin, his heart, given to God does not want to sin. Paul is acknowledging a key point that *the very nature of the earth experience, with the veil between us and our prior experiences with God and the many temptations in this mortal sphere handicaps us, but for such a man as is truly given over to Christ, he will, though never attaining in this life a state free of sin, yet attain the heavenly prize; those earthly handicaps accounted for in God’s judgment.* Referring to the Jewish system of laws...

**Galatians 2:16** Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Further reading verses **17-21**.)

Taken with the many statements from Jesus himself about ones “walk” implies a faith that is expressed in actions where one is no longer readily given over to sinful lusts. One’s faith should indeed show in the outward behavior and if not, one might rightly wonder to what extent if any the Spirit of God has actually affected the individual.

Some religions use terms like “Saving Faith” to try and describe sincere devotion to God and the working of the Holy Spirit in return. Consider Enos’ experience as he was “Born Again”:

**Enos 1:4** And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. **5** And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. **6** And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

**7** And I said: Lord, **how is it done?** **8** And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. ... go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

**9** Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words **I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them. (*Emphasis added*).**

This is really a key point, that “Saving Faith” necessarily leads to a change of desire and desires to behavior and was the thrust of the letter from James perhaps in clarification to some of Paul’s writings saying:

**James 2:26** For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

**James 2:18** Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

**James 2:19** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. **20** But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

**James 2:22** Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

**James 2:24** *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

**James 1:22** *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.*

So Paul says, “man is not justified by the works of the law” (Jewish law) and James says, “by works a man is justified.”

To reconcile this conundrum, I want to again emphasize that the atonement (being saved and sanctified) has to do with healing us and justifying us to God. **Justifying in the sense that Paul uses, does not have to mean to excuse or to explain, but might better be interpreted as a carpenter might use the term – to straighten, to align to a reference. In this case the reference is Christ himself.**

**1 Pet 2:24** *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: **by whose stripes ye were healed.***

**25** *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

**Isa. 53:5** *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

*Notice the application and the effect.* You are not just absolved, you are healed – made better, reformed, re-aligned- justified. Your desire to do evil is replaced with striving for good!

**If Christ then is the good physician, how is he able to turn the hearts as Enos experienced?**

In what are perhaps the most insightful statements ever promulgated into this great mystery, the miracle of the atonement, we read from Alma:

**Alma 7: 11** *And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.*

**Alma 7: 12** *And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. (**Emphasis added**)*

**Notice the connection – He experienced – therefore.** People talk glibly about “Personal Savior” but this explains how and why. In this grand unfathomable (infinite) experience, where time and space and all events, future and past, collapsed into a singularity that Jesus God could examine, where each life experience was reproduced and experienced vicariously by Jesus, this occurred in such a real and graphic way that it caused God himself to blanch:

**DC 19:18** *Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—*

**19** Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

Alma continues his admonition to take hold/advantage of this great event to be born again as a new creature and by so doing lay hold of the power to actually effect a new level of mastery over sin, selfishness and all the other vices of the world.

**Alma 7: 13** Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.

**Alma 7: 14** Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

**Alma 7: 15** Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and *show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins* and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism.

Then Alma continues and implies a continual striving for excellence and perfection not unlike Jesus' own admonition to his flock:

**Matt. 5: 48** Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Reconciling these two angles is the matter at hand in our discussion. Continuing with Alma:

**Alma 7:16** And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will remember that I say unto him, yea, he will remember that I have said unto him, he shall have eternal life, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testifieth in me.

For individuals receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost – receiving as it were the equivalent of “Power Steering” in their efforts to follow Christ, they are able to achieve a greater degree of perfection than would have otherwise been possible. Taken as a whole, we see that being “*willing to repent of your sins*” (Alma 7:15) is an ongoing concurrent action - *striving* to keep the commandments. It will always be a goal not perfectly attained.

Paul, on the other hand, who some try to argue was implying works mean nothing, was speaking largely about the Jewish fixation on certain performances that could and often were executed without any devotion or love. Paul was focused on these; writing on the condition of the heart. He further acknowledged that even if the heart was right before God that the conditions of the flesh and the world, could still cause us lamentably to *occasionally* do wrong.

**Romans 7:14** For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.  
**15** For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. **24** O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?  
**25** I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

I emphasized, *occasionally*, because some who bare the Christian label excise Paul's comment here from the broader commentary and thereby abuse this set of verses to justify free indulgence in sin of all sorts Monday through Saturday as long as they can praise the Lord on Sunday!

Look how marvelous the reformation:

**Alma 36:17** And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

**18** Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am bin the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

**19** And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

**20** And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

**21** Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

Alma turns his life around and become a great missionary – reminiscent of the Saul/Paul saga.

Paul attempts to separate the heart from the actions and he emphasizes the heart first; trusting that if that is right, despite our failings, the godly actions will follow. This reconciles how Jesus could still declare, "**None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.**"

True biblical faith (some say "Saving Faith") then is not idle. It aligns our inner self with Christ. We are justified (think a carpenter's square) to Him and if truly so, we are born again as new creatures that cause us to strive to walk in God's ways. For all the times Paul is quoted for "faith, faith, faith," I, who have that faith, am most impressed by Paul's additional admonitions to back that faith up with running a solid race and "**to fight the good fight.**" **1Tim6:12**

True it is that Paul wrote about being "saved by grace," some twenty-one times, but he was also identified as one who stressed the importance of good works and deeds over eighty times. Looking at this with a personal perspective, **Paul wrote as he did knowing that if the atonement was truly functional in my life, my heart would be healed by the**



**one physician intimately familiar with my wounds and He would send the Holy Spirit with exactly the balm I need to help me turn my actions godward.**

Our works, then, become aligned to our faith or you could say our faith is justified to or as James says, "by your works." A Catholic, Marcellino D'Ambrosio Ph.D, writing in "I Believe - The Heart of Catholic Faith" coined it well saying, "So really, it's not faith or works. It's faith that works."

Jesus indeed set a high goal; a commandment to become:

**Mathew 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect (completeness), even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.**

Another, some say a better translation for "perfect" (completeness) goes well with the famous slogan of the US Army, "Be All that You Can Be." So it is that when the veil of this life is lifted and we are brought before God to be judged, he will see our perfect hearts having been healed by Christ by His Holy Spirit of the desire for sin and grant us life Eternal in His kingdom. Our actions will be viewed in the context of the handicaps of the flesh. **He will judge our lives in light of "all we can be," the weakness of the flesh and the full of sin world environment we are saturated in. When we are brought before God, we, who have given ourselves over to God and had Christ's healing balm of Gilead applied to our souls, will be stripped of the earthly handicaps and our perfect heart will express itself in the perfect members or our resurrected body.** The scripture say He will remember no more our former sins. He sees us for who we are and can be not for what we in the past have done.

**1 Jn. 3: 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**

Our rewards in heaven will be as the bodies Celestial, Terrestrial and Telesstial; the sun the moon and the stars. Our works will certainly play a role in the mansion He has prepared, but only those who have had their hearts cleansed and transformed (born again) will partake. Whether in this life or in the spirit state prior to resurrection, one must come to the Physician and *be healed or truly be weighed and be found wanting!*

**1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:**

**19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;**

**20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.**

**21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:**

**22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.**



## Conclusions about salvation, Grace and Heaven

Peter continues to explain that the Good News is this: that for all mankind, whether dead physically or currently (in a spiritual sense) we can be justified; i.e. aligned to Christ in our spirits, the flesh being accounted for in God's mercy and wisdom. Truly, that is good news indeed.

**1 Peter 4:6** For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

God, then, through the Atonement of Jesus, has made it possible to be cleansed of our sinful nature and desires. Not a whitewash of our surface garments but a change in the inner man. The circumstances of the flesh interfere with our best efforts. This is understood, but for all Paul wrote about being saved, Paul clearly points out that this is not some game where we can fool God as to the character of our heart. A good heart cleansed of the desire to sin will drive its members toward perfection. Good works will naturally abound in such a man.

**Paul to the Galatians 6:7-9** Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. **And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.** (Note familiarity with Alma 7:16)

Note "if we faint not" teaches that finishing the race with your eyes toward heaven is requisite. Likewise, we read in John that our walk will reflect the condition of our heart, imperfectly yes, but cleansed of the desire to sin, our heart (or inner spirit) will drive its members toward perfection.

That is the evidence of the "New Man" The blood of Christ cleanses of sin, not by some mystical debt exchange, but by a real change, a healing and perfecting of the inner man.

**1John1:5-7** This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

There's a tight relationship with the walk and the cleansing; this is not just a payoff of some sin account. When we are cleansed, the healing changes our walk and that is the proof of the effectiveness of the new birth; you begin to walk the talk. It is a lifelong process,

**1Peter 5:10** The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Notice the process starts as an event is more than just a one and done event. Jesus will not be smuggling sinners over the wall to heaven, nor will he be placing his finger on the scales of justice to fool the Father. Truly, God expects us to see the Christ when He comes, because we, His children have the capability and the power through the healing balm of Gilead to have become like him in heart and to a greater degree than we can often imagine - even in deed. (Ref **1 Jn. 3: 2**) God be with you! *Brother Steve*

## 31. So, Just Who Exactly Do We Pray To?

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“In the name of Jesus...”

Jesus gave explicit permission – even a commandment that we could and should address our petitions to His and our Father in Heaven.

[“pray ye like this....”](#)

Critics of the restored gospel fault the saints for giving lip service to Jesus just as we fault the sectarians for fabricating from their sincere desire to serve - the authority to so act.

There is some validity to each claim. In all practical matters the saints are faithful to God’s commandments and sincerely strive to lead the kingdom by inspiration and revelations from the HG. So if we pray to the Father and the HG does most of communication, save a personal visitation from Jesus himself, what active role does our Savior play?

In the Sacrament service, one contemplates the Saviors sacrifice and ones walk, but for some the relationship is one of feta comply rather than an active ongoing relationship. Such is not contrary to LDS doctrine, quite the contrary as we have previously shown, but culturally, the atonement is seen by some, as a payment long ago rendered to which one strives to be worthy of. In the essay “Forgiveness and the Power of the Atonement” by Jordon Marquis, considerable discussion is extended on the topic, but in this brief note, we will just address the element of formal prayer.

**Consider that it is not simply a technicality to invoke Jesus’ name. He is not simply a stamp to the envelope addressed to the Father. Rather he is the interpreter, the advocate, the physician, who consults with the Father and from His personal experience in that garden and the cross returns with the just the right cure delivered generally through the agency of the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.**

So, when you pray, remember that it is the intercession and conjoined effort of the Godhead that your prayer is heard and answered. How an individual visualizes that is not hard-coded in doctrine. When we teach prayer, let us not be correcting of those who see the Lord Jesus as an integral part, but rather, use the Savior’s words gently inviting us – permitting us to direct our petition to His Father and our Father.

[John 14: 16](#) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; [17](#) Even 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. [18](#) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

[John 14: 26](#) 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. [27](#) At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

[John 16: 27](#) For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. [28](#) I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

[Col. 3: 17](#) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, ado all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

When we understand Jesus central role (especially in prayer to our Father), and we close in His name it will not be mumbled or a rushed epilog but a sincere invite to our brother and advocate to intercede in our behalf...

In the name of our Lord Jesus! Can I get an Amen?

*Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## 32. Is Any Faith Equivalent? David O McKay

with commentary from Steve Marquis

Teachings of President McKay:

President David O. McKay was always kind and respectful to people of other faiths, and he praised the good work of all churches. However, he was firm in his testimony that the fulness of the gospel is found only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To teach the importance of obeying the principles and ordinances of the restored gospel, he spoke of membership in the Church as citizenship in a great kingdom:

“All churches and all creeds contain some good which lead toward the kingdom of our Father; but to become a citizen of that kingdom everyone must conform to the requirements made by the King. Indeed, there is only *one way* in which entrance into the Church of Jesus Christ may be obtained, and that is the way marked out by Jesus Christ, the Lord. ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’ ([John 14:6](#).)

**1 Ne. 14:10** And he said unto me: Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth.

Indeed since there are so many churches in the strict sense of the word, that I believe Nephi’s use of “church” in this sense goes beyond a particular organization. Indeed I believe he uses the term in the same sense as the savior spoke when queried about “others” who attempted Christian practices, but who were not acting under the direction of Jesus, “

**Mark 9:38 ¶** And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

**39** But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man, which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

**40** For he that is not against us is on our part

**41** For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

**Luke 9:49 ¶** And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.

**50** And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against us is for us.

So if God can take such a charitable attitude toward “casual followers” and if in the end one is judged based on what you know then why all the effort to spread the gospel since God will justify each man according to his circumstances anyway?

**2 Ne. 9:26** For the atonement satisfieth the demands of his justice upon all those who have not the law given to them, that they are delivered from that awful monster, death and hell, and the devil, and the lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless

torment; and they are restored to that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel.

**Mosiah 3:11** For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.

Indeed the same question might have been posed regarding the “chosen people” and even more narrowly the tribe of Levi.

Since there are so many people on the earth and so few in the kingdom – let alone in the good “church” it should strike one with awe that you have been chosen out of this chaos of competing philosophies to carry the light of truth in an otherwise dark corner of the world.

Teachings of President McKay:

.” (**D&C 76:22–24.**) “That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God

Those who have such assurance in their hearts accept him as “The Way, the Truth, and the Life,” as the one safe guide in this perplexing universe

It is also a task of Herculean proportions to see to the task of ordinances for all. For while Jesus was very generous about who he called His friends, he was sharp as a sword in delineating the entrance requirements for the Kingdom.

Repentance and good works followed by baptism.

Teachings of President McKay:

“The means of obtaining citizenship in the Church of Jesus Christ are very explicit; so clear, indeed, that it is surprising that so many seemingly intelligent and well-read people ... [assume] that they can gain entrance by other and various means.

“There is only one who has the right to prescribe the means of human salvation. Surely he spoke not meaninglessly when he said what is necessary to citizenship in his kingdom.

“Note how explicit are his words: ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ [**John 3:3**; italics added.] In explanation of this seemingly enigmatical saying to Nicodemus, the Master continued:

“ ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God.’ [**John 3:5**; italics added.]

“Evidently Peter, the chief Apostle, attached significance to this requirement as an essential means of gaining not only citizenship in the Church, but also salvation in the kingdom of God, for, when the multitude pricked in their hearts cried out, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ [**Acts 2:37**] he answered and said:

“ ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ (**Acts 2:38.**)

## What is the difference between belief and faith?

Teachings of President McKay:

What we need today is faith in the living Christ, which is more than a mere feeling, but a power that moves us to action—a faith that will put purpose into life and courage into the heart. We need the gospel of application.8

The Church does not accept the doctrine that a mere murmured belief in Jesus Christ is all that is essential to salvation. A man may say he believes but if he does nothing to make that belief or faith a moving power to do, to accomplish, to produce soul growth, his protestation will avail him nothing. “Work out your own salvation” is an exhortation to demonstrate by activity, by thoughtful obedient effort the reality of faith.

## Repentance:

What is the difference between belief and faith? I once had a billboard decrying the immoral positions of a certain politician running for office. A certain man claiming the Christian faith vandalized and tore up my billboards because he did not think I should disparage sinners because God would justify all “saved” sinners.

**2 Ne. 28:8** And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will **beat** us with a **few stripes**, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

Teachings of President McKay:

It is inconceivable to think that anyone can even question the essentiality of repentance. Every principle of the gospel when studied carefully reveals a harmony with truth that is simply sublime. Each seems to be all comprehensive, either leading into or embracing other principles. Thus, faith in a perfect being, inspiring one to live righteously, seems to include repentance.

John Wesley’s mother

“Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure? Take this rule: Now note—whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, takes off your relish for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of the body over the mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem in itself.”

Teachings of President McKay:

It is not uncommon for people to have remorse for mistakes made, for follies and sins committed, but to have no turning away from such frailties and evils. They may even feel penitent; but "penitence," we are told, "is transient, and may involve no change of character or conduct." Repentance, on the other hand, "is sorrow for sin with self-condemnation, and complete turning away from the sin." It is, therefore, more than mere remorse; "it comprehends a change of nature befitting heaven."

Bottom Line here is that the Kingdom of heaven can accept repentant sinners because we will no longer be sinners - having our hearts turned away from sin. It is common for some Christians to assert that God the Father will see Christ's cleanliness and not our filthy rags. In other words Christ is smuggling in sinners acting as a shield. We assert that God the Father will see Christ's cleanliness and ours having been washed in his blood and kept clean through the working of the Holy Spirit who helped change our nature. We will see his face because we will be like him. What a difference!

*Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)

### **33. A Historical Context for understanding the ‘Mountain Meadow Massacre’**

**By Steve marquis**

In the PBS special on the Mormon church, the “Mountain Meadow Massacre” section was poorly represented by conjecture and reports from 1800’s eastern papers rather than court facts, diaries and 1<sup>st</sup> hand contemporary accounts. They drew from late 1800’s “thriller” magazines such as a story entitled, “I Survived the Mountain Meadows Massacre,” an account written under the name of Elizabeth Baker Terry, a 3 year old child survivor. However, Mrs. Terry did not write the story, it was taken from an interview with her as an older woman by a professional writer. This is an example of the classic “sources” that antagonists of the church have drawn from since there are no eye witnesses nor a single confession to draw from.

The popular, sensational; eastern press accounts of the 19th century that PBS drew from placed the context in isolated fanaticism and the motives in revenge and hatred. After a 150 years, PBS referenced the same editorials as prima fascia facts. It was such a sad event, no-one in the church leadership wants in the least these days to be seen as defensive and anything other than apologetic and so the worst interpretation of the events are promoted and no rational explanation is proffered leaving the conclusion unanswered that “Mormon fanaticism” was the root problem and by extension if then, why not now.

The Church’s original position was that the Indians did it. That may well be fundamentally true, except it is equally undeniable that John Dee Lee and the militia he was steward over were definitely involved in the tragedy but in a way that makes the true history stranger than fiction.

From the 1st hand primary sources we learn of a time of an approaching war machine with 25% of all US federal troops marching on Utah itching for a blood fight, a land and people responding under martial law and a distant outpost with standing orders to at all costs avoid another conflict with the Indians as the territory could not afford a 2 front war. The territory had just suppressed a 10 year bloody Indian war and it was Brigham’s promise to defend the Indians as an ally and that the white people would freely share of their food and cattle.

On a war footing , the Mormon settlers in this remote outpost had cached almost all the settlement’s surplus supplies in the mountains in anticipation of a pending gorilla war effort. As such they were in no mood nor position to share with passing settlers; particularly so for these who, when denied supplies, overtly declared themselves enemies of the Mormons. With the refusal to assist in resupply, these passing embittered settlers were emboldened in their animosity perhaps ultimately sealing their fate. Reports circulated that these Missouri/Arkansas immigrants had, on the way through the settlements, harassed and openly bragged at being part and hand at the Prophets assassination and (this is key) threatened to raise an army and return from California to fight the Mormons from the South.



Under this context, this obnoxious group of settlers traveling though Southern Utah bound for California was reported to have also initially refused the Indians food, poisoned a well, and murdered one of the hungry Indians. When finally some meat was offered the Indians, other deaths occurred including at least one white settler who was reported to have died from handling the poison meat.

The treatment and manner of the murder so enraged the Indians that they gathered a group of tribes together and attacked and held the offending wagon train for a number of days to the point that the wagon train was nearly out of water and suffering considerably. Being well armed, however, they managed to continue to inflict casualties on the Indians. The Indians went to the head of the nearby town militia and demanded of Bishop John Dee Lee (JDL) that Brigham's promise of mutual protection take the form of revenge on the men of the wagon train or they would re-ignite the Utah-Indian war. There were one or more visits from white settlers with the Indian siege which some interpreted as variously collusion or even instigation – even masquerading – but the treaty of mutual protection\assistance with enemies is a more likely scenario.

It is apparent that from the 1<sup>st</sup> hand accounts that militia leaders were conflicted as to how to proceed. JDL was between a rock and a hard place and he sent a truly heroic express rider all the way to Salt Lake riding Pony Express style all the way – non-stop to Brigham and back with a message to do no harm to the members of the wagon train (possibly) allowing the Indians the goods only as compensation, but he arrived back with BY's message a precious few hours too late...

What took place in those preceding hours can only be comprehended under the context of the duress of threatened war from the Indians and the wagon train settlers themselves and a threatened southern war front should the settlers proceed.

JDL came up with a plan to get some or possibly all of the settlers out. There are really only three likely possibilities from there.

1. Either he agreed with the Indians to execute the men and let the Indians do the dirty work with the women and older youth and then carried out that plan OR
2. He agreed with the Indians to present the wagon train *men* to be executed by the Indians but once the slaughter started the Indians expanded the slaughter as was their custom in war to destroy all but the younger children OR
3. He only feigned to do (1 or 2) hoping to somehow break them free.
4. What is NOT a possibility is that JDL and the pious Mormon settlers with no other instigation than being called names had suddenly become blood thirsty vengefully lying, callous, hatchet wielding butchers of men, women, youth and even children; even in the manner of the killings, it is simply inconceivable given their cultural background.

Despite what any yellow press sensational rag of the day printed nor what PBS repeated over a hundred and fifty years later, only scenario #2 listed above is remotely possible, though #3 is what JDL held as true to his dying day.

JDL to his moments before the firing squad saw what happened as a tragedy, but neither he nor any other Mormon settler ever admitted to murder. For a long time the church protected him and all involved. President Buchanan issued a blanket pardon for all acts during the "Utah War," but reneged on the Mountain Meadow trials claiming the action unrelated to the war. In the 1<sup>st</sup> trial, all participants but one were acquitted. JDL's trial ended in a hung Jury with 1 person voting guilty. 10 years or so later, with the church under intense persecution and the eastern presses unceasingly demanding blood for blood, Brigham, JDL's adopted father, removed the churches' protection and essentially offered up JDL as the sacrificial lamb at another trial. That was a bitter pill for JDL who voluntarily returned from hiding to be immediately found guilty. He wrote bitterly of his abandonment and went to the firing squad claiming he did no wrong. His final words were simply, "Aim well boys."

Only in the context of the war does this take on a new light that they would have agreed (truly or otherwise) to help the Indians. While it is clear that JDL's militia escorted the settlers from the besieged wagon train, and they may have executed the men, there is no actual evidence that JDL's men fired even one shot - none of those involved ever admitted to their dying day to have killed the men let alone killing, butchering and hacking up the women and children with knives and hatchets.

On the other hand, given the circumstances of war, and the enemy status of the settlers themselves, it is conceivable that they did execute some of the men but there is neither direct evidence nor eye witness testimony to that end. Conversely, it is inconceivable regarding the savage treatment of the women and children. However, the fate of the women and in particular - which children were killed vs. which were saved, is quite consistent with the practice of the Indian's warfare at that time.

This much is certain. The "Young's wild rampaging mob of vengeful Mormons" theory wallowed in by enemies of the church just doesn't hold water, but the context of the imminent war on a lonely isolated and threatened outpost makes all the sad pieces fall into place.

Ps: The reader is no doubt wondering how I came to this narrative. This synopsis was not intended as a documented thesis, but I can recommend the inquiring reader an exceptionally frank, scholarly, well documented treatment, "The Mountain Meadows Massacre" by J Brooks. My conclusions are my own. You might want to start with the last chapter "Cause and effects," positioned just before the almost equally impressive appendix.

*Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## 34. Dear Friends –On the Topic of Anachronisms and Oddities

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*I felt impressed to send this note to a friend who had some concerns about Temple worship or possible other anti-Mormon materials – there is a lot out there. I share it with you readers now who are concerned that such beliefs endanger one's salvation. Salvation as a topic is addressed in some detail in: [“What's all this 'Being Saved' stuff anyhow?”](#)*

When my family was 1<sup>st</sup> investigating the church we were at 1<sup>st</sup> very interested and then some (I presume well-meaning) relative sent us pamphlets describing in great unseemly detail what was claimed to transpire behind those great doors. I was young at the time but my parents severed our relationship with the missionaries immediately. “What a strange cult,” they thought.

A few weeks later, the local bishop who happened to be a near neighbor stopped by and asked if we had some concerns that led to our withdrawal. After some coaxing, Mom showed the Bishop the materials. He briefly read some about the Temple and started to laugh; descriptions of naked orgies and other nonsense filled the pages. Some short time later my whole family joined ourselves with what we knew was the kingdom of God. It is the only thing that makes sense out of this existence and this is the beautiful part – God has not left us alone and we can reach Him to learn the truth of His restored church.

It has subsequently been my lot and privilege on several occasions to address such accusations; some in the form of books and others in pamphlets. Some were written by competitors if you will; other preachers and some by former friends. Some of the worst is by former friends, Judases if you will with some axe to grind who either never understood their religion in the 1<sup>st</sup> place or who had a falling out. Others have fallen into sin or find the commitments to some of God's laws encumbering and to justify themselves and slake their conscious attempt to find fault in former leaders or doctrine.

A new member, the Blakeys, who received such “helpful materials,” just as my family did, asked me to review and respond to a book's anti-Mormon accusations. This actually takes a significant effort. I researched and wrote a paragraph by paragraph response and one evening presented my findings. After reviewing 3 or 4 pages together with nary a paragraph without distortion, error or deception, Brother Blakey stopped me and said that would be enough. I was surprised (considering all the effort it had taken) and he continued, “If there are that many errors on the 1<sup>st</sup> few pages, it's not worth reviewing the rest!” And so it is that much of the critiques are unfounded or simply erroneous.

What is remarkable to me is how much effort, truly remarkable effort, is expended by some to tear down another faith. I wrote a short piece on that topic that you may find useful.

[“What's all this 1 True Church” stuff anyhow?”](#)

I came to understand that intense unrelenting opposition and persecution was actually a key sign of God's true religion. Who else would the Devil spend so much effort on?

**Ephesians 6:12** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

There are others however, well-meaning individuals, coming from our modern world of fashion and sophistication who find the Temple worship singularly archaic. This reminds me of a friend, who said “ I love everything about your church, the focus on the Savior, family and the outreach to the members; If you could just lose that story of the angels and ‘golden plates’, I could join this church! He seemed to miss the fact that to be God’s kingdom there better be some stories of extreme encounters with the Divine or it would necessarily be just another club of like-minded folks. Without the Angles and prophets, miracles and yes ancient rituals, I couldn’t be a member!

**A key concept in the true religion is the concept of our kinship with God and our ultimate possibilities.** It is surprising that few religions even attempt to explain why we are here and where we are going.

The Bible on practically page 1 describes some of the characteristics that what makes man different than animals and like Himself; one of those is being self-aware with reasoning capability. **Gen 3:22**

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil

In the **Ps. 82:6** God himself declared our astonishing potential saying:

I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High

And in **Acts 17:21** the inspired writer further connects the dots

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Who are we to argue with that? This kinship is addressed in some detail in this short article on the topic of Being Children of God and the true Brotherhood of man:

[“What’s all this ‘I Am a Child of God’ stuff anyhow?”](#)

Additionally, the dual spiritual and physical nature that God and man share is addressed in more detail in this next article: [“Why are some folks so bent out of shape over the idea of ‘an Anthropomorphic God’?”](#)

In fine, the scriptures teach us that we are God’s children and saints of God’s kingdom believe him. We do not suppose God was deceptive and we take Him on his word. Without apology or quote marks we, along with the ancient inspired writers, declare that He is our Father and you are my brother or sister. It changes everything when this light of knowledge dawns.

With that knowledge come the realization, that if children, then our possibility are limitless. Jesus himself said to his disciples that even now we had greatness in us as recorded in **Matthew 17:20.**

He said to them, “...For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

I have to tell you that sounds like pretty god like capabilities to me! Jesus set the standard and I presume it is eventually possible to achieve it when he commanded his disciples in Math 5:48:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Lastly, while our finite circumstances at present make it impossible for us to fully comprehend how such capability is part of our destiny, but God said it so I believe it. **1**

**John 3:2:**

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

God does make it clear, though, that while being saved from Eternal banishment from God's presence (Hell, if you will) comes by our faith, rewards and destiny in the here-after are related to our desire and efforts and that is where His kingdom on earth comes in – to help bring us back to His presence where we would be glorified beyond what we can comprehend: **Romans 8:14-17**

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

While our relationship with God is fundamental, the New Testament records many other things that are strange to most present day "Christian" denominations yet are quite familiar to LDS Temple going saints. Even these "small" things turn out to be a hallmarks of true religion. Again from the Bible **1 Cor 1:27** we read:

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

For example, consider the idea that some things are withheld from the world; the whole secret/sacred debate. Consider these few anachronisms that were anciently spoken about. These concepts are very familiar to LDS temple worshiping saints but contemporary Christians are at a lost to do more than a passing glance as they hurry on to more familiar texts that better suit their attention.

**A secret new song or verse that is to be taught to select individuals Rev 14.3**

And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

**Hidden knowledge and a new name and a stone are mentioned related to personal revelation Rev 2:17**

I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

**Discussions of Baptism for the dead IE vicarious ordinance work for another is found in 1Cor 15:29**

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

Then there are some detractors of our religion who take the sacred and attempt to make light or take one meaning and construe another out of it. For example, some detractors make much sacrilegious light of the LDS temple clothing. I am reminded of God's warning recorded in **1 Cor 2:14**.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

If temple worship is of ancient origin, as claimed, I would argue that at its root, it must be ancient! You might well expect aspects to seem out of time. But to men of the world, even some who share much of our Christian teachings, they would in their ignorance rather mock what God has called sacred.

On a 4 day mountain climb I had this amusing encounter with a couple lay-Baptist ministers who were my climbing partners on that trip extracted from [Adams2010 journal](#).

“the other two fellows had ‘til now never joined in our conversation but today being a bit closer something must have been said that cued the other fellow – (yes another Baptist preacher) that there was a Mormon in their midst.

I must interject that the other 3 fellow are all from Tennessee and all seemed to delight almost as a redneck contest as to who could out-drawl the next fellow. Even I began to speak southern “smack talk” as they called it.

With that in mind, the prison minister blurted out in his best smack.” Say, did you say, Ah mean did ya say that you was a Mormon, Ah mean are you really a Mormon??? you know with the magic underwear and all? Ah ah are you wearen’ ‘em right now???

I flung it right back “dyed in the wool through and through but unlike many ministers that wear their priestly vestments outside for everyone to see, I wear mine close to my heart to remind just me of my promises to God.”

That seemed to put a cork in it and Jeff and I proceeded down the snowy road continuing our discussion, but I did ask Jeff; now in my best southern smack talk, “say is that a weddin’ ring? Ah mean is that there a weddin’ ring on your finger? So, what does it mean?” Jeff would offer several suggestions and I would ask for more until all the common symbolisms had been vetted. I then pointed out the similarities in those symbolisms to the Mormon priestly vestments; commitment to what is right, to constraining our passions and to daily prayer kneeling in supplication for God’s guidance. That seemed to cement the point and we then moved back onto discussing the remaining 13 Articles of Faith. “

**A few thoughts regarding Temple Clothing:** Have you ever wondered how hats continue to play such a roll in defining station? Consider the soldiers, police officers. These are forms of crowns used to define the kings and queen’s lofty station. Religions have, throughout the world, used many variations of head covering to this day; Jewish men’s yarmulke, Sikh turbans, Muslim, Jewish and some Christian women with head coverings and almost all women with veils - at least on their wedding day. Shriners and Masons all have extensive symbolic garments; and then there is that odd cap and gown used in graduation ceremonies when you are given a special diploma and title...

Speaking of gowns? Have you ever wondered where those odd looking Caps and gowns come from used at graduation ceremonies? Ever been in a court of law and seen a judge? Ever heard of a kingly robe? Clothing used to have meaning. To this day, it is still echoed that “clothing makes the man.” There is something special and ancient about clothing; it was God himself that made the 1<sup>st</sup> coverings for Adam and Eve – and for the PETA people, he did it out of animal skins!

The Jews were commanded to wear a number of articles of clothing; each with symbolic significance to the wearer. Burial shrouds found in ancient Coptic Christian cemeteries show key markings that members of our religion would recognize. Priests of many religions wear outer garb and sometimes hats representing their station. In our religion, we too wear priestly garments but rather than advertise our station, we keep them close to our heart as a personal reminder of our covenants with God. It’s that simple. If you find some similarities in garb and symbols found in LDS temples with other faith traditions, rather than assume some plagiarism, it is equally probable that a common and ancient origin is the root of those similarities. I vote for the latter explanation.

**As for specific ceremonies**, much anti-Mormon material takes the church to task for a previous variation of the temple ceremony that used mock penalties. The concept was to express that what was being taught was so sacred, that you would rather die than reveal it; much like we used to say as kids – “cross my heart and hope to die” That is all it meant. To make anything sinister or threatening out of it is nonsense. Still because some detractors did manage to misconstrue it, the language and gestures were replaced by a simple admonition - more appropriate to today’s sensibilities.

Likewise, the ancient practice of washing and anointing, while always tasteful and modest and never done except in a unisex environment, has been for reasons of modern cultural sensibilities, minimized to eliminate most touching that some found uncomfortable. The message is the same. The mode of conveyance was modified for reasons of culture – nothing more.

Special handshakes? Even the Boy Scouts has them. The early Christian had their special greetings – this concept is very very old and so it should be. Anyway, I suspect all the details of the LDS temple ceremony are only prototypes of what we will learn, but regardless, I will maintain the sacred nature of the instruction as promised without regard for whether the sacred is still secret. That is between me and the lord.



So, my good friends, if it is peculiar to say you want to be like God our Father, then I glory in the possibility of peculiarity. If the Almighty wants us to clap our hands or wear hats to remind our forgetful souls of this or that, then show me the hat rack! I will go or do what He asks because His wisdom *is* wisdom! A unique scriptural reference central to Jesus' restored gospel is as follows: **Moses 1:39**

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

That nicely encapsulates our relationship with God, our Father. We used to sing a children's song that said "Jesus wants me for a sun beam to shine for him each day. And so, to the best of my ability, amplified greatly by God's Holy Spirit, I attempt to shine, just a little – each day.

**Yours in the Lord,**

***Brother Steve*** [Back to Top of the Document](#)



## 35. Father's Day Sermon,

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given on 6/21/15 by Steve Marquis:

Trust in our Father

- Rewards of Fathership,
- Sacrifice of Fatherhood
- Effective Fatherhood
- Strength of our Fathers
- A partnership with God

Guidance for the general direction of the thoughts expressed in this sermon courtesy of these two verses:

3 Nephi 14:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

DC88:118 Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith

I chose to discuss this with a series of short personal stories and vignettes; recapped lessons learned are highlighted in black bold text.

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### **Intro**

Trust in our Fathers  
Jump and I will catch you.  
Perspective is what Dads get by walking the trail before us.  
Fathers play roll of advance recon IF the children allow it.

### **Rewards of Fatherhood**

Natural man is interested in equity,  
There Goes My Life  
Sacrifices of Fatherhood  
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Service to God and fellows  
God does not need servants  
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50 miler and the boots.

### **Methods of Effective Fatherhood**

Covey story about love.  
Choose the Battles Wisely; Brother Foulch's advise.  
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### **Strength from our fathers.**

Stories that bind  
I was privileged to be my Fathers companion  
Fathers, Be one with god in this partnership of parenting.

### **Fathers; be one with God**

How can we be thought anything like God?  
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### **Wrap Up**

Young men and young Women appreciate correction.  
Jared taught Enoch - Enoch received instruction  
Be the Leader, the Good salesman  
In closing, I go to be gathered with my fathers

## Intro

When I was a young father I was camping out in the 'back 40' with the kids. My youngest 4 at the time and I were looking up at the stars when a dense cloud layer rolled across our view covering up all the stars. "Look Jordon! All the stars are gone. What shall we do?" He immediately replied, "Dad, you need to ask Heavenly Father to bring them back!" I looked at him in wonder.

Not long after that as the troops were returning in great fanfare from the war in Grenada, amidst all the band playing and honors, out of nowhere he says. "Some of the dadies aren't coming home, Huh?" I wondered again, "What sort of spirits had I been entrusted with?" **As we are all spiritual beings having a human experience, we are all like Joseph and Mary; step-parent to God our father's spirit children.**

[Rom 8:16 The spirit of God witnesses to our spirit that we are the Children of God and if children then heirs](#)"

## Trust in our Fathers

**Jump and I will catch you.**

Trust in our father. This is a tough one. I'm a 10-11 year old on one of Dad's many Boy Scout Hikes in Alum Rock Park and we are up along the rocks above the old railroad bridges and the mountain goat trail just dead ends and you have to jump to the other side of a cleft in the rocks to pick up the trail again. I make a quick calculation and determine I cannot safely make the leap. Dad beckons me from the other side "Jump, I'll catch you!" I hesitate at first. "Don't worry," he encourages. "I won't drop you!" So I take a leap of faith and, well, I'm here to tell the story!

Learning to trust in our Heavenly Father and His son Jesus follows the same trajectory. We cannot see how it can be done, but we have faith in His love and ability.

Enos asked, after making the leap of faith into the arms of his Brother Jesus, "[Lord How is it done?](#)"

**To this day I'm not sure how my Dad caught me. It seemed impossible from my perspective. It may seem unfathomable how our spiritual father could experience us where time and all events collapsed to a singularity that God could experience but my dealings with our Father has shown that the Lord does know us individually and His arms are outreached continuously after us if we will just take that leap of faith in Jesus.**

**Perspective is what Dads get by walking the trail before us.**

### **One of my passions is Mountaineering**

There are times when I want that Luis and Clark experience but more often I prefer to follow the best known path. **God has given us Fathers to accompany us and scriptures to learn from our forefathers and the wise take advantage of both of them.**

Confucius say there are 3 ways to learn wisdom.

The 1<sup>st</sup> is by reflection, which is noblest.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> is by imitation, which is easiest.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> is by experience which is bitterest.

## **Choose your path wisely**

### **We see as through glasses darkly**

We see life “as through glasses Darkly”, as Paul said, but if we can realize that our fathers are just a bit farther down the trail we can benefit from that foresight. We don’t know what we can’t see, but if we sons and daughters can experience just a bit of wisdom, we will sense that we see only partially; **like man born blind, we can’t quite comprehend what we don’t yet know but the wise see through the wisdom of others.**

Fathers play roll of advance recon IF the children allow it.

### **The Talk!**

Another time an older brother and I were on an 8 day 50Miler and come Sunday we found out my Dad had to go out do to a work commitment. I was in awe as we had come in Sat a grueling 15 miles and for Dad to leave meant not rest as we got but 15 more miles just to have spent the day or so with us. Dad wanted to take us both out on a short walk to speak with us. I could sense it was an important time; maybe even THE talk! But my brother was all into his friends and would have none of it and kicked and argued and so embittered the moment that they finally scuffled. It was a sad moment and I was flabbergasted at my brother’s stubbornness to show respect to our Father. My Father left and I was robbed of a precious moment and what advice and insights I could have had.

**Young people, Honor your Father and Mother that your days may be long upon the land. My brother actually had many fine qualities but failure to follow this key commandment cost him dearly and his days were short – far too short upon the land.**

**Lift up your eyes in honor to your Earthly Fathers who love you and then extend them farther to your Father in Heaven whose love is eternal ... and Live.**

### **Come down boys, You need me!**

If you ever saw the Broadway play “Cheaper by the Dozen” (the original) the Father of a large family who is an efficiency expert by trade finds out he has but months to live and goes on a mission to impart all the wisdom of life to his family in his few remaining days. His kids and wife, who knew nothing about his fate, think he’s just about gone nuts with the sheer intensity of the effort and only after he is gone realize what he was trying to

accomplish. I often felt that way that my time with my boys was melting away like a snowball on a summer's day. At 1<sup>st</sup> I would call them to come help me with something, but as often as not I could do it as fast with them as without but one day it dawned on me that I was saying the wrong thing. So when I wanted to impart some method to replace a U-Joint on a drive shaft or some such deal, I hollered. "[Come down boys, You need me!](#)" at 1<sup>st</sup> they thought I misspoke, but they soon got the idea that Dad wanted to impart some knowledge or wisdom.

**I wonder if God our Father isn't calling us all the time, "Come here Boys, You need me", when he calls us on missions and as Sunday school teachers and YM an YW assignments and so forth.**

[To the brother of Jared, our Lord said, "Come to me with your weaknesses and I will make weak things strong!" saith the Lord.](#)

## Rewards of Fatherhood

Natural man is interested in equity,

Selfish children are miserable persons and if they remain so become narcissistic men. A father's role has little in apparent equity as he sacrifices all he has for his family. **But like the refrain "[sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven](#)" so to, fathers are blessed.**

### There Goes My Life

One of my favorite country western songs "[There Goes my Life](#)" speaks of a young man who thought the arrival of a child in his life came at the cost of all his dreams and **then comes to see that little girl as his greatest purpose and joy.**

## Sacrifices of Fatherhood

### Ultimate Sacrifice and the greater Love

My great grandfather served with the Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, My grandfather in WW2. My father and Father In law served in the Korean War and I have a son who served in Iraq and currently in Kuwait where that sort of heroics is clear and present reality. We often think of ultimate sacrifice in context of war and great heroics.

[John 15:13](#) Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends..

## Lose Your Life to find it

**But there is another way to lay one's life down that Jesus described when he said "He that would lose his life for my sake shall find it."**

Mahatma Gandhi captured the practical implication when he said, "the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

## Service to God and fellows

King Benjamin said, Mosiah 2: 17 And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.

## God does not need servants

Do you really think that means you help your fellow beings to please or get reward from God. Does he really need servants? The point is that no man worthy of that title is trying to get his kids to serve him and neither does our God need servants; what He wants, what He glories in is when we become one with Him and His son Jesus. **We inherently desire the welfare of those about us not to please God and carve out a more palatial residency in the Celestial worlds, but because we are becoming more and more like Him.**

## 50 miler and the frying pan.

As a young person, for some reason, I don't recall giving my father's work and efforts for me and our family a second thought until we were on a 50 Miler Hike together as a tiny 12 year old. Now I loved my Dad and enjoyed doing all sorts of things together, but I just sort of took it for granted. I never really contemplated his role until my 1<sup>st</sup> big backpacking trip. I think I only weighed 98 lbs and somehow my 8 days of gear and food came in under 25 lbs. It's a doable load that with serious effort I bore day after day until Thursday came and the menu was pancakes. Now I had the flower mix and a bowl and a saucer-plate but it suddenly occurred to me that I had no fixings nor pan or oil. You can bet I did not call Ghost Busters, I went to my Dad and to my shock, he pulled out of his backpack dehydrated syrup, Tang powder and – and get this - a serious frying pan. To this day I swear it was cast Iron! **I marveled at the load he bore for me and that translated to Love. Our Fathers can be prototypes of the love the father of our salvation has expressed and bore for us**

## 50 miler and the boots.

On another 50 mile hike, my brother related this story. We didn't have a lot of disposable income growing up but we never thought of ourselves as poor, just not terribly rich! But coming down a steep trail the pounding of the heavy packs on what turned out to be practically ancient worn-out Marine boots left over from his service in the Korean war took their toll as the hob nails holding the heel on poked through the thin pad and made blisters the size of your palms on each foot. We only knew of this sacrifice by watching Dad attempt to doctor them with mole skin bandages – and that without any verbal complaint. This event showed me how much Dad sacrificed his own well-being for us even his blood.

**Subsequently as a young adult, when I heard this song “I stand all amazed” about our Heavenly Father and Son’s sacrifice, it took on greater meaning as I saw and witnessed true sacrifice from my Dad**

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,  
Confused at the grace that so fully He proffers me  
I tremble to know that for me He was crucified,  
That for me, a sinner, He suffered, He bled and died

## Methods of Effective Fatherhood

Covey story about love.

"My wife and I just don't have the same feelings for each other we used to have. I guess I just don't love her anymore and she doesn't love me. What can i do?"

"The feeling isn't there anymore?" I asked.

"That's right," he reaffirmed. "And we have three children we're really concerned about.

What do you suggest?"

"love her," I replied.

"I told you, the feeling just isn't there anymore."

"Love her."

"You don't understand. the feeling of love just isn't there."

"Then love her. If the feeling isn't there, that's a good reason to love her."

"But how do you love when you don't love?"

**"My friend , love is a verb. Love - the feeling - is a fruit of love, the verb. So love her. Serve her. Sacrifice. Listen to her. Empathize. Appreciate. Affirm her. Are you willing to do that?"**

Choose the Battles Wisely; Brother Foulch’s advise.

Seeing how exacting and demanding I was being with my own boys in the troop, one of my assistants, a grandfather, took me aside and shared a lesson he learned too late; **that not**

**every slight and shortfall need be confronted - else so much of your experience with your sons will be one of confrontation.**

As a scout leader I learned this just barely in time for my own kids the value of influence vs coercion; though they might wonder about that.

This is captured in DC121. Now I advise scout Advisors with children in the program and Dads who come along to allow and specially arrange that other adults take care of discipline for their child should it be called for, allowing you to enjoy the time and build that positive bank account. You get the fun and someone else is the heavy; and then you return the favor with other's boys.

**You don't want to go negative and overdraft in the personal account.**



## Exercise influence VS control

God does not force man to heaven neither should our earthly fathers.

1. Know this, that ev'ry soul is free  
To choose his life and what he'll be;  
For this eternal truth is giv'n:  
That God will force no man to heav'n.

2. He'll call, persuade, direct aright,  
And bless with wisdom, love, and light,  
In nameless ways be good and kind,  
But never force the human mind.

**As soon as reason is possible, Fathers should use every effort to persuade rather than coerce.**

DC121:41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile

***Brother Steve*** [Back to Top of the Document](#)

# Strength from our fathers.

## Stories that bind

### Lowe's 3 marriages and determination

Grandpa Lowe's 1st wife died several years after giving birth to my grandmother of tuberculosis. He remarried a rather eccentric woman who pushed my grandmother into acting and the two of them traveled widely; stage-mom and daughter. This eventually bankrupted my grandfather and the strain contributed to eventual divorce. Grandpa picked himself up remarried a sweet lady that my mother greatly admired. He retrained and started a new business as a pharmacist and became the Mayor of Fremont district Seattle.

### He never quit.

I believe he started the tradition of handing down the Poem If from Rudyard Kipling to the children as they came of age.

If poem excerpt by Rudyard Kipling

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster

And treat those two impostors just the same;

...Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,

And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

### Family History and Resilience

Study shows that "The [children] who knew more about their families proved to be more resilient, meaning they could moderate the effects of stress," Dr. Duke told the *New York Times*. <https://www.lds.org/church/news/want-emotionally-healthy-children-tell-family-stories?lang=eng&query=resilience>

Cross-generational family stories play an important role in children's self-definition. When children see themselves as part of a larger family narrative, they

Feel more secure and more confident.

They have a stronger sense of self.

As a result, they have a greater ability to overcome challenges,

Greater emotional resilience in the face of life's ups and downs.

The researchers are quick to point out, however, that simply knowing family stories is not really the most important factor in this area of children's development.

**What gives these stories their power is the means by which they are conveyed—frequent, meaningful parent-child interaction or, in short, family time. And the dinner table still seems to loom large as a place for passing along family lore**

I was privileged to be my Fathers companion

I got to be my father's Home Teaching partner as a youth, He remembered people's birthdays. He and my Mom learned Sign and Finger language to help a dear but a very physically challenged Brother Kenergenny.

**I learned what true love is by examining its prototype as demonstrated by my Father.**

## Fathers, Be one with god in this partnership of parenting.

Fathers; be one with God

**John 17:22** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

How can we be thought anything like God?

I was sitting in the foyer of the temple waiting for my wife and admired a painting of the Savior in a contemplative mood overlooking the city Jerusalem and it struck me that this was the God who made the universe and the planet he now humbly inhabited and yet that immensity was contained somehow and expressed in a child that grew from infant, learned line upon line at his mother and father's knee. At some point, perhaps greater view of his unfathomable capability came to him but at best certainly not at first. He was not remarkable or even unusual. "Is this not the carpenter's son? Are not his brothers and sisters yet with us"

**He was like us. He took pains to place us in the same relation. "Your father and my father" your god and my god."**

So when the Pharisees of his day took great umbrage over the implication that he was more than man, He who would know, replied "why do you decry that I said I was the son of god. Do not your scriptures declare that ye are gods and children of the most high?"

**Jesus taught us that we have great potential and that we have but a fraction of our capability revealed and available to us at present. So when Jesus said, "You can say to this mountain be removed and it would be removed hence" know that this is possible because just as Jesus spirit is immense in capability, he taught us though Paul that " the Spirit witnesses to our Spirit that we are the Children of God and if Children then Heirs, joint Heirs with Christ."**

Recall that Enoch actually did remove a mountain and change the course of a river! **So while our Fathers may sometimes seem limited, perhaps even all thumbs, know that greatness is there and worthy to be honored.**

## Being 'One' with God starts by "Listening"

### What shall I do with this kid Lord?

There was a particular evening when I and one of my sons had exchanged some cross words. I was completely out of ideas as to how to deal with the situation that seemed to be auguring downwards into a destructive place. So I'm on my knees talking with God bereft of ideas lamenting the situation, when crystal clear my mind is flooded with the thought, "Go and apologize to your son" I looked up at the heavens and said, "Huh? What for?!!!" Clearly I was perfectly faultless in this matter. Uhuh! But it came to me again, "Go apologize to your Son." Well, when I get such direction - especially if it cuts across my own instincts, I've learned to just get up and act. So I went straight way to his room still wondering what I would say. It was later at night and I knocked on his door and opening just said something like, "Son, I apologize that we had such cross words. I did not intend for us to have hard feelings. I love you." That may sound weak but it was what I could muster. And you know what? Things immediately improved between us and changed our trajectory.

### Dad, I want to join the Army

When my 1<sup>st</sup> born son was about 17, an Army recruiter was over speaking effusively about the benefits of Army life and how no wars or significant conflicts were even on the horizon. I took the matter to God that evening and what I heard was startling; "There will be a war but send him anyway. He's in my hands." The following year, Jared was in boot camp when the Twin Towers were hit.

As the Invasion of Bagdad progressed, with my son's Army engineering group up in front with the Marines, the Lord met Jared in a profound way. I like to say that he found the God of Abraham out in the sands of Bagdad. **It is good to have God as a partner, confidant and advisor in this enterprise of raising his children.**

\*Another one of my favorite country western songs is called [Love Without End, Amen by George Strait](#)

When I became a father in the spring of '81  
There was no doubt that stubborn boy was just like my father's son.  
And when I thought my patience had been tested to the end,  
I took my daddy's secret and I passed it on to him.

Last night I dreamed I died and stood outside those pearly gates.  
When suddenly I realized there must be some mistake.  
If they know half the things I've done, they'll never let me in.  
And then somewhere from the other side I heard these words again.

#### Chorus:

And he said, let me tell you a secret about a father's love,  
A secret that my daddy said was just between us.  
He said, daddies don't just love their children every now and then.  
It's a love without end, amen, it's a love without end, amen.

**This speaks soundly to the Love and Mercy of fathers; Can I get an AMEN?**

# Wrap Up

Young men and young Women appreciate correction.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth

Jared taught Enoch – but Enoch received instruction

Moses 6:21 And Jared taught Enoch in all the ways of God. 31 And when Enoch had heard these words...and spake before the Lord, saying: Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant? 40 And there came a man unto him...and said.: Tell us plainly who thou art, and from whence thou comest?

41 And he said unto them: I came out from the land of Cainan, the land of my fathers, ... And my father taught me in all the ways of God. 42... as I journeyed ..., I beheld a vision; and...and the Lord spake with me, and gave me commandment; wherefore, for this cause, to keep the commandment, I speak forth these words.

**A father can do no greater work than to introduce his children to God and a child in turn can do no greater thing than to turn that introduction into an eternal relationship.**

Be the Leader, the Good salesman

**Fathers try not to think of yourselves as a dictator or professor/lecturer but as a good salesman who carefully brings his clients to the right conclusion.**

In closing, I go to be gathered with my fathers

Children of God, young and old, male and female, of all your doings and of all your gettings, direct your life's course, correcting your path using the grace of Jesus so that when you too are old and ready to depart this life, you can say;

2Tim 4:7: I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith and now I go to be gathered with my fathers and your father, with my God and your God.

Yours in the Lord,

**Brother Steve** [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## 36. Father's Day Sermon Readers Digest Version

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As we are all spiritual beings having a human experience, we are all like Joseph and Mary; step-parent to God our father's spirit children.

To this day I'm not sure how my Dad caught me. It seemed impossible from my perspective. It may seem unfathomable how our spiritual father could experience us where time and all events collapsed to a singularity that God could experience but my dealings with our Father has shown that the Lord does know us individually and His arms are outreached continuously after us if we will just take that leap of faith in Jesus

God has given us Fathers to accompany us and scriptures to learn from our forefathers and the wise take advantage of both of them. Choose wisely.

...like man born blind, we can't quite comprehend what we don't yet know but the wise see through the wisdom of others.

Young people, Honor your Father and Mother that your days may be long upon the land..... Lift up your eyes in honor to your Earthly Fathers who love you and then extend them farther to your Father in Heaven whose love is eternal ... and Live.

I wonder if God our Father isn't calling us all the time, "Come here Boys, You need me", when he calls us on missions and as Sunday school teachers and YM an YW assignments and so forth. "Come to me with your weaknesses and I will make weak things strong!" saith the Lord.

But like the refrain "sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven" so to, fathers are blessed... and then he comes to see that little girl as his greatest purpose and joy.

But there is another way to lay one's life down that Jesus described when he said "He that would lose his life for my sake shall find it." Mahatma Gandhi captured the practical implication when he said, "the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

We inherently desire the welfare of those about us not to please God and carve out a more palatial residency in the Celestial worlds, but because we are becoming more and more like him.

Subsequently as a young adult, when I heard this song "I stand all amazed" about our Heavenly Father and Son's sacrifice, it took on greater meaning as I saw and witnessed true sacrifice from my Dad

"My friend,, love is a verb. Love - the feeling - is a fruit of love, the verb. So love her. Serve her. Sacrifice. Listen to her. Empathize. Appreciate. Affirm her. Are you willing to do that?"

...not every slight and shortfall need be confronted else so much of your experience will be one of confrontation.... You don't want to go negative and overdraft in the personal account.

As soon as reason is possible, Fathers should use every effort to persuade rather than coerce.

Grandpa Lowe & IF – Rudyard Kipling What gives these stories their power is the means by which they are conveyed—frequent, meaningful parent-child interaction or, in short,

family time. And the dinner table still seems to loom large as a place for passing along family lore

I learned what true love is by examining its prototype as demonstrated by my Father.

Jesus taught us that we have great potential and that we have but a fraction of our capability revealed and available to us at present. So when Jesus said, "You can say to this mountain be removed and it would be removed hence" know that this is possible... So while our Fathers may sometimes seem limited, perhaps even all thumbs, know that greatness is there and worthy to be honored.

It is good to have God as a partner, confidant and advisor in this enterprise of raising his children.

He said, daddies don't just love their children every now and then.

It's a love without end, amen, it's a love without end, amen. This speaks soundly to the Love and Mercy of fathers; Can I get an AMEN?

**A father can do no greater work than to introduce his children to God and a child in turn can do no greater thing than to turn that introduction into an eternal relationship.**

**Fathers try not to think of yourselves as a dictator or professor/lecturer but as a good salesman who carefully brings his clients to the right conclusion.**

Yours in the Lord,

*Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)



## 37. Why are you afraid of guns...?

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**Preface.** Is this a topic of religious import? To protect the innocent and preserve the peace against evil is a religious duty. That we should never act in rage and should “turn the other cheek” and eschew violence as the last resort is understood but is not an excuse to allow evil to reign and have its way with innocent people, yourself included. Paul said that for a man to not take care of his family was worse than an infidel. IE you should know better that it is your duty to take care of and protect your family and by extension your neighbor. And who is your neighbor?

In a discussion of the place of weapons in society rather than dive right into statistics and sophistries about this scenario or that, I want to address somethings more fundamental – subliminally - why do some feel the way they do and how might that color how those stats and arguments are either accepted or rejected?

Perhaps more in the last 50 years, notably our schools have impressed the idea that there is no justification for violence. If a kid fights back to defend himself, both kids are suspended without question. While it might be just practical, avoiding the “who did what to who 1st,” what is overtly taught is that you do not have a right to defend yourself period; that sovereignty is transferred to the teachers or administrators no matter what the circumstances. Even judgements are argued to be suspended in the name of tolerance of differences and promotion of “diversity” thus training up a generation with the inability to judge anything. The adversary would have us believe that there is no absolute right and thus, no absolute wrong. This is the basis for the wave of moral relativism sweeping the western world. The society’s PC police will take care of the thinking for you. Our intellectual sovereignty is expected to be transferred to the collective.

Bear with me, hang on to that thought. This bit of psychology yet plays a key role in this conversation about Gun control/confiscation.

Now, the media with its vast reach across the whole country, is able, no matter how statistically infrequent, to bring to our living room - virtually every day - some sad act of violence making it feel frequent and immediate and too close to home. Obviously once is too many, but I’m talking in this note about how we perceive the situation which may or may not align with reality.

I was discussing this once with a very articulate spokesman for gun confiscation. We spared deftly for several days about statistics and policies ... and then it got personal; though not in the normal bad way. Personal, in that he finally revealed something that helped me see what, deep down, was motivating his every energy on this topic. It colored and diminished any of the facts I put forth to support my arguments and amplified to religious fervor any argument he suggesting as to why we should remove from society ‘all the sharp objects’.

Wow, what was that? Simply this; it wasn't so much that he specifically did not trust me with weapons, no, it came to this. He actually did not trust himself with weapons and if he didn't trust himself he sure wasn't going to trust you, me or another stranger!

Not trust yourself? Really? Why would that be? Think about the common narrative in just about any "if it bleeds, it leads" news story of late. Does this sound familiar? "He seemed like just the kid next door." "He was never in any trouble." "He even passed a back ground check." **That's the narrative. What's the subliminal message? It's suddenly obvious. If he was just a normal person then what about me?** If I was placed in the same circumstances, maybe I too would flip out and kill dozens of 5 year olds, or at least my boss and that annoying coworker; maybe my wife too!

When I list it out like that, our high level brain functions kick in and refutes that as ridiculous but our gut level has been impacted by years of training to transfer your sovereignty, mind and body to the collective. Remember that side discussion about being trained to avoid making judgements? Time after time our gut is being reinforced that the beast within is uncontrollable and just waiting for that perfect storm of bad luck and annoyances to express itself in an amoral explosion of rage. **This is the message we keep receiving from the would be masters of our lives; that you cant trust You!**

12 years in public education, reinforced by daily news fare culled and fashioned to keep this narrative ever before the populous, we are steeped in the notion that there is no circumstances that a man should ever use force; that to defend yourself or an innocent victim is not your job nor right. Why – again subliminally - because you cannot be trusted to behave reasonably under trying difficult situations.

Men, who have for thousands of years taken the roll of defending the weak and the innocent, the virtuous and especially their families, have in the last 50 years been systematically talked into, trained against and indoctrinated to a state of passivism and have transferred sovereignty back to the kings and lords and their knights. The end game is a corresponding push to avoid having any opinion informed or otherwise (unless promoted by the elite).

The passivism works well for the elite masters - those who would be our lords - because the same submissive mindset makes for a compliant co-dependent populous that is easy to control. Tyrants world over have long known that weapons are as bad as ideas. Said Joseph Stalin, "Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas."

So this all begs the questions, "Are they right? Are we all ticking time bombs ready to grab the nearest sharp object when distressed to wreak havoc on innocent men women and if at all possible little children?"

Let me now focus attention on the basic premise – the narrative of "normalcy -> suddenly gone estranged from humanity." Is that really true? NO. It's not true. The truth is that these nut case, asocial misfits with mental issues simply had not YET expressed violence. Almost all of them would or did pass a background check, yet I can't think of a single case of asocial behavior that did not have a seriously disturbed actor behind it. "He kept to

himself” “His mother was worried about him” “He was always angry” and on and on – none of them were normal guys – all had clinical signs that could be spotted a mile away if someone was simply looking. And something else. Something too familiar. With few exceptions they had no fathers and no Christian religious practice. No fatherly influence, No accountability, No morality.

No, they were nothing like you and me. That is what I want you to take away from this discussion. You need not worry that just any random person with a bad hair day is going to flip out, run some kids over with his car on his way to stabbing the butcher on his way to blowing up the elementary school.

AND you need not be concerned that having a gun for protection is going to make you a psychopath if you touch one. That’s not how life works. That is what experience tells us. That is what our founding father depended on when they declared that a free society depends on the virtue of the people. We the 1000 or 1000,000 to 1 good guys to bad are the source of maintaining that freedom; not the knights, the soldiers or police – we the vast concourses of good moral guy and gals with guns are the palladium for liberty and peace.

May it ever be so. Steve

For further reading of what God in the scriptures had to say about people defending themselves and other may I refer the reader to these to short and very well considered references.

[www.gotquestions.org/Christian-gun-control-Bible.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-gun-control-Bible.html) 1 Tim 5:8

<http://www.gotquestions.org/war-Bible.html>

<http://freedomoutpost.com/2013/06/jesus-christ-was-not-a-pacifist-2/> Luke 3:14

[http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/War\\_and\\_Peace](http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/War_and_Peace)

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## 38. Why people cling to their notions of Biblical interpretations? ...

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**Preface** I work in downtown San Francisco where every day I encounter passionate preachers of many persuasions – like every corner!. I admire the dedication. Honestly Discussion is fine and I appreciate the outreach, but sometimes I see it get outside the bounds of civil discourse. Why do people fight about religion? Why are many Christian denominations overwrought with concern that someone who shares a different conception is headed for hell? How is it that they are so sure? I've scarcely found a one claiming to have seen a 'burning bush' yet so many remain adamant that their unique view is spot on and the one sure ticket to paradise? How can that be? I mean the Bible is such a sparse data set that a thousand religious can comfortably claim it perfectly supports their unique view! Well I finally figure it out and I captured that insight in a letter to my Niece a departing missionary for our Church.

Dear Amara,

Have you wondered why individuals cling so tenaciously to a philosophy – totally convinced that they are right? In the case of Christian faiths, the adherence will be quite adamant, no - supremely confident, that their understanding is the correct one and oddly can't seem to grasp the import that other equally intelligent people are reading the very same words with different understandings. How could that be? A dear sweet lady I met in Norway taught me this important – no crucial lesson. This is what happened.

I met Fru Jonson in Arendal Norway just out visiting folks in their homes as a missionary. She said at the door that she had been baptized into the Mormon faith several years back but left the association not long after that, and that prior to that had actually been a missionary for the Jehovah's Witnesses for more than a decade. This was clearly an interesting lady! I asked her if she would share her story with us. She invited us in to what became one of the most enlightening conversations on religion I would ever have.

Not so much about what she or I and my companion said but what God would speak through all of us in the course of these conversations that would stretch out a couple months.

I asked her why she had left associating with the Mormon faith. Fru Johnson spoke of her many years studying the Bible with the JWs and how they had very specific understandings of how the scriptures "argue" various dogma but in LDS church meetings there was never forum for such apologetics (trained, logical arguments and proofs) The dissonance between what her head knew from all those years and what her heart told her about the new found faith was irreconcilable and so he just stepped back from attending, though never formally withdrew. As a student of the Bible, I offered to take as much time as she needed to go page by page to answer her every question. And so we began 1<sup>st</sup> with Genesis. Where else !?

Paraphrasing a longer discussion, she began the conversation by presented the JWs standard view of how God intended Adam and Eve (and their children) to live forever in peace and harmony in the perfect garden and basically Adam and Eve screwed up – rebelled against Gods greater wisdom and were punished with physical death, permanent gone forever, end of story death for their rebellion and that God was using the next 8000

years of their children's further rebellion to prove to all angels and future observers that in the end God wins, so learn from history.

As I was asking God for enlightenment (what do I say to that?) this thought came to me like a bolt of lightning. While the narrative was perfectly consistent with the scriptures, there was numerous points of sophistry interjected fleshing out the narrative. I called them "unsupported premises". Foundational assumptions ...and then I saw that our religion too had these; now in some case they were supported by the Book of Mormon or some modern Prophets utterance but restricting oneself to just the Bible, it too would look like an unsupported premise. So we carefully, with no judgments, identified them from both religion's narratives.

For example, the LDS church teaches that:

- 1) In their innocent state Adam and Eve not only failed to recognize they were naked, there were no desires associated with that recognition and were incapable of begetting children. Not found in the bible! (Book of Mormon yes).
- 2) Man is a Spirit intelligence, whose essence or intelligence or life force is itself eternal and not created.
- 3) God knew from the beginning they would choose mortality. He planned it that way creating perfection, but allowing man to create a mortal state of imperfection.

Regarding the JW narrative, the list of unsupported premises were:

- 1) God chose NOT to look into the future so was "surprised" that they chose to eat of the fruit.
- 2) Adam and Eve were capable of begetting Children even in their innocent state.
- 3) Their children/decedents would *not* have ever sinned or eaten of the fruit,
- 4) Adam and Eve could not and did not repent of their "sin."
- 5) Eating of the fruit was an act of open rebellion an constituted unforgivable "sin" worthy of death with no forgiveness.
- 6) Earth life is thus a show case for future generations of beings to learn from that God always wins in the end. He is the wisest – to be yet proven so by this demonstration.
- 7) Such a demonstration would be so convincing that no future being would ever rebel against God.
- 8) Man is dirt; electro-chemical reactions and nothing more.
- 9) It is possible for God to create a being entirely but yet not be responsible for how that being functions.

You just can't prove that stuff from the Bible. It's too sparse, too vague, too contradictory in several instances and a 1000 Christian sects clearly demonstrate that. So we proceeded along that wise dissecting every statement – parsing out the parts that would stand incontrovertible from the parts filled in by lots of hand waving allegories and yak - not found explicitly in the Bible. The only rule was that any concept had to be by some sophistry or

another fit the scriptures to be considered and any “yak” to glue the concepts together, not found explicitly in the Bible, would be added to the lists of unsupported premises.

Story after story, chapter after chapter, book by book we proceed. We never argued, always prayed for enlightenment and God’s Spirit to guide us – NEVER placing judgment on an argument - simply racking and stacking the hard facts from the assumptions/sophistries and so about 2 months later by meeting twice a week for an hour or so we arrived finally at Revelations.

The Mormons argue that the book referred to in Rev 22:19 is the same Book of Revelations John is commanded to be sent to the 7 churches as referenced in Rev 1:11. Protestants argue that God would know that some 2-300 years later the compilers of the Bible would re-position this letter from John to the last part of Bible tacitly sealing the work shut and that God had nothing more to say to mankind. God was done speaking!

Now I think it’s a lot less of a leap as we would argue it, but somehow I managed to refrain from pressing that judgment as we had on all the other topics and added those to the list of unsupported premises. Either view could be derived.

So as we closed the Bible and I asked two simple questions.

- 1) Have we satisfied that *either* faith can be reasonably represented from the Bible – based on additional unsupported assumptions?” “Ya.” “So both the LDS doctrine AND the JW doctrine can both be consistent with a reading of the Bible!”

Huh...interesting conclusion! Note: I had not asked this next question (on purpose) until just this time...

- 2) “Fru Jonson, Why did you join the Mormon Church?”

She looked at me and said, “I felt the spirit of God when I read the Book of Mormon and prayed about it.” Then I was given to ask, “Do you think He would answer you again?”

Now I want the reader of this journal to appreciate that I could “feel” the Spirit of God as I asked that – not bodily per se - it’s hard to place words on this feeling of peace and simultaneous enlightenment, but I’ve learned to recognize when its truth being distilled for my consumption.

She said, “Ya” and so we just all knelt down that very moment and prayed. It’s been too many years since to remember exactly what was said or who said what, but when we got up from that prayer she said she knew it was true religion and the Book of Mormon was part of that truth.

She came back to church and became a stalwart member and even heading up the local branch of the women’s auxiliary when finally I left the country. I have long since lost contact but will never forget how God did not forget his searching daughter nor his servant who learned to hear His voice to a greater degree than previously was the case.

*Uncle Steve*

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## **39. A Heart of Thanksgiving; Advice from Abe Lincoln,** **- Inspiration from the Book of Mormon.**

As an engineer I have experienced a few brief moments of glory when finally, the gizmo is shown to work, but for the most part I live in a churning sea of troubles. We engineers look for them, are thrown into them and are frankly bored without them! It might appear to the uninitiated that we tend to pessimism where no positive assertion goes unqualified, and doom and disaster are frequent points of conversation. After all, would you like to use a bridge where the engineer hadn't considered if his design was strong enough or in other words at what load is it too weak? So while it may seem otherwise, ultimately an engineer can be incredibly optimistic; building what has not been done before, risking reputation and resources and often life and limbs (usually other peoples!) in forever uncharted territory.

So here is the dilemma; how does one living and focused on problems keep a thankful attitude when even the tools to solve the problem have problems?

I am reminded of the history behind our Day of Thanksgiving and how it was instituted by Abraham Lincoln -, not in his day of victory but in his darkest moments of national and personal distress. In these extremities Lincoln found God and reason to be thankful. How did Lincoln go from a fairly secular country lawyer to the President-Prophet he came to be revered as? Here is the little known story drawn from the seminal work, "The Lincoln Hypothesis."

Abraham began his presidency with clear pronouncements that the Civil War was *not* about freeing slaves but about keeping the Union and Federalism. But his war to preserve the Union dragged on badly with revolts to his forced conscription on one hand and failure after failure on the war front on the other— and that despite clear material superiority. And that's how it went, from bad to worse....and then something bad happened personally...

His beloved son, who he devoted himself to, died. Abraham was devastated and had a choice, hate God or seek God. He chose the latter and began reading from many world religion source works to try and find meaning and guidance in the midst of these tragedies. At that time his ally guarding the South West war front, one Brigham Young of Utah Territory, sent Abraham Lincoln a copy of his most precious possession; the Book of Mormon. The book was placed in the Library of Congress, rare books section after Abraham read and dog-eared all the pages in the book related to 'America as a land of promise providing it served the Lord.' That's a lot of dog eared pages as it is a recurring theme in the Book.

Then things changed.

In speech after speech he taught a new principle often quoting the key passages from Isaiah duplicated in the Book of Mormon about the land of promise. His second inaugural address reads more like the admonitions of an impassioned prophet than a war weary president. He told the nation that God had a different purpose in mind for the War independent of the goals of the North or the South – He spoke as an enlightened Prophet that what he termed a "national sin" must be purged from the land to recover God's blessing. He taught that its citizens, as a whole, must turn back to God in prayer and



thanksgiving to expect His protective and guiding hand. He called for a national day of fasting and prayer and forgiveness. He called for national day of Thanksgiving set for the last Thursday of November.

He made a proclamation that the slaves of the occupied and war-torn territories were free men; a controversial executive order based on the ironic legal concept of “confiscated property during war” as he had not the constitutional authority yet to free the slaves in his own territory in the Northern states. He waged a relentless, seemingly hopeless, task of obtaining the passage of the 13 amendment; his most important victory and a battle he nearly lost!

From the moment he changed the goal from power and control to serving God and ALL his children as equal under the law, things changed. Battle after battle turned in the Union’s favor; sometimes in miraculously manner. The famous Gettysburg address carries the feel of reverence for the mission and of reconciliation.

Finally, as the war drew to a close, he emphasized thanksgiving, not pride, forgiveness and national reconciliation, not punishment and over-lording power. Before the contest was over with the passage of the 13th Amendment, he freed all the slaves and set the nation forever on a better trajectory.

Who knows how much better things would have been had he been allowed to live and guide the nation in the post war period when for many decades forces tried to undo his effort. It took the pains of a 2nd world war before the nation fully embraced his teachings making Thanksgiving a national holiday. The national day of prayer he instituted continues to this day and “in God We trust” now resides as reminder on all the realm’s coin and currency and was also added to The Pledge of Allegiance.

May we always remember as Lincoln taught that things are possible for the nation that serves the Lord in a spirit of thanksgiving.

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## 40. Just Whose Fault Is It Anyway? Letter to a friend

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I shared this with a friend I met in San Francisco. I've removed the personal detail – but this touches on the fundamentals of what this life is all about and is a suitable introduction to the Essay Just Whose Fault Is It Anyway, Thoughts on Immortality and Agency.

Dear [Redacted – available upon request]

I've been meaning to write you since our conversation last Thursday, I want to express how grateful I am that there are good men and women like you and your wife trying to make a positive dent.

Again my deepest condolences for recent the death of your son. I'd like to say I don't have any words, but knowing me you know that would be a lie, but perhaps what's true is that I may not have the right words to assuage what pain you and your wife must feel.

No matter what one believes or knows to be true about afterlife/eternal life, in the best of circumstances we will miss our loved ones greatly. I just shipped my wife off to Los Alamos to do her grandmother thing with a new arrival but I will miss her in even that month she is gone. Even though she is alive – she is yet gone. I feel to say the similar thing to you {Redacted – available upon request}, though your son is gone, yet is he alive; not in a book nor a God's tape player.

I was very curious and I think it was you that I asked “why you believed strongly enough to find yourself standing on a street corner when so many competing beliefs might vie for your acceptance” and I think the reply was not that “God spoke to me” or something direct and definitive but simply – “this was the most logical explanation for the holy writ you could find.” Perhaps I have you mixed up with another fellow but I've heard that more than once. But even with that best guess strategy, It is generally acknowledged that some views espoused by {Redacted – available upon request} have changed on a few topics as better enlightenment presented; so perhaps, maybe you might be open to more of that?

I've never approached our conversation as me trying to argue my perspectives or directly challenge yours. I genuinely wanted to know why you believed and have appreciate your explanations. Obviously, I have my concerted views and my own reasoning's that I don't mind sharing - but it's not my mission to persuade – I'm perfectly satisfied that God will have a mansion in heaven for anyone like you with his heart set on doing right. Still if I could offer you and your wife, in your time of trial, a glimpse of something even more grand than being a “memory stick” in God's archive - a more sure relationship with the divine, I would, if I could.

As we broached the topic the other day of our inherent worth or worthlessness, it seemed clear that scriptural references could readily interpolate the fundamental nature of man as either an inherently eternal spiritual being OR with a different perspective be interpreted much more glumly as just “talking gadgets -Memorex tape.” That latter interpretation also leaves us sadly with the unavoidable conclusion that whether we are resurrected or not doesn't matter at all to the individual Not resurrected. AND if you believe the promise about “no tears” in the future heaven/paradise then even those that are resurrected won't miss them! Huh! Yup that's what you have to walk away with – the logic is solid and most

poignant.

In my efforts to come to grips with my own previous dabbling with atheism and the scientific attempt to claim that artificial intelligence can be achieved, I dug in and came away with what I feel was some enlightenment from God. There is just so much evidence that our ability to choose is a God like characteristic that cannot be duplicated with gears and levers. Trust me that's essentially all that electronics is. I can make a machine that chooses. That's not a problem, a traffic light computer chooses but it's just a machine that is all darkness inside, whirling gears and sliding levers, mere electrons running around – That ability to be self-aware, to step outside of yourself- actually proves that our root entity IS essentially “outside of ourselves” or at least this physical part. And when this shell fails, that sentient, self-aware part that's outside of ourselves “goes back to God who gave it. “

I captured this in a short writing that I hope you can find useful. You seem like a searcher and unless your truth bucket is already full up, then perhaps something God gave to me may be useful to you.

God Bless you

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## 41. Who's Fault? Thoughts on Immortality and Agency

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By Steve Marquis

If religion is anything it should attempt to explain 'why we are here', 'how did we come about', 'what we should be doing' and 'where we are going?' Surprisingly, most religions leave out the Why, What and the How altogether. This leads to many thinking individuals having no faith at all or distorted, hazy, at best half formulated answers that satisfy only the most shallow investigation.

Based on what most say about God, you would have to conclude that Its God's Fault. –all or it – every good deed, every bad – all acts of war, each lie, each kiss – absolutely everything is God's fault IF ....

...IF God made the very essence of our beings, if our physical beings (and for those who believe in a spiritual self, if that "self", the life force, spark of intelligence that makes you you) was created wholly by God, then by God, *He* is responsible for the outcome. But what if that's not the case...?

With only casual thought, many – even most, glibly reply, "No, no, no, God gave man his *agency*, his free will, his ability to choose...so is *not* God's fault! Hmmm let's see – does that make any sense? If I make a machine that can choose, what would be the mechanism for that? – If I make the thing perfect then what causes the perfect thing to execute one way today and another way tomorrow? You would need something like a random number generator. If the device, so endowed, chooses "right" one day and "left" the next, shall fault be found with the device for doing what it was created to do? Ought not the maker be asked what was his intent, that He should have discontent in His creation - considering that it behaves precisely as designed! How could it do otherwise?

Note: The word Agency has multiple somewhat overlapping meanings; 1) the ability to make independent thought (freewill-Intelligence was not created or made, [D&C 93:29](#)) **and** 2) the environment where choices are possible (See [2 Nephi 2](#) **and** [3](#)) the accountability for having been empowered to make the choices (See, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil [Genesis 3:22](#))

For a Deeper treatment of that topic see this essay "[Agency in LDS Theology: A Misunderstood Concept](#)"

When claiming that the perfect God made the perfect man – all aspects thereof - as a perfect being - it is *not* consistent to then claim that it is *also* flawed – It's a logical contradiction!

There is insight into this topic by examining the character of "god" as a self-existing, self-motivating being. If I were to try to define what to be 'a god' was, I suppose I should start with what God himself said about the matter in this classic passage when God is speaking to another God (or just talking to Himself as some theologians have Him doing a lot) and said, speaking of Adam and Eve, "They have become as one of *us*, knowing good from evil." This came about by the expression, or in other words, the exercise of agency or free

will. So, we learn that a keen attribute of a class of God-beings to be able to act and to be aware of your circumstances; a sentient being.

Unlike inanimate objects, plants and even simple animals, each of these must be acted upon. They react and their programmed instincts play out, but God is self-motivating, self-aware, able to act and not just be acted upon.

Notice how God places man as “one of us...” Many a “Bible believing” sect has all but rejected a strict plain interpretation of that and minimize that otherwise profound import. If you don’t try to make an allegory out of such striking statements, one can find in the Bible some very revelatory truths connecting God with mankind; not as His collection of talking gadgets, but as *His* children and *all* that implies.

But, by saying “implies” one need not infer that I am teasing some obscure meaning from the plain-spoken Biblical text. I’m saying that it’s hard to *not* see what the scriptures plainly say.

In several Biblical passages, a powerful being, variously called Lucifer, Satan, Son of the Morning, rebels from God and is cast out of the presence of the God called Father. He, Lucifer, believed he would be greater than the Father God. “How would that be possible - to be greater than God the Father, the one said to be the “Beginning?” ...How indeed could such a thought be even conceived... unless.... there is more to the nature of God’s Children than a mere metaphor!

We already discussed, “they have become as one of us knowing good and evil,” but I hasten to add that this sentient awareness was but ½ the equation, the inherent ability to act independently was the other. Without awareness, there really cannot be independent action, only reaction. This is KEY. Some theologians ever anxious to denounce adding to the word of God do just that adding popular phrases not found at all in the writ like “God granted to man free agency.” Remember our discussion on agency? Did God really “grant” them anything they did not inherently possess?

What then are we? What is our essence? Examining the nature of spirits, it is claimed that “God is Spirit”. Other Scriptures like [Rom 8:16-18](#) speak of God’s Spirit speaking to Man’s Spirit and declaring that man is His children and that we are on some par with Christ Jesus himself.

[Rom 8:16](#) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Jesus affirmed the same saying,

[John 20:17](#) ... Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Satan was another sentient being also defined as a Spirit being. Story after story is told in the Biblical record of even multiple beings possessing a common physical being – even animals and that these spiritual beings could then control the physical. It would seem from all that was said that the Spirit is what animates the body. For example, when Jesus died, - [“He gave up the Spirit. Math 27:50”](#) In another place it reads, [“...the spirit returns to god](#)

who gave it. [Ecclesiastes 12:7](#)” It’s just untenable to cling to the notion that we are talking about breath! The repeated context does not support that. This is not just air, but animation and interaction at a high level.

After the crucifixion, the disciples seeing Jesus thought it was a spirit, implying obviously that a spirit is a being – another dimensional existence? Perhaps?? What is then Spirit? What about seeing the spirit? One scripture reads that “You cannot see the face of God and live”. Well, that implies that God has a face that under some circumstance could be seen. Recall the Israelites who were invited to meet God and they being convicted of their imperfections were afraid and blanched at the opportunity. In fact, at one point they saw God or parts of His being but God covered His face to keep the visitors from perishing. This all sound very real and in some dimension perhaps tangible. See( [Essay76.On seeing God](#))

So, what does establishing the Spirit nature of Man’s essence have to do with agency? Again, what is ‘free agency’, if not the Ability to Act for themselves and not be simply acted upon. We observed that that was a key and salient attribute of God – being an independent actor. **So, spiritual beings have ‘agency’ as an inherent quality. That is the connection between God and man.**

Indeed, it was Jesus himself that affirmed the ancient prophetic statements that “[Ye are Gods! \[and let the follow-up axiom sink in\] and children of the most high! John 10:34](#)” Lest we wrestle obscurity and nonsense out of the plain and clear, this affirms *why* God is interested in us. God says that “We are gods”. The definition is then ‘a self-motivated being; a being with power and the inherent spark of life and intelligence.’ This is one of the most profound statements in the Bible [though ignored and oft avoided] and it is uttered by none other than the acknowledged God himself “[Ye are gods! and children of the most high! Psalms 82:6](#)” The context of that profundity is fully supportive. The Pharisees were criticizing Jesus because he claimed to be the Son of God and he retorted paraphrasing ‘Why do you think it so strange that I said I was the Son of God when your own Scriptures teach – Ye are gods!’

I know some might turn that exchange into allegory, the favorite means to dismiss something important, but the critique being levied against Jesus was about his lineage; who He was and they thought it blasphemy to claim direct ancestry with God. To say Jesus sidestepped that fundamental accusation with a clever play on words is weak and out of character. What was in common character was for Jesus to place us in the same intimate relation to His father as He Himself and that was what He did again when answering the Pharisees.

Can you see where we are going with this? God was obviously involved in forming man’s physical body, but somehow God our Father was also involved in forming our spirit – I am going to suggest that like we have demonstrated, that the essence of living man is the spirit that resides in man, that that spirit hath elsewhere its beginning, that like our Father who had no beginning in essence, that the essence of man likewise has no beginning, and that solves the great riddle as to how man was supposed to have an eternal existence, yet had a ‘beginning’. That man was *nothing* and then became *everything* was always an inherent contradiction and as we see a contradiction inconsistent with the truth.

That truth, so cleanly expressed by Jesus, explains the actual brotherhood of man. God, then, is not a metaphorical father but a Father indeed of our spirits making us in reality brothers and sisters; perhaps in some dimensional existence –tangible beings.

"If you examine the import of the observation, "I think therefore I am" it is speaking to the idea that there is an intrinsic extrapolation of the self *from* the self. This might sound like Jabberwocky at 1st but consider that one can iterate the thought about thinking about the fact that one is thinking....Your body, in fact, becomes a sort of avatar! Consider if a person lost an appendage. Does the person no longer think he is the person? In other words, your arm is not *you*. The concept of conscious awareness also entails the concept of abstraction; of you from your physical self. Religions that appreciate the concept of a soul or spiritual self, thus see the body as a true avatar and the mind as a processing engine and keyboard connecting the actual self from the physical interface. Consider a mechanical computer. It is levers and gears and conditional sliders and so forth. An electronic computer is nothing more nor less than lots more of the same. If you observed a room full of sliders and gears and levers would it be logical to think that a sufficiently bigger and bigger room of the same would be self-aware? No! Self awareness is of necessity the ability of that real self to not in very fact to be part of that physical self."

**It is our self-existing intelligence that makes us independent actors and thus responsible for those acts. Agency was not created or “granted” to man or Lucifer or any other spiritual being, but is inherent in the substance and thus while God somehow gave that substance form and expression as Spirit entities, the expression is fundamental and fully explains one of the grand questions of who we are and why we are so important to God. We are clearly of great potential – God has foreseen it!**

William Wordsworth 1770-1850 Ode - Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, <sup>60</sup>  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come <sup>65</sup>  
From God, who is our home:

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## 42. The Mathematics of Faith and Doubt

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How is it that men of Science can come up with diametrically opposing views about a subject such as human caused global warming? Why can intelligent, sincere individuals review the same information about a matter of faith and one individual moves closer to God as a result and another retreats? The answer to this confounding behavior lies in mathematics; in particular the convolution.

For the non-engineers, please bear with me through this paragraph! The convolution procedure is the basis for digital filters, like a stereo's tone control. A signal over time is fed to a multiplier which has a set of coefficients (numbers) that are multiplied one at a time to the incoming signals in just such a way that frequencies you want are accentuated and frequencies you don't want are diminished.

It turns out we do that all the time; often without thought or awareness that we are filtering the information that is presented to us. Unless we are very careful, without hardly noticing it, events that match our political or religious and even technical proclivities will be boosted in relevance and veracity and things that don't match our expectations/desires will be diminished, even dismissed as irrelevant. No matter how significant the data, our internal convolution function can multiply it by a zero and poof, it is gone from significance- we have effectively filtered out the annoying signals that we do not want. We do this for the most part without any conscious thought!

There is a scene presented in the Lehi Vision story of a "great and spacious building" The inhabitants are seen in an act of mocking the individuals that are proceeding to and partaking of the Tree of Life. Some of those become embarrassed by the mocking and abandon the quest and are lost to what he called "forbidden paths".

**1Ne 8:28** And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.

Because of the herd mentality, the natural need to fit in, lest we be aware, our filter function adapts and we receive exactly the signal we are tuned to.

In addition to this filtering of information, many individuals naturally point their antenna to only supportive signal sources. If it's of naysayers, that's what they hear - almost exclusively. They focus most of their time and energy listening to detractors and only precious little to apologists that might add supportive insight and explanations. This is just as true for questions of science or the divine. You can't hear what you are not listening for. You cannot see what you do not observe. Especially when signals are small and buried in noise, you need a good antenna and it needs to be directed and focused to pull out the signal from the noise. There are those who look in all the wrong places to address a concern about science, the Church or God. Jesus said it this way,

**"They have ears but cannot hear and eyes that cannot see."**



But there is yet one more consideration the seeker of truth must appreciate (yes one more key aspect to muddy the water) related to something mathematicians call 'Chaos Theory'; where there is order to be found embedded in noise. Often the noise can be much larger than the signal (or truth you are looking for); yet the signal is in fact present. Weather, for example, is a massively complex system making predicting it a non-obvious task. So it is with matters of faith. Real life presents massive clutter that can obscure the salient points. When NASA scientists want to communicate with the Voyager Deep Space probe, the signal is so weak we must train hundreds of antennas at that tiny distant point, all tuned to just that frequency, gather that signal and combine, adding it all up, so the signal finally begins to emerge from the noise and clutter.

Like gathering that tiny signal, on the quest for truth on any topic, science or faith, one must understand the nature of the undertaking. There may be dozens of variables to consider making the solution non-obvious and may require considerable effort over some time. Then, as previously discussed, there are influences playing a "*convolution*" role in our minds that can obscure the truth rather than extract it from the clutter of noise. Unless you understand this "math" you may miss the small signal and not even know it is there. Beware that you don't actively filter or "tuned it out." This is what Nephi describes as a "mist of darkness."

1 Ne 8:23 And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.

To Summarize:

- Be 'eyes open' aware that external peer pressure and personal motivations can and most likely will color how you weigh information. Truth may be ignored or marginalized if it does not fit the "desired" narrative even if this motivation is subconscious. So, raise the level of "consciousness" and do some self-examination! Everyone needs to do this occasionally; no one is immune.
- Give at least as much attention and time to supportive information as subversive. Subversive material is often pushed to you; you may have to reach out for supportive. Sadly, it seems that the adversary is all but knocking down your door, whereas you may have to "knock" to have the door of truth opened.
- Most things are actually far more complex than a cursory review might suggest and a full understanding is often non-obvious. Einstein opined that "all things should be made as simple as possible, but not more so." Beware of the oversimplification and the quick answer. You may have to gather information from many sources over time for the realized truth of a matter to emerge from the clutter.

**Active filtering (convolution), exclusive focus and truth buried in clutter.** Yes, It's easy to lose your way! To hear the "still small voice" requires tuning to the right frequency, a certain focus and appreciation that it may take some effort and sometimes just time to extract a full picture from the chaos of clutter.

In other words, Seek truly with eyes that are willing to see. Faith in God comes from experience with God. Just like scientist's hypotheses are ratified by experiments, so should you experiment on His word! Doubt and clouded judgements buried under clutter come of neglect to that relationship. Finding truth then just takes common sense and maybe a little understanding of math and experimental science...

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### 43. How can someone like me ever be anything like Him?

Ever since man could gaze upon the heavens he has contemplated his place in the universe and ever since God 1<sup>st</sup> spoke with man, and spoke that we are his sons and daughters we have asked, "How is it possible that we be sons and daughters of God, to be perfect as Jesus commanded? How could we limited vessels have any part in the immensity of God? We get a glimpse to His attributes when He declared the "He created us in His image, male and female," but Enoch's encounter with a very personal God has special insight to me.

[Moses 7:29 And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?"](#)

We seem like nothing against such immensity but yet He, who would know, calls us His children and as Enoch saw, demonstrates personal genuine concern for each of us.

The Holy record describes Christ's life as human, like one of us, who suffered life and temptations just as we do. I am persuaded that his human experience was much like ours, that even he had the veil of separation from the heavens and to reach His father he did so as you and I do, with prayer and that he found times where he was left to himself to resolve the matters; "[Father why hast thou forsaken me?](#)" Have not each of us occasionally wondered as 'A Child's Prayer' song says, "[Heavenly Father, are you really there and do you listen to every child's prayer?](#)"

Yet this same Emanuel; (meaning God is with us) was the very Jehovah that had created the very earth he now struggled to find so much as a place to lay his head. That immensity, manifest in the mortal sphere, was hidden. "Wait!," you might say, "did not he command the wind and the waves and even walk on water?" "I can't do that!" I would retort, "...but Peter did and Jesus, speaking of his miracles to his apostles said, "[you will do even greater.](#)"

Recall from the Pearl of great Price the writings of Enoch where he spoke and changed the course of rivers! Do we believe Jesus when he uttered these profound words?

[Math 17:20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."](#)

When Jesus was being interrogated by non-believers about his claim to be the son of God, He recounted that the inspired psalmist had written,

["Ye are gods and children of the most high."](#)

Paraphrasing this exchange, Jesus asks, 'Why do you find it so preposterous for me to claim to be the son of God if your own holy book claims that you yourself are gods, seeing you are children of God.'

Is it not natural and plausible that the son can become as the father? Notice that the question is one of intimate, direct relationship. He is clearly not using some metaphor as he is using that relationship to describe his own!

He later carries this line further when he said

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

Notice the context he places us with His Father. Paul understood from his former Greek background those who relished the mystical and speaking to the people of Athens,

Acts 17:22 "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.... Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

The restored gospel of Jesus, likewise declares to a confused world that He is not "incomprehensible" as the both protestant and Catholic catechism says, but in fact ["to Know Him IS Life eternal."](#)

The holy book teaches that Jesus was ["the 1st born of many brethren"](#) and we in His restored kingdom understand that he is our eldest brother, and part of the God Head and while our life seems so limited, we have his example to lean on that even the one who created the universe could be housed in this limited circumstance and we also have his confidence that we have great potential too. There is much more to us as spirit children of a Heavenly Father than meets the physical eye; like an Iceberg, there is much much more to us.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

So we can understand that we are not playthings or creatures, but children of great promise. The great Elohim, Father God, himself declared as recorded in Moses 1:39

[For behold, this is my work and my glory--to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.](#)

So when regular life makes it seem such a distant impossible potential, remember that even Jesus lived a life and grew up learning a trade. He grew up and connected with his Father and learned His father's will and so therefore can we; The inspired prophet wrote,

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

To that I add my own testimony, from personal experience with the divine, that the Lord Jesus lives and loves us and holds each of us in great value as Sons and Daughters of God. I have experienced a withered heart restored and seen great miracles. I am so persuaded that our potential, expressed in even a tiny measure at present, is simply glorious.

DC136:20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

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## 44. Born to be King

King Louis the Sixteenth of France had been taken from his throne and imprisoned. His young son the prince had been taken by those who dethroned the king. They thought that inasmuch as the king's son was heir to the throne, if they could destroy him morally he would never realize the great and grand destiny that life had bestowed upon him. They took him to a community far away, and there exposed the lad to every filthy and vile thing that life could offer. They exposed him to foods the richness of which would quickly make him a slave to appetite.

They used vile language around him constantly. They exposed him to lewd and lusting women. They exposed him to dishonor and distrust. The young Prince was surrounded twenty-four a day by everything that could drag the soul of a man as low as one could slip.

For over six months he had this treatment but not once did the young lad buckle under pressure. Finally, after intensive temptation, the captors questioned him. Why had he not submitted himself to these things? Why had he not partaken? All of the things that were offered provided pleasure. Things that would satisfy one's lusts and things that were desirable to everyone else. And all of them were offered to him! Why wouldn't he partake of them?

The boy said, "I cannot do what you ask for I was born to be king". As retold by Vann Featherstone

I cannot vouch for the historical accuracy of this story, but the sentiment is poignant to remember your grand potential as sons and daughter of the Most High God and be less concerned with finding the "right guy or gal" and more focused on engaging the Holy Spirit for becoming the right guy or gal. Be less focused on having friends and more thoughtful about being friendly. Lose your life in the service of others and you will begin to find the godliness inside yourself. The essence of the gospel is to let that inner light shine forth by repenting and engaging the Holy Spirit to unlock your unlimited potential for expressing those godly traits; after all we were born to be Kings and Queens to the Most High God.

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## 45. How the Scriptures Brought Me to Christ

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Sermon Given by Steve Marquis 10/29/2017 Issaquah Wa

Preface:

Its quite a rarity I am asked to speak over the pulpit. I think I do my best around a camp fire with young folks, but I was asked to deliver an address this Sunday about how the written word of God played a role in bringing me to Christ. The circumstances of my coming to know the Lord were unique to my needs and powerful and provided a resilient base that has survived all critique. What I describe really happened to me and so I am not stating a believe or view point. I am giving you my explanation to consider as to what I personally experienced and I hope some may find helpful. My takeaway is that God can and will reach our reaching in the way each of us needs...if we want it and are willing to act on it. How God will talk to you will be on your terms.

Note that I did not read this sermon as I don't talk the way I write, but this written form has the intent of what I felt inspire to share and is faithful to most of what was said!

I was born of Goodly Parents, and from My mother's knee I was taught that God was my Father. I was taught every evening out of the Bible and somewhat in all the learning of father who was both a Nuclear Engineer and a man of Faith. Having been taught somewhat by the preaching of the Methodists, I learned all the significant stories of the Old and New Testament by the time I was 8. My father and mother were schooled by the great world wars and had seen many afflictions in the course of their days, nevertheless, I was raised in a time of when I'd have to say I was highly favored to be introduced so diligently to the Lord. As a lad, my parents wanted more answers to the great questions and after a couple years of seeking my family joined ourselves to the restored kingdom of God.

In the New Testament, **I found the Writings of Paul intriguing as he seemed to use every opportunity to tell his story – He would say, “Let me tell you about what happened to me!”** His testimony was a recital of the events he personally experienced. I want to tell you a little about my struggle with the Lord or more correctly my struggle to know the Lord.

As I mentioned, my parents and other earnest teachers introduced me to God and gave me every opportunity to know Him, yet for much of my formative years I seem to keep one foot in and one foot out of the church - **You might say I did the hoky-poky with God.** I was tempted in various ways common to youth and at times gave those who cared about me cause to raise up their voices to God in my behalf. I was a longer haired, raggy bellbottomed, tank top wearing youth that was more than once suspended from school! Church was sometimes spiritual and sometimes a casual affair for me. Often enough, seminary I attended as a teenager was more a social event to show off to the girls by making an appearance on my motorcycle!

I was enough obstinate trouble that when I was 17, I actually left home to be on my own over some stupid matter of doing a simple household chore. I got a PHD in DUMB. To survive on my own, I worked **at a 24-7 Gas station while also attending junior college – that that is where my Road to Damascus begins.** A Nigerian student friend who also worked at the station was never scheduled for Sunday and I asked him one day how he managed to never be so scheduled. ( I wanted more time with my girlfriend on Sunday too) **He replied completely straight faced, “Beer Wine and Woman Man!” “What???” “ Yo**

**Man! Beer Wine and Woman!”** That sent me reeling thinking **“Wow, he must have been quite convincing! So, what do I really believe in?”**

I questioned whether the faith of my fathers was more than just a good feeling. The public school's theology of Darwinism left me empty - a life void of any meaning. Was I nothing more? Was I really just a complex of electro-chemical reactions doomed to vanish, never to have consciousness apart from this brief spark. If only the God of Heaven would come and speak to me!

Frankly, I had all but forgotten about miracles small and large my own eyes had seen. I had all but forgotten His interventions. Looking back, I now remember that moment of vision where I saw a high-speed collision about to transpire in a blind intersection and so maneuvered my car blindly to cheat an early grave from my reckless driving. I had forgotten that I was 'impressed' to step back as a branch came crashing down from a hundred feet to where I had just stood working on Mom's car one day. I had forgotten the sudden healing I received at the hands of my newly ordained father when I was but 8 years old when I had a major concussion from a fall at school, but I did remember the inner warmth of singing a hymn...

This may seem odd, but miracles both small and large that I had experienced did not in themselves drive me to any conclusion. I think it was our Seattle Patriarch Bateman who said:

“People go one of two ways: they either make effort to conform their lives to their convictions or they abandon their convictions to conform to their actions. We cannot long tolerate a significant disparity between our actions and our convictions.”

**Math and a little inspiration A thought experiment with two possible and startling conclusions.**

I was learning mathematics at college at this same time and with possible war with Russia it occurred to me to run a thought experiment where I postulated the end of the earth when all are suddenly vaporized; what then is left to supply meaning or significance to any of the activities before the terrible end?” I could find no significance whatsoever. *It would be as if nothing had ever existed.*

No matter how far back preceding that moment, the result of insignificance at the end did not change. I proved with this thought experiment that **“if we meant nothing at infinity+1, we meant nothing at infinity-n”** Letting  $n \rightarrow \text{infinity}$  brought me right back to today with that same unavoidably depressing conclusion... but then I think the Almighty inspired me with a small epiphany - reversing that axiom— a revelation, if you will, that **“if we did have significance at infinity, then we must have significance now.”**

This couplet is what led me on a quest to earnestly find God; who was also claimed to exist outside of the constraint of time. If I could only somehow touch the existing one, outside of time, then I would know that life did have significance.

**James 1:5 If Ye lack Wisdom Moroni 10:4 As with Real intent**

Somewhere about my 18<sup>th</sup> year, I found I could no longer live with the schism between my actions and my former convictions.

**Autobiography excerpt 1975:** “So it was that I found myself alone in my apartment; free from anyone, wondering ‘is this all there really is?’ In this quiet moment, I remembered the



words learned from church, "prove me herewith", "ask and ye shall receive", "trial of your faith", "if it is a good fruit, it must be a good tree", "...with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of all things", "if you lack wisdom"; things I had learned but never applied in earnest.

I remembered Alma's challenge to "Experiment upon my word" so, being all in to science I did just that. Steeped in the standards rules of scientific investigation, I knew that conclusions with no experiment were just opinions. I took James, Alma's and Moroni's challenge and read their writings with open and real intent. I followed the procedure, read the scriptures, even fasted. Each night for a few weeks I spoke to the heavens *but I don't recall anything of significance until I read 2Nephi33.3. This was Nephi's last will and testament.*

"...For I pray continually for my people by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them;..."

I was struck - intrigued by an intense compassion he displayed for others at a level I personally had never known, but I saw in that moment a value and purpose.

**"Oh God if there be a God"**...I recalled from one of those rare Seminary moment when something was retained, about one Lamoni who reached out to an unknown God and so I sincerely uttered something similar, to the effect of, "Oh God, if there be a God, help me to understand what this Nephi is experiencing"...ref Alma 22:18 & [Acts 2:17](#)

**A most remarkable experience unfolded.** A scene opened to my 'eyes' where I saw through Nephi's eyes and felt what he felt with such impact as I had never imagined. Further that night, I dreamed a dream or continued in that state (I cannot tell) wherein I was on a trail that crossed a stream. I slipped and was swept into the stream. The banks were slippery with mud and the water dark, filthy and cold. I reached for the only stable hold and found it an iron rod. Even with one hand clinging, it was not enough and I realized I had to hang on with both hands or be swept away. So, I held on for all my strength as the current buffeted and dragged at my body.

When I came to myself again I 'knew' that it was people like me Nephi was weeping over and the filthy water, the life that was sullyng my future. The message received - the conclusion of my experiment was that I knew that if I was to survive, I'd have to hang on to the words and commandments of God with both hands and place both feet on the path. (No more Hoky Poky!)

I said I knew. How is that? When I came to myself, I found that same understanding and deep feeling of empathy for others I had asked about remained with me. Somehow, God had reached down to speak to one of His. Overnight, I had a new heart and conviction to follow the rod leading to life. *It was as if I had acquired a heart transplant* where my selfish stony one was replaced, in one life changing event, with a fleshy one. Recall the scene in the Grinch that Stole Christmas when his heart grows! That's about what it was for me.

**In that moment, I was born again as a new creature** with compassion for others and a clear vision as to the trail I would walk. I sought out the Bishop to clear the stumbling blocks and set my life in order with God. I asked my folks if I could return home as I prepared myself to serve God. I think that was quite a surprise and Mom let me know that I'd have to help out and follow the rules. I told her that was never going to be a problem



again. I have never looked back except to with clarity to see God's hand in reaching out and preserving His son.

***I came to know that those who want to know, who seek truth with all their hearts, and are willing to act on that truth will find it.*** That small expression of faith – an experiment upon the word, as Alma said, became knowledge by experience, and that experience and those that followed have been both anchor and lighthouse in a life that otherwise would have been tossed about with uncertainty; even despondency. Fear had been trumped by faith. I knew that God knew me. I knew that when I prayed in Jesus' name that He advocated my words to His Father and used His personal experiences, having suffered for my sins, to know how to reach my reaching and provide the balm unique to my spiritual ailments.

**So, what was the greater miracle** – a survival from certain death on more than one occasion or a heart transplant? – Frankly I'm not likely to ever forget either. Each journey is tailored. It's no badge of honor to need such a kick in the pants; Far better had been had I, by reflection as a much younger man, found the Lord Jesus eager to save and heal and exalt. Each of us will have our own Road to Damascus story that is tailored to your unique situation. It may instead be more like a Road to Amaeus story when the Lord Jesus touches our life and you say, "Did not our Hearts Burn within us?" It may be a deep assurance, a crystallization of faith in believing the words of others.

This is my testimony, my story to you, that **I was healed and made something I was not before** – and for the asking. Now, I hear Him speaking from every page of the Scriptures. I have subsequently read and taught from the pages of all the Holy Scriptures. Recently, I was teaching Gospel Doctrine from the New Testament, one of my favorites, and then last year from the Book of Mormon and found each week that God spoke to me, sometimes from chapters I had previously glossed over. By listening for His direction, I was able to bless the lives of many and myself too.

But just like our parents, local church leaders and even the prophets are just people and if like me seriously flawed people! Scriptures were written by inspired people, but they were all just people. So, take care that you do not condemn because of imperfections. You will surely find them. So, I asked God to help me know what to teach. Flaws that used to annoy me, I now saw as natural culturalisms and time compression; the results of real people writing with their human limitations. I understood why they would pen, "Do not condemn because of our imperfections!"

Even in so called "war chapters" I was inspired by how relevant every page was to some modern problem of persons and communities. I keenly saw how focused the writings were on Jesus and his atoning sacrifices meant to lay out our path back to Him.

I do believe that my experience of healing and enlightenment, by searching His words and sincere prayer, is not unique. By sincere prayer, I mean as the King Lamoni uttered, "I will give away all my sins to know thee," He will answer.

Alma 22:15-18 O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day..."

I think about how my brother, Dr. Dave, challenges his patients. He is willing to give advice for healing but only they are *willing to comply*. Consider the language of the Sacrament

Prayer. Are you willing to put your pride, your past ways and harsh speech and personal habits on the alter – to give all to know Jesus and be saved from your sins and healed from your imperfections?

If you haven't done that already, are you willing to say *that* in personal prayer to the Lord today? I am certain that He who gave all, who knows you at an intimate level, is ready to heal, to enlighten, to forgive, to enable - He will reach your reaching.

**Jesus is the power multiplier in prayer!** When you pray in His Holy name, repeated time and time again in the pages of the Holy Writ, it will not be a rushed epilog ... but a whisper to the ear of your Advocate to the Father to bring his atonement daily to your small but sincere efforts and thus multiply and make you - even each day, into a new creature and to impart to you His vision for what you can be.

The blessing of Jesus as a multiplier, is that you can begin to see yourself as He sees you and from that new perspective you can also begin to see others about you as He sees them.

Life is hard and few of us leave this without hardships and challenges to overcome. **Life is just easier with Jesus** and certainly a better journey when you can see...really see your value and destiny.

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## 46. Why I Don't *Not* Believe - for believers and skeptics

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A couple years ago I was asked to teach New Testament and the following year, the Book of Mormon. Living in the San Francisco area, I had plenty of opportunity to dialog with those who do not believe. I even had opportunity to discuss matters of faith with those whose former faith had waned in the flux of pseudo-intellectual attacks from all quarters, former believers and never believers alike.

There are, after all, plenty of topics to challenge one's faith regardless the holy writ one clings to. As a student of the Bible, I would have been asleep at the wheel to not be aware of controversies like constructing the earth in a few days, no rain until a world-wide flood, celestial impossibilities like the sun standing still, people coming back from the dead, oceans parting, over-packed arks, walking on water, talking donkeys and walking conniving serpents just to name a few more prominent anachronisms to the modern mind.

The Book of Mormon adds its own collection of improbabilities to the sciences; animals that weren't thought to habitat, civilizations undergoing frequent and massive cultural seesaws, rare metals and materials....

**To those who make a life's work out of undermining other's faiths, there is plenty of fodder to work with... and yet I still believe. Why? And what do I mean that "I don't not believe?"**

Simply this; science is an uncertain art that is constantly correcting and re-enlightening itself. History is even worse as the sources are few, biased and void of testability for veracity. So, I have come to conclude that to base one's beliefs about God on the outcome of an intellectual sparing session would not be a solid foundation to springboard one's life.

I could choose to 'Not Believe' the spiritual content and value obtained from the Book of Mormon or the Bible for lack of my ability (at present) to examine the alloy of stainless steel in the sword wielded by Laban or a plausible explanation for the solar stand still, but that might be a bad call should for example they unearth that steel treasure down the road a piece as my life comes to a close. I could choose to scoff at the talk of Jesus walking on water having failed in the attempt to reproduce the event in my own laboratory!

You see where I am going with this? I have watched a number of 'Ahahs' reveal themselves in just my own short life; like pre-Columbian horse and Hebrew DNA being finally discovered as predicted by the Book of Mormon - but in no case, did that shake, let alone break, my faith in bleaker years.

Why not? Because in the very beginning I chose wisely to test the very premise of Christianity and the restored gospel. My experiment on the word asked the most fundamental question right up front; as the children's song says, "Heavenly Father, are you really there and do you listen to and answer every child's prayer?"

So, when I hear someone say, "I question if Joseph Smith was Prophet" because of

historical hit pieces, either real but generally not, I think to ask – “Have you asked the only source that matters?” Have you never had encounters with the Divine that you are left to but your own devices to ferret out truth from the clutter of opposing or even hostile forces?

For my understanding, testimony is not belief and contrary to popular lingo, I don't think you strengthen or weaken it. It can only be added to or forgotten due to long neglect. In my parlance, it is direct experience. Belief, however, can come from experience or an extrapolation from hope. Let me explain that seemingly reverse or perhaps circular order.

I had a profound experience with God when reading the writings in the Book of Mormon as a young man. I have written more extensively about this [elsewhere](#)(link). It was life altering and heart changing. I knew God existed because he changed me pretty fundamentally - instantly. From that encounter, I 'believed' the Book had to come from a divine source and by inference the man who produced it too.

I took that experience of a mighty change of heart and when called, answered the call to preach the good word to the people of Norway. When explaining the story of Joseph Smith's first visionary experience, without belaboring this discussion with so much detail, I and all in the room shared another revelatory event where body and mind are lifted and enlightened - a singular moment of pure knowledge and epiphany. Like explaining what a spoonful of sugar must taste like for the first time, all I can say is you don't forget those moments any more than any other event you might witness.

So, I added that event to my book of testimonies. An experience had become testimony and that in turn led to a belief that was subsequently replaced by a testimony. My stories of direct encounters, enlightenments, revelations, healings, and directions have grown and have not dimmed by time nor diminished by sophistries demanding instant answers.

Patience has been my friend; sometimes after years of trial of my faith, it revealed “ahah” moments that have been precious to me. After all, even agents of the most high God appreciate seeing comforting signposts along the path to Zion.

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## 47. The Revelatory Church

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The basic premise for the existence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is revelation; that God is not dead, nor asleep or on a long trip nor has He lost interest in us or simply has nothing more to say.

**1 Kings 18:27** And in the middle of the day, Elijah made sport of them, saying, Give louder cries, for he is a god; he may be deep in thought, or he may have gone away for some purpose, or he may be on a journey, or by chance he is sleeping and has to be made awake.

In the Bible, we learn that to know God requires revelation. James 1:5

**Matthew 16:17** Jesus replied, Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Even to understand what has been written takes continued revelation and to execute his will in the kingdom of God most certainly does- Furthermore, practically speaking to be called "His church" requires both his authority and his ongoing revealed will.

**2 Pet 1:20** Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of one's own interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 4:11** So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

There is much written by the acknowledged seers and revelators about the continuity of God's interaction with man. To reject that God can or would continue to do so is to reject the very nature and power and love and even the current existence of God.

**Amos 3:7** Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets

Reviewing what previous biblical writers have said on this keystone must first start with the last verse found in the biblical cannon as this is a common chestnut brought up in this discussion.

For proper context, it should 1st be understood that the word "Bible" is just a translation of the Latin for "books". Biblieotek, then, means "library". In Norwegian, for example, the word for pamphlet is simply "little book". It must therefore be understood that "the Bible" is but a collection of these small books that make up the current cannon of scripture in both the old and new testaments. The arrangement of these books is acknowledged by nearly all biblical scholars as *not in chronological order*.

This *last* verse in the "small book" of the Revelation to John (placed out of time sequence in the Cannon) is pretty much the *only* verse used to claim God is finished talking to us. But even a casual inspection of the context reveals that the warning listed is specifically applied to the *letter* or the small book comprising just the revelations John was sending to 7 churches. See Rev 1:11

“...Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

Noting also that the collection of books called the Bible would not take place for a century, that John is referring to this specific letter is the obvious context. Recopying and altering copies by scribes was a constant problem prior to Zerox! John places a warning to not alter his letter and uses the same language used by prophet's generations earlier struggling with the same trouble with plagiarism, imposters and miscopies. See Deuteronomy.4:2, 12:32 To avoid such by error the Hebrew language incorporated a sort of check sum.

Deuteronomy 4:You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

Deuteronomy 12:32 Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Others who reject God's ability or interest in further communication with mankind hone in on Biblical authors using language like “once and for all”. Consider in Jude 3 as we read

Jude 3 I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Yet this writing is also neither the last compiled into the Biblio nor the last written chronologically.

Likewise consider this prophesy about something big happening at end times.

Rev 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying overhead, with the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

This is precisely what the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is claiming took place. Obviously, God felt he had more to say else why a new messenger? Since God is unchanged in his concerns for mankind then how can any reasoned individual possibly argue that he doesn't speak any more?

Furthermore, what books fill the shelves of Christian book stores – Bibles only? Not even close! Are the authors to argue that they received no inspiration? Probably not. What of the congregations of Christian churches, are they arguing God gives them no guidance? For sure not, so why all the animus against this church for simply clearly making that claim? I would propose one reason and one reason only professional jealousy.

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## 48. Teachings on the Divine Potential of Man

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What exactly is “Mormon Doctrine” regarding the Divine potential of man? While some doctrines are clearly part of the cannon of scripture, pronounced by the prophets as accepted and derived from God, other pronouncements may sometimes rise to the stature of official doctrine without being voted on per se. When many of the accepted prophets preach with clarity the same doctrine, it would be fair without that formal process to consider it valid Mormon doctrine. No it is not canonized per se but in that light, I include this compilation of statements from many of our latter day prophets on this clarion doctrine regarding man’s destiny and relation to deity,

The following was compiled by **Bruce K. Satterfield** BYU Idaho Department of Religious Education

Man, The Offspring of God by Lorenzo Snow

Our spirit birth gave us godlike capabilities. We were born in the image of God our Father; He begot us like unto Himself. There is the nature of deity in the composition of our spiritual organization; in our spiritual birth our Father transmitted to us the capabilities, powers and faculties which He Himself possessed -- as much so as the child on its mother's bosom possesses, although in an undeveloped state, the faculties, powers, and susceptibilities of its parent. [Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, p.4]

First Presidency Message: Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund

Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God. [Messages of the First Presidency, 4:206]

Joseph Fielding Smith

We believe in the dignity and divine origin of man. Our faith is founded on the fact that God is our Father, and that we are his children, and that all men are brothers and sisters in the same eternal family.

As members of his family, we dwelt with him before the foundations of this earth were laid, and he ordained and established the plan of salvation whereby we gained the privilege of advancing and progressing as we are endeavoring to do.

The God we worship is a glorified Being in whom all power and perfection dwell, and he has created man in his own image and likeness, with those characteristics and attributes which he himself possesses. [Conference Report, April 1970, p.4]



God's Work and Glory Moses 1:39 For behold, this is my work and my glory--to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Spencer W. Kimball

If we are true and faithful, we shall rise, not alone in immortality but unto eternal life. Immortality is to live forever in an assigned kingdom. Eternal life is to gain exaltation in the highest heaven and live in the family unit. [Conference Report, Oct. 1978, p. 109; or Ensign, Nov. 1978, p. 72]

Marion G. Romney

Immortality connotes life without end. Eternal life, on the other hand, connotes quality of life--exaltation, the highest type of immortality, the kind of life enjoyed by God himself. . . . The crowning work and glory of God is, therefore, as he has said, to bring to pass the eternal life of man. Such is the worth of a soul. Surely it "is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). They should be of like value in the sight of men. As God's work and glory is to bring to pass the eternal life of man, so the desire, hope, and work of every man should be to obtain eternal life for himself. And not for himself only but also for his fellowmen; and it will be when he fully appreciates who and what he is--his nature, origin, destiny, and potentiality. In comparison to eternal life, all else sinks into insignificance. For, as Jesus said: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37.) [Conference Report, Oct. 1978, p. 19; or Ensign, Nov. 1978, p.14-15]

Bruce R. McConkie

Since it is the prophetic purpose to lead men to full salvation in the highest heaven of the celestial world, when they speak and write about salvation, almost without exception, they mean eternal life or exaltation. They use the terms salvation, exaltation, and eternal life as synonyms, as words that mean exactly the same thing without any difference, distinction, or variance whatever. [The Promised Messiah, pp.129-130]

Achieving Godhood: The Purpose of the Gospel by Gordon B. Hinkley

The whole design of the gospel is to lead us, onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follet sermon (see Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 342-62) and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is a grand and incomparable concept: As God now is, man may become! (See The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, comp. Clyde J. Williams, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984, p. 1) [From October 1994 General Conference, Ensign, November 1994, p. 48; also Teachings of Gordon B. Hinkley, 179).



## Brigham Young

The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like himself; when we have been proved in our present capacity, and have been faithful with all things he puts into our possession. [Discourses of Brigham Young, p.57]

## Joseph Smith on Man's Potential for Godhood

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible, -- I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form -- like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another. . . . Here, then, is eternal life -- to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. And I want you to know that God, in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming his name, is not trifling with you or me. [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.345-346]

The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence, which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits. [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.354]

## Brigham Young

Intelligent beings are organized to become gods, even the Sons of God, to dwell in the presence of the Gods, and become associated with the highest intelligences that dwell in eternity. [Discourses of Brigham Young, p.245]

[Mankind] is brought together, organized, and capacitated to receive knowledge and intelligence, to be enthroned in glory, to be made angels, gods -- beings who will hold control over the elements, and have power by their word to command the creation and redemption of worlds, or to extinguish suns by their breath, and disorganize worlds, hurling them back into their chaotic state. This is what you and I are created for. [Discourses of Brigham Young, p.48]

The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming gods like Himself; when we have been proved in our present capacity, and been faithful with all things He puts into our possession. We are created, we are born for the express purpose of growing up from the low estate of manhood, to become gods like unto our Father in heaven. That is the truth about it, just as it is. The Lord has organized mankind for the express purpose of increasing in that intelligence and truth, which is with God, until he is capable of creating worlds on worlds, and becoming gods, even the sons of God. [Journal of Discourses, Vol.3, p.93]

#### John Taylor

A man, as a man, could arrive at all the dignity that a man was capable of obtaining or receiving; but it needed a God to raise him to the dignity of a god. For this cause it is written, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him" And how and why like Him? Because, through the instrumentality of the atonement and the adoption, it is made possible for us to become of the family of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; and that as He, the potential instrument, through the oneness that existed between Him and His Father, by reason of obedience to divine law, overcame death, hell and the grave, and sat down upon His Father's throne, so shall we be able to sit down with Him, even upon His throne. [Mediation and Atonement, Ch.20]

[Man] is not only the son of man, but he is the son of God also. He is a god in embryo, and possesses within him a spark of that eternal flame which was struck from the blaze of God's eternal fire in the eternal world [The Gospel Kingdom, p.54]

#### Lorenzo Snow

Obedience and purity are requirements of godhood. That exalted position was made manifest to me at a very early day. I had a direct revelation of this. It was most perfect and complete. If there ever was a thing revealed to man perfectly, clearly, so that there could be no doubt or dubiety, this was revealed to me, and it came in these words: "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be." [Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, p.5]

#### Heber J. Grant

These duties and obligations are calculated to make us godlike in our disposition. They are calculated to make gods of us, and to fit and qualify us that we may become joint heirs with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. [Gospel Standards, p.38]

#### Joseph Fielding Smith

Mortality is the testing or proving ground for exaltation to find out who among the children of God are worthy to become Gods themselves, and the Lord has informed us that "few there be that find it." (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:69-70)

This mortal probation was to be a brief period, just a short span linking the eternity past with the eternity future. Yet it was to be a period of tremendous importance. It

would either give to those who received it the blessing of eternal life, which is the greatest gift of God, and thus qualify them for godhood as sons and daughters of our Eternal Father, or, if they rebelled and refused to comply with the laws and ordinances which were provided for their salvation, it would deny them the great gift and they would be assigned, after the resurrection, to some inferior sphere according to their works. [Doctrines of Salvation, 1:69]

The purpose of this mortal life is to prepare us to become gods; even the sons and daughters of God. In the minds of many misguided people, this thought appears as blasphemy. For an elder of the Church to speak of the just becoming gods through obedience to the words and laws of the gospel stirs their souls to bitterness and anger. Yet this is one of the plainest of all the teachings in the Bible. The real intent of mortality is that we might, through the trials, tribulations and blessings of the mortal life, come back into the presence of our Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ, to share all the blessings of a glorious exaltation. [ Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol.2, p.x]

Spencer W. Kimball

Mortal man has not become what he may become. Perhaps there is something else that we will learn as we perfect our bodies and our spirits in the times to come. You and I -- what helpless creatures are we! Such limited power we have, and how little can we control the wind and the waves and the storms! We remember the numerous scriptures which, concentrated in a single line, were stated by a former prophet, Lorenzo Snow: "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be." This is a power available to us as we reach perfection and receive the experience and power to create, to organize, to control native elements. How limited we are now! We have no power to force the grass to grow, the plants to emerge, the seeds to develop. (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p.26)

Ezra Taft Benson

As God's offspring, we have His attributes in us. We are gods in embryo, and thus have an unlimited potential for progress and attainment. (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p.21)

While not formally doctrine as the Prophet Hinkley demurred, I'd say that counts as doctrine that I'm comfortable with!

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## 49. Light to those who struggle! Plausibility

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In these first essays (1-7) on truth seeking, I focused on underlying motivations, often hidden from our conscious thoughts, that might color or even subvert our quest for truth and how God speak truth to me, you and even the prophets.

1. Previously I wrote on deep, even hidden motivations that can drive folks from truth and God, the source thereof.  
[14: A more sure way to hell](#)
2. Then we discussed methods and hindrances to truth gathering.  
[41: The Mathematics of Faith and Doubt](#)
3. Then I shared my own personal testimonies as an outgrowth of actual experiences with God; not simply conviction with the takeaway that each needs to sprinkle their own life's journey with their own ongoing God experiences.  
[44: How the Scriptures Brought Me to Christ.](#)
4. The last addition I wrote in this series, emphasizes experience and details clearly the differences and dependencies between testimony, belief and conviction.  
[45: Why I Don't Not Believe - for believers and skeptics](#)
5. As I write today about specific contraindications, I do so on the shoulders of the thoughts I previously discussed about oddities.  
[34: Dear Friends –On the Topic of Anachronisms and Oddities](#)
6. How God leads the Church through a prophet is a lot like how he can lead you; the burning bush is a rarity.  
51: God Works His Will but Forces No Man, None.

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## 50. On the Topic of Plausibility and Proof

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In this note, I am writing a synopsis to specific trouble spots for some; to the naysayers or those whose faith is challenged, **I'd like to discuss the topic of plausibility**. In Norway, I met a woman who had been a Jehovah's Witness full time missionary for 17 years, then was baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saint, but subsequently struggled on points of theology. That is where I, as a missionary, was able to hear God's voice speaking in her behalf, and light entered into both our lives. The whole story is found in [Essay 37: Clinging to Biblical interpretations](#). but the quick take away from that remarkable experience was that people do deeply desire Proof, but if not proof then at least **plausibility**. There are, however, times when neither of those going to be available. As mentioned previously, I had to wait nearly 2 decades to acquire plausibility and proofs of horse and sheep DNA and DNA proof of Middle East lineage in American Indian populations. I will write about such happy moments as the last in this series. Clearly people have lived and died without having 'proof for their minds' replace 'faith in their hearts'; so it's no given, but still we strive. This essay describes some of those strivings regarding the common touch stones of the detractors.

But before I step into that, it is worth noting that I have never heard of such a concerted negative effort from virtually day 1 in 1830 to now to undermine a philosophy. These naysayers and ardent opponents are spending so much life energy. Seriously, who walks door to door like Philastus Hurlbut did to get affidavits. How is it that an entire anti-Mormon book was written only 3 years after the 1<sup>st</sup> 6 guys meet in a farm house? The guy was a sleaze ball and this was THE guy at the heart of almost all subsequent and persistent efforts to undermine the faith. How can it be that so much negative effort had been pursued over so many years since then? Did a bunch of folks from day one simply have a collective overly developed sense of revenge or animus for something that had no impact to their lives or maybe Paul's description, speaking to a the broader picture, is germane:

**Ephesians 6:12** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Oliver, Sidney, Joseph, the Apostles and many others spent so much of their life in battle mode. Many of them at some point or another became very disaffected by the personal slights, policy argument, leadership screw-ups, money debacles and sometime doctrinal differences such as accepting polygamy, yet none of them to their dying day gave hint to anything but re-affirmation to the divine origin of the work. In what gang of conspiratory thieves does such persistence to the cause exist? Who volunteers freedom in their hand for a certain death as Joseph and Hyrum did for a goofy get rich quick scheme that hadn't gotten anyone rich in 20 years. Who persists in a failed phony enterprise as you are burying your children from that very cause?

I'm sorry for those who have excess negative energy to spare in writing tomes on who knew who or claimed to say what 200 years ago, but the whole 'grand conspiracy of rouges and thieves' theory just doesn't match my expectations of human behavior; and not

just one, but so many. This would be a conspiracy of dozens! Remember a lot of folks saw and handled the plates.

Rouges and conspiracy of thieves? That just doesn't pass the sniff test. On the topic of plausibility & proof, here are a few:

## Joseph Smith and Polygamy

Some years after writing a paragraph by paragraph rebuttal to an anti-Mormon book, detailed in Essay 37 (that took a lot of work), I was presented with yet another hack job purporting to be research. It was called 'The Thirteen Wives of Joseph Smith'. Page after page, chapter after chapter, I attempted to follow the references and the logic or lack thereof. It was a good spicy read but finally, I set the work down as so unreliable, as a scholarly work, as to not be worth more of my time. So many of the supposedly scholarly looking footnotes simply led to more non-primary sources; it was a veritable mesh of anti-Mormon linkages referring to more of the same. Subsequently to me setting that work of smoke and mirrors aside, DNA research on Joseph Smith's progeny has completely refuted the whole of it.

**Plausible.** Sealing into the family of God seemed to be a concept that was fleshed out in practical detail over time rather than being revealed in detail all at once. For a while, dozens of individuals were being sealed to prominent leaders before and even after deaths. It is entirely plausible that this is the explanation for apparent sealings even to women who were separated but perhaps not formally civilly divorced (a rarer event in those days). Detractors of the church, like Fawn Brodie, had made much claims about supposed children by such relationships in an attempt to discredit the Prophet as salacious, but modern DNA research has shown all such claims to be false. See DNA solves a Joseph Smith mystery.

**Proof:** The available evidence does not support the claim that Joseph had intimate relations with married women or other women sealed to Joseph.

- Michael De Groote wrote "[DNA solves a Joseph Smith mystery](#)" published in the Deseret News 7/9/11
- "[What is known about possible children through Joseph Smith's polygamous marriages?](#)"

**Plausible:** Actual real "consummated" polygamy was taught and practiced by many of the early saints. It was not unusual in those days and region for girls 14 going on 15 to be married and women separated from husbands remarried often without a court order. The actual DNA evidence doesn't support that Joseph Smith participated in either such unions but if...if it did it would not be the 1<sup>st</sup> prophet to be so criticized for his multiple wives.

**Numbers 12:1** Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman.



## Book of Mormon Changes

It should be understood that forwards and chapter headings are embellishments by modern editors. The standard of perfection demanded by some detractors of the Book of Mormon seem wholly out of reasonability given the astounding number of significantly different translations made available by the faithful in the Bible. So why this harsh view of any changes, perhaps because Joseph Smith called it the Most correct book

“I told the brethren that the **Book** of Mormon was **the most correct** of any **book** on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other **book**.” (History of the Church, 4:461.)

It should be obvious, but it seems to escape detractors, that he did not claim it was absolutely perfect; simply the best available at the time! In the text, itself, the ancient Book of Mormon authors plead that we be not too critical of imperfections in their writings and rightly so because there are some patterns of speech used by the authors that can be easily misunderstood in today's culture. Take for example several passages that have been commonly thought related to skin color. At least one was modified even by Joseph Smith himself to speak to countenance, not color. Now at some point in my career of gospel study I was reasonably satisfied that we were simply reading the human condition that could involve racism. Its certainly common enough, but the apologists at <http://blacksinthescritures.com/> and others, like the Genesis group, have very studiously shown that passages that seem to be plainly talking about skin color are actually referring to spiritual darkness or even depression. These were ancient Biblical era forms of speech and to find it in the Book of Mormon is in fact one of the more odd but valid forms of internal proofs of its ancient origin.

So, if the forward changed ever so slightly by subsequent better informed editors to more accurately explain the genetic mixing with other indigenous population, we should cut them some slack. Not every commentary by every last church General Authority is cannon. In fact, little of it ever is, but the core scriptures have remained remarkably stable over the nearly 200 years since its 1<sup>st</sup> publication and I think that still qualifies for the “most correct” designation.

## Brigham Young and other Leaders on Racism

If we review many of the revelations of God, many if not most of them came by open minded inquiry. I am of the mind that God does not force his way about - even in His own Church. The ‘finger writing on the wall’ event was just as rare as the parting of the Red Sea. Consider the issue of Peter and allowing preaching to other races. In this instance God did intervene after some time in a dream to confirm what one of Peter's colleagues had laid plainly on his doorstep - that He, Peter, was behaving like a cultural racist! But Peter could have just dismissed the impression as a bad dream!

It has been claimed by some Church Authorities that God will never allow the Prophet to lead us astray but if perfection is the standard for church leaders then Peter failed that test for several years. The policy of restricting blacks was wrong in the same way too. While that “astray” statement has actually never been added to our cannon, some people take

that to an extreme implication that Prophets never make mistakes in how they run the church. That is plainly false. Joseph clearly made a number of errors, especially related to financial matters in the church. People thought everything he said was imprinted by God, and it probably was not!

It is very easy as a Church leader to get a big head about one's own importance so even a local leader needs to hear this advice passed on by President Faust to President Uchtdorf about humility.

**"They will treat you very kindly. They will say nice things about you." He laughed a little and then said, "Dieter, be thankful for this. But don't you ever inhale it."**

Some people think that God has a Red Phone hotline to contact the prophet, but that is simply not the way. I recall the Old Testament story of the Gideon who was called to lead the people but he wasn't quite sure he heard God right even after some pretty serious God demonstration so he actually tested the Lord with the famous 1<sup>st</sup> of its kind double blind experiment using the fleece (Judges 6).

My takeaway is that when we as a people and even the leaders are willing to hear and harken to what will be said and knock, then God opens the door for enlightenment. It would appear that most the people of America in the 1800s– even the most abolitionists were *not* in favor of freely intermingling, through marriage, the races. When one of the ordained black Mormon elders began taking *white* wives, it would be fair to say that Brigham Young reacted unfavorably and used much the same theological explanations used by Southern and English preachers to justify slavery to justify barring them from full participation.

For all the statements in those early years about Blacks, there is never a "thus saith the Lord" revelatory assertion amongst the whole of it. It was never ratified as doctrine, ever. Several later Prophets, uncomfortable with the practice of limiting black African descent individuals from priesthood functions, reviewed it in detail and each concluded that there was no legit basis for it, but based on 'stare decisis' gave undo deference to previous administration's acquiescence and/or did not seem to think that bucking the social norms during their day was wise. This inertia played poorly for the Church. If they had made the change in the 50s or even the 60s when many other churches and institutions were desegregating (something the LDS church almost never did in the 1<sup>st</sup> place) then it would have been par but due to this inertia, they ended up being one of the last large institutions to purge racist influences in their practices. I can't help but think that if former leaders had asked God to reveal his will instead of calculating and studying and had the social backbone to lead out on the matter that things would have gone more gracious for the church.

As for the 'Never Lead You Astray' part, it should be recognized that never happened in the fundamentals of salvation which is really all most other churches have anything to say about. I don't mean to diminish this flaw, and the personal impact of so many being denied this privilege. It only shows God has pretty flawed humans to work with. My point is that most of humanity never had that privilege in their lifetime or even the privilege to be baptized or even hear about the lord. Israel was the **ONLY** chosen people for some time, do recall. In the Lords timing, we LDS people understand that all will have that chance and



the grand work in the temples speak to that final equity even if it took our people a good 150 years to fully extend the mercy God already had.

## **Brigham Young and Blood**

A great deal has been made about the fiery rhetoric of Brigham Young as Governor of the Territory of Utah. Given these fellows fought for their very lives daily on the ragged frontier and at least for the 1<sup>st</sup> 10 years were a complete theocracy I think it fair to judge some of the statements coming from Brigham young in that light. In other words, the death penalty was a common remedy back then and Brigham and assistants like Jedediah Grant used harsh and vivid language to threaten lawbreakers at a number of public affairs, nearly all of which freely blended the secular and the theological. Despite lots of brash rhetoric in those days and even finding its way into former temple ceremonies that used to be laced with “Cross my heart and hope to die” styled oaths, there were no such penalties carried out beyond as expected by the secular law.

As both Secular and theological leader, they often used the language of the church to describe the Death Penalty as atoning. They even argued that to have any hope of exaltation that a murderer would have to atone for their own crime (making amends, blood for blood, AKA Old Testament rules). Detractor have tried to make that into rampaging death squads suitable for a great salacious novel (and more than a few of those were produced during the late 1800s) but the supposed bodies never showed up. In fact, there doesn't appear to be a single documented case. This is not related to salvation as is often mixed up in this discussion, Brigham seems to be referring to exaltation a rather important distinction. Most Christians who believe that faith in Christ is the prime ingredient to enter heaven but they mostly agree that ones rewards in heaven are related to ones works – It may well be that that theme informed Brigham's Old Testament-like views on restitution and capital crimes.

In the last of this series I will celebrate what I call my list of AHAS Stay tuned...

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## 51. Why I have Reason to Live!

Of all the gospel topics I have written about, If I'm not right about this point, I have no logical reason to live another day.

I have yet to hear any argument, even a weak one, from any other religion or secular atheist philosopher to give them logical reason for drawing one more breath either. This topic is that critical and not surprisingly it always makes the naysayer's list; persistent foes who seem to delight in giving their listeners in effect, 'no reason to live'. But I will direct you to the Rosetta stone for life – and that more abundant.

What is it then? Forgive this long infomercial preface, but I feel compelled to pick up this hot touch stone that seems to drive a lot of clash between positive and negative energy. It's such a huge issue and frankly its why many thinking individuals find such interest in the Mormon church and conversely why those few that leave the church, for the most part, become depressed or at least ambivalent atheists who stumble through what is left of their life, sadly coming to believe and accept that life actually *doesn't* have any meaning. **I'm talking about the unique Mormon doctrine that we are actually God's children. (No quote marks!)**

Perhaps one hurdle is the penchant for self-debasement by many who adhere to most of the great religions of the earth. While Jesus always spoke upliftingly of our equivalent relationship with His (and our) Father, detractors have a near apoplectic fit at the concept that the sons of God might actually have the potential to become like their father. *That is because they just don't believe God!* They believe a lie that you are nothing but a talking gadget to God and frankly if that were true then, yes, you would be worthless because the Takie2.2 release is due any day...Think deeply about this. Why would God send His Son(or Himself) to die for a failed Takie 2.1 model? This is explored significantly in [Essay10](#). It's not that I don't like the classic Christian answer, it their utter lack of answer that perplexes.

This is just sad. If religion is anything it should attempt to explain 'Why We Are Here?' Surprisingly, most religions leave out the Why altogether and for the most part barely touch on her brothers . 'how did we come about' and 'where we are going?' This leads to many thinking individuals having no faith at all or distorted, hazy, at best half formulated answers that satisfy only the most shallow investigation which accounts for most of humanity actually, else there would be a lot of depressed aimless folks walking about! Their ignorance actually saves them from the torment of their imagined uselessness.

The Gospel however teaches that we are of great worth for a very good reason and not just because God loves his gadgets. The root of Spirit is Agency; the ability to act. This is explored significantly in [Essay40](#). It can be demonstrated that the ability to think and act independently is the essence of God. It is also and not coincidentally the essence of man. So, who or what is man then to God? The answer hits the fundamental question of why man would be worth anything to God. King Mosiah emphasizes humility and uses pretty stark language to that end– your nothingness, dust, and so forth.

Such pronouncements would tend to argue against our great potential, but remember that Jesus was born in a stable! There is a lesson in that. As with many conversations in the

scriptures, the context of the discussion often demands many perspectives. These same prophets also understood that deep humility was the odd companion to greatness.

Joseph taught a profound concept that explained perfectly the meaning of life and our relationship to God. Some years later, the Prophet Lorenzo Snow contemplating those words received an inspired couplet consistent with what was revealed the Joseph, a couplet in its simplicity that shocked the theological community.

“As man is now, God once was; as God is now man may be.” Lorenzo Snow

It should be noted that Lorenzo Snow actually places the context on his famous couplet in context of Jesus (God). See this [FairMormon link](#) for a thorough treatment. Thus, since Jesus is also God, Lorenzo’s couplet could easily be transcribed thusly,

“As man is now, Jesus once was; As Jesus is now, man may be.”

Since Jesus as (a)God lived with us, was limited as us , in all particulars was one of us, this variant of the couplet might make an easier entry to our limited psyche. Lorenzo’s couplet can be written either way, so when Hinckley was asked “if God the Father was once a man?” he replied that we don’t talk much about it and even said “I don’t know much about it.” This is precisely correct; we have precious little to no revelations giving additional understandings about the Father. Hence Hinckley eschewed speculation about that possible interpretation of Joseph or Lorenzo’s statements. Certainly latter day saints speculate, but speculation is not doctrine.

Did not Jesus claim that we were like him? Did he not command us to be perfect as our Father in Heaven. – That is the emphasis – *to become* and the possibility to do so says everything about our and God’s origins or **more aptly our mutual lack of origin!**

Obedience and purity are requirements of godhood. This may appear to some minds as something very strange and remarkable, but it is in perfect harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ and with His promises. He said:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21).

The Apostle Paul also taught in this wise:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

“This is the high destiny of the sons of God, they who overcome, who are obedient to His commandments, who purify themselves even as He is pure. They are to become like Him; they will see Him as He is; they will behold His face and reign with Him in His glory, becoming like unto Him in every particular.” (Lorenzo Snow.)

While some detractors criticized President Hinckley for what they think he understands about the nature of God, but they should spend their time trying to understand the

“Incomprehensible God” they claim to believe in. After all, it is important for our eternal salvation to know God.

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3, emphasis added).*

**Let me leave you with full purpose of life in the knowledge that you are intrinsically of great worth with brothers and sisters who share a great destiny. Our potential is limitless. God hath spoken it. Ask Him if you do not yet believe.**

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## 52. God Works His Will but Forces No Man, None.

With the passing of President Monson, our new prophet was ordained and set apart by the 12 to lead the church and lead he did. Almost immediately, President Nelson was announcing revelation and guidance for the church's affairs; some modest structural changes to the duties and organization of the priesthood and relief Society and recently changes that were prophetically timely given the current world wide medical crisis! It was quite thrilling to watch but also a bit puzzling. Did it take a new prophet to receive a new direction?

Was this revelation "new" with President Nelson? Certainty, there are situations, such as the long-overdue revelation on allowing all races to participate in the Priesthood, that point to the fact that our human natures can get in the way of revelation. Better then to consider the nature of our human condition as root difficulty to accepting change. It would seem from evidence that God governs the church and His children somewhat passively; perhaps reactively would be a better fit. In the modern vernacular – "Free Range Parenting!" That is, when asked and ready to receive, the Lord reveals. Consider how long it took Peter to accept gentiles... His racist/bigoted attitude was difficult to overcome, but dreams and friendly and not so friendly arguments from his friends finally held sway and he was finally in a place to be able to receive revelation as recorded in the Bible.

In a similar vein, Mark mentions that Jesus was unable to do many miracles in His own land because of the dearth of faith of the people.

[Mark 6:4](#) Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is without honor only in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household." [5](#) So He could not perform any miracles there, except to lay His hands on a few of the sick and heal them....

So, there we have it that God was limited in what he could (or would) do because the people were (by God's design) actually a significant part of the equation. God could, Sodom and Gomorrah, style intervene rather dramatically, but more often than not choses to stay below the radar; so to speak. More often than not, He requires us to invite to receive. Recall,

[Math 7:7](#) "Knock and it shall be opened unto you"...

Note the order. Faith precedes the miracle. Consider Jesus' comment to the Centurion concerned after his faithful servant recorded in [Math 8:13](#):

["Go! As you have believed, so will it be done for you."](#) And his servant was healed at that very hour.

The initial focus of my thoughts was to answer 'why can't our esteemed leaders, who do seem to acquire inspiration and revelation in their tenure, receive *all* the mind of the Lord right away? I think the answer might be basically "they either didn't ask or were not ready to receive!" In some cases God has His timing, but, the real and more salient takeaway is far more personal. What does God know right now for me, that for my lack of asking or willingness to receive, I will never know? Asking, to know the mind of the Lord, seems to be what Jesus was spectacularly adept at. He once stated that ["he does nothing but what he as seen His Father do."](#) Ok, that also opens up a whole other nuance-to enlightenment, but let's hold off and **retain this one useful nugget that a daily mission should be for each of us to be open for change in attitudes/behaviors and to seek the will of the Father for our lives today - shall we not?**

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## 53.The Algebra of Faith Healings.

I was tasked with teaching about Faith healing to 8 years-olds today. That meant I really had to come to terms with more than the easy answers. I had to understand. Here is what came to me as I petitioned God for understanding.....and yes I did successfully teach them the math part too.

One of the great questions that often goes begging for a suitable answer relates to when God does or does not intervene either directly or through the administrations from His servants. How is it that a trivial question of finding a lost item goes answered but another brother loses a battle with cancer, prayers and administration nevertheless? These are the grand questions.

From personal experience, I know that God does hear and ratifies His servant's administration - but not always.

When I was but a lad having just joined the Church of Jesus Christ, I was pushed over at school and fell straight backwards striking soundly the base of my skull on a concrete curb. I was dizzy, throwing up and in poor shape. These days it would have been a trip to the hospital but was brought home. My Dad was already there and newly ordained as an Elder anointed me and blessed me to recover. We then drove the 5 miles to Dr. Kroger, who had stitched me up at least once before, to be examined, but by the time we got there all my symptoms were gone.

Years later, as a missionary a lady we were teaching asked if we, as representative of the apostles, had the power from God to heal the sick. "Yes, we do," was the reply to which she presented her mother who had a frozen elbow unable to move its position - low a dozen years. The words came to me to command In Jesus name that her arm to be made whole, which in retrospect seems bold since we don't see that sort of drama often! As we removed our hands she raised and articulated her arm as new, to my wonder and supreme gratitude!

Yet, despite experiencing God's mighty power, some years later as my wife lay critically ill for a couple weeks with "valley fever" it did not come to me to simply offer my hand! Finally, when she was to be admitted the next morning to the hospital, she asked me for a blessing – and I did with no hesitation, but I have to ask myself – why did I wait? Her fever broke shortly thereafter - that very night and never was admitted to the hospital.

And yet there are those who's righteous desires for healing do not come about. Clearly this is a complicated calculus. The scriptures assure us that life happens! Jesus taught it in this wise:

**Mathew 5:45** That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

So, we ought to be careful to not impugn motive and directive making all things as God's will or intention. We may never know whether it is simply God's will that we endure the trial well rather than His Will as causal.

The Story of Job teaches that in some cases the devil can place stumbling blocks as tests but even that story does not suggest God was plotting out Job's trials. Jesus taught about a person who was born blind saying, "...that the glory of God might be manifest...". Did that mean that God blinded the infant or was Jesus asserting that even in distressing circumstance God's glory could be manifest. I've often thought that the compassion and patience in the individual, his family and friends were as great a manifestation of God's glory as the final event when Jesus healed the man. After all, it is God's glory for us to become like Him!

This passage can be better rendered, "But let the works of God be displayed in him." So, the whole passage would read as follows:

**John 9:3** "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"  
"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered, "but let the works of God be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent us while it is day..."

This better translation makes good sense; biblically. Jesus shows us that the question to ask is not, "Who sinned?" but "What can we do to help the situation?"

Sometimes there is purpose and a learning opportunity to be had but other times its more random and just life. The test then is how we endure it; well or do we reject God for not being a Sugar Daddy doling out good things for good behavior? It should be appreciated that many a prophet was killed while doing good things!

The Story of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego teaches a keen point. When challenged as to would or could their God could save them from the King's seven times hot fiery furnace they responded with these amazingly brave words.

**Daniel 3:13-16** King Nebuchadnezzar "If you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to answer you carefully about this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Paul likewise, once he came to know God, spoke of his trials, losing his wife to an early death and acquiring a permanent illness or disability he called a thorn. Asking for its removal got this response from God.

**2Cor.12:7-10** "in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about



my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I recall friends of mine, a brother and a sister who as teenagers joined the Church of God. A few years later Jeff, the older of the two, joined the military. On the way back to base from a family visit, his companion fell asleep at the wheel and all in the car lost their lives in a terrible crash. Becky, his sister, lost faith in God and stepped off the path... Why do some turn *from* God and others turn *to* Him in their extremities? I believe it has to do with actually knowing God beforehand; not knowing about God, but *knowing* God. As the poet wrote, "Some sail East and some sail West by the self-same wind that blows..."

So, as I return to my original complexity, I thought to try and write it in the plane language of math to reduce the confusion to understanding:

Consider then variables

- W – will
- F -faith as an assertive power
- H -Healing

And subscripts

- g – god and
- m – man
- s – servant of God    n-number of servants exercising faith

then  $H_m = W_g * F_g * (1 + (W_m * F_m + W_m * F_m * \text{Sum}_{(1-n)}\{W_{sn} * F_{sn}\}))$  ) or factored differently

then  $H_m = W_g * F_g * (1 + (W_m * F_m (1 + \text{Sum}_{(1-n)}\{W_{sn} * F_{sn}\})) )$  )

**This equation teaches that Divine Healing in a man/woman happens when God's will either aligns with man's and his servants or overrides it altogether! It explains that a person's faith is the key to healing with rare exceptions and that healing can take place even when the servant's faith might be weak but clearly when the person's faith and the servant's faith is strong then the powers of heaven can be readily unlocked.**

Of course, God can do what He wants but more often than not He works in the confines of our faith which He wants us to exercise as an active power too.

**Mark 6:4-5** Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

Whether the trial is natural happenstance or purposeful linkage, our own faith is a significant element in God's calculus - or in this case simple algebra.

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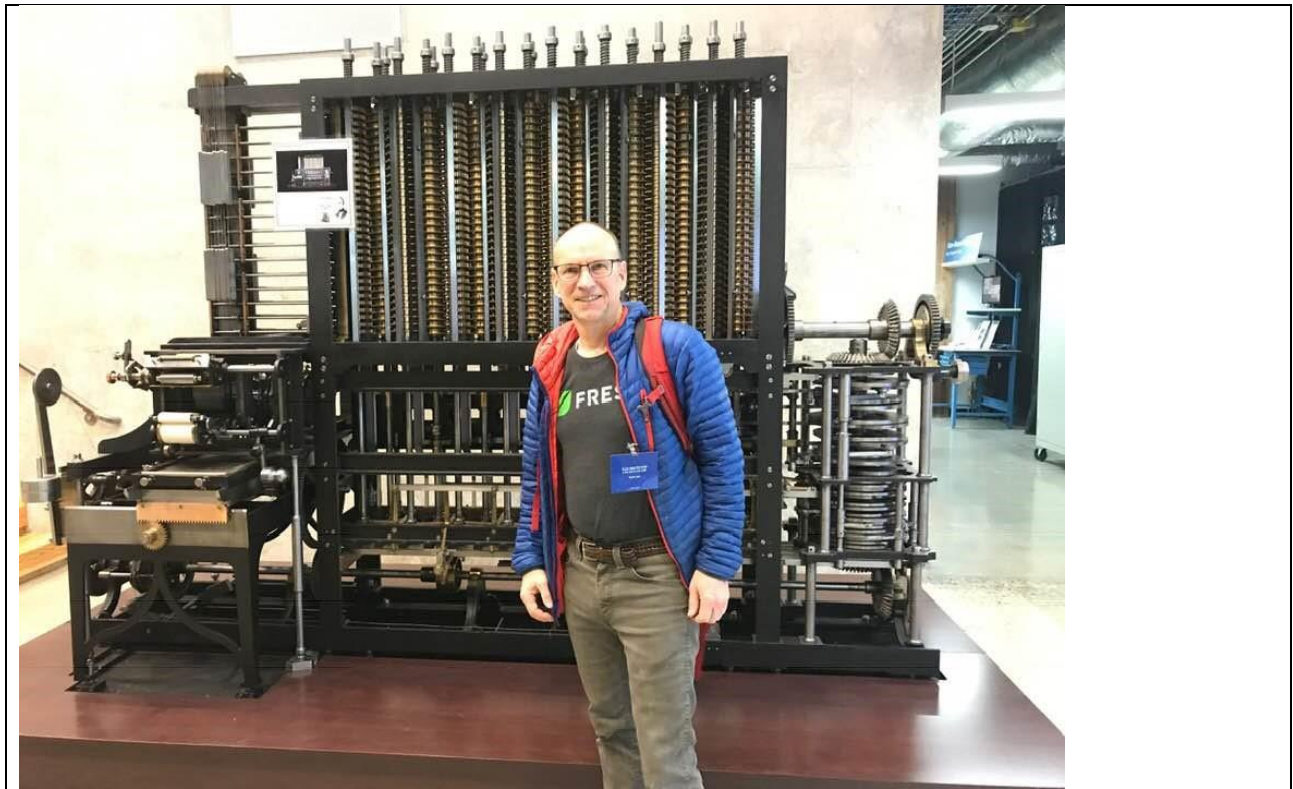


## 54.Deductive Proof: there is more to Man than meets the eye.

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Like a perpetual motion machine, some concepts are logically impossible. The following deductive reasoning demonstrates why the sentient '3CPO' is impossible – not simply improbable or awaiting the next improvement in complexity.

Let me preface this assertion by pointing out that you may well be able to program a self-optimizing algorithm that could mimic human response like making the sounds of speech, but that machine has no consciousness or self-awareness no matter how convincing the act of aping our behavior. Why? Consider the Babbage calculator remarkably designed some 200 years back! (See photo of the author standing in front of a replica of this marvel.)



[Link to Article on Blogsite](#)

As the gears whirl and the shift levers click away is there any reason to anticipate that the gears or the collection of mechanisms can be “aware” of itself? It seems plain enough as you watch the gear motions that it's just metal clanking away and the metal is just that with no inherent intelligent property to make such a self-judgment - each gear is just a metal gear. If you can accept that premise, then let's add one more gear and turn the crank. Did the outcome change? Are the gears somehow aware of themselves due to the addition of one more? Note that electronics is just gears and states and levers- that have identical analogs to our mechanical setups illustrated by the Babbage machine and even analog representations in our human anatomy.

What if we added so many gears and gates and holding states that the machine now could answer your question perfectly - maybe even broadcast the sound sequence of "I think therefore I Am?" Even output the sounds of "Ouch" if you kicked its tilt sensor? Looking at the gears whirling and self-optimizing the calculation - are the gears 'aware' of their own motion? No, because once again it's just metal gears and levers and the metal has no inherent property outside of being metal. If for N gears and levers and gates and holding states the gears do not in themselves have awareness or consciousness of self, a sentient property and N+1 does not, then for all complexity N+[ ] the machine remains just more gears, in other words, all darkness inside no matter what sounds or actions mimicking our behavior the machine produces.

If the Human brain and our usage thereof can be reduced to a series of wires, gates; in fine, a self-optimizing calculator with gain, gates and memory states which we have just demonstrated is unavoidably dark inside then the human too would be dark inside - reacting to the world but not able to "sense" anything even though it be festooned with sensors and broadcasting "ouch" as you kicked its tilt sensor!

But you say, I think and sense and feel and imagine and so much more- Yes and that only demonstrates that you must be more than gears because the deductive proof just outlined is logically sound.

Consider that you are watching yourself (out of body) reading this short essay. You are iteratively extrapolating yourself from yourself. That ability is what separates man from machine. There is clearly something more to man than the body's machine parts. The part that makes you 'you', as demonstrated by that exercise, is separate from the mortal carrier. Religions have attempted various explanations. Call it spirit or the breath of life, the spark of intelligence - it's just not the dust as this deductive proof demonstrates.

The only way we can experience consciousness is to, in some respect, be separate from the body; exactly what religions the world over have been trying to put words to for millennia. Perhaps we can thus think of the body as a carrier and the brain as an interface with cache memory and sensor preprocessing functions.

The spiritual side thus plays an integral role in what we call consciousness; the substance that interprets and interacts through the physical body. Those who dedicate themselves and strive to find in the evolutionary dust all answers have found consciousness the conundrum. The fact of the matter is that a computer-machine running a simulation about building a machine is still just a machine of lifeless parts flipping states; there is no life from lifelessness.

Likewise, physicists are grappling with the impact of consciousness on the origin of matter itself as we have begun to prove that matter at a particle level actually responds to being observed! Viewed at a quantum level super-positioned wave states don't collapse until observed or measured. The big bang could not have initiated unless it was observed! Looked at from that perspective, consciousness did not evolve if it took consciousness to initiate the big bang! So it is not the physical that begets or evolves into consciousness with sufficient complexity but consciousness that creates the reality of the physical.

New Experiments continue to stack up showing Consciousness Affects Matter. In over 600 experiments by university labs over several decades this effect has been thoroughly

proven. Said, Dean Radin Ph.D at University of Arizona, "Consciousness is an active participant in reality". (Ref <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRSBaq3vAeY>)

Have you ever wondered, "OK, but what happened before the big bang? What changed?" I'll let one of the most ancient religious text speak the last word, "The consciousness spoke and the worlds were created."

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## 55.A Reason for Faith, Review and Commentary

There is a very well put together anthology called ["A Reason for Faith"](#) that I'd like to pass on to any of my or your friends whose faith has been challenged by Science or Historical hit pieces on Classic Christian and particularly the tenants of the Mormon Christian faith.

If you are just mentally anguishing over some argument, this book is going to be a big help to resolve that conflict, but CONFLICT implies there is something arguing otherwise. If you don't have those spiritual events to be in conflict with, then my dear friends, THAT is a or perhaps *the* biggest problem to rectify, but if this helps at least give you a reason for hope, then Hope leads to Belief and Belief begets Faith, and Faith engenders Confidence and Confidence - well that provides Peace. How would a heaping helping of peace of mind sit with you when the world just told you are a worthless pile of dust soon enough to die. By that logic you aren't really alive now! Unsettling unless you ignore that conclusion with busy-ness and/or sensuality until you have no choice but to face the grim reaper. Would it not be so much better to have purpose and peace and run to the light in the end? That confidence can be obtained or recovered.

Consider this experience I had some while back as I helped a new convert (former Jehovah' Witness) to our faith who was struggling with what is best described as Cognizant Dissonance, a syndrome I think may be at the root of others struggles.

She had had spiritual confirmation of the truth of the restored gospel and the validity of the Book of Mormon, but some nagging questions remained. Since we don't usually do the classic Bible Study where folks try to prove their faith with layers of proofs and sophistries, there remained a number of questions Re. understanding passages that just went unanswered and thus doubt festered and plagued her.

I was a student of the Bible and offered to walk through the pages with her and we did so from Genesis to Revelations over a couple months. God inspired me to do this one key thing and NOT do another thing. Do - look for unsupported premises. Don't try to prove, only support but also acknowledge my own unsupported premises.

This is really simple - my loving family and friends of different viewpoints. The Bible is full of dangling thoughts and un-fleshed out ideas that theologians enjoy filling in the blanks for with their own. What??? OK here's a classic: Adam, Eve are booted out of the garden right? For eating the forbidden fruit. So far so good (or evil) ha. But theologians assert that that was a HUGE mistake we are all suffering from. Why? because say they, "If they hadn't royally screwed up then everything would have been super duper and all of us would be happy and sin free - its all on them!!!"

OoooooK so lets take that apart. What are the unsupported assumptions? 1. They could have had children in their innocent & immortal state. 2) Any Children and progeny down to today would have been perfect or had their agency removed and forced to obey perfectly.

Where is that written??? Easy nowhere. OK that's 2 - next page.... Se how it goes all the way to Revelations.

So I successfully helped her to see that there were other logical explanations. No proof , but reasonable alternatives to the *same* data set. So then I asked her, "Why

she joined in the 1st place", and here is the takeaway – **If you got this far!** She said, "She felt the Spirit of God in the pages of the Book of Mormon...." So now that her dissonance problem was addressed, I asked if she thought maybe God might answer her again? Nodding affirmative we knelt and she prayed and came up rejoicing and was now able to embrace her new faith without reservation - I guess with both halves of her brain, or Mind AND Spirit if you will.

But beyond satisfying our natural desires to be intellectually consistent, one has to have that other – even more important part, the spiritual experiences, the anchors OR YOU GOT NOTHING to hold you when opposition hits you up... Personally, I had to place DNA research off on a shelf for about 15 years as it initially reflected a rather dim light on our viewpoint but now with the latest research, I feel quite bullish about it. I feel largely vindicated (last time I looked) but can you imagine if I anchored my ship to the whims of the fellows in white lab coats 15 years ago? I'd be sunk by now!

Fortunately, the only solid anchor is the Rock of Salvation. Personal experience with the Lord Jesus can be a steady source of confidence! If this is ever lost, know that His hand is still outstretched. When we meet Him even part way it's like your ship's got its rudder back and you can confidently sail into the unknown with Him as Pilot and Navigator.

The authors of ["A Reason for Faith"](#) take a rather pessimistic but some might argue a realistic, assessment of the evidence, granting in many cases what could be disparaging testimony but then argue from those positions; those 'facts' notwithstanding. This approach results in very powerful arguments. Very different tacks could be taken than the approaches used in several of those essays, but if one can hold their faith with those reasoned approaches, that's a very stable position. I highly recommend this work to all who would love to build or rebuild their Reason for Faith.

Building our relationship with the Almighty involves reaching for Gods already outstretched hand - an invitation worth our every effort.

Blessing Friends,

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## **56. Slower, a Christian Approach to Living Life More Abundantly by A. Jensen**

I don't know about you, but it's been a doozy of a year for me. At times it's been exhilarating - arms straight up on the rollercoaster. Other times, I've been screaming to get off. There have been times when I've been pushing as hard as I can and times when I've been pushed as hard as I can stand. It's been a year of self-reflection and sometimes a year of self-pity. I've learned a lot. I've cried a lot. I've felt all the feelings.

I say this because I felt like this year swallowed me up and spit me out right before December hit. And I was exhausted. Maybe you've felt like this. At a time when the party was just getting started and celebrations and festivities were gearing up to go all out this season - my tank was empty.

I started to crave something. And the something, was nothing. I wanted to clear the schedule. I wanted SIMPLE. I wanted to burn a ton of candles. I wanted to read piles of Christmas books with my kids. I wanted to have time to actually think about Christ. And so, I took my December back. At the beginning of the month, Scott and I decided we would pick 5 things that we wanted to do this month. And that was it. They were pretty simple things. I mean one of the things was: get a Christmas tree. But let me tell you, this newfound sense of control has changed us and I'm happy to say it's been one of the best Decembers we've had in years. I've felt peace at this time of year that I haven't felt for a long time. I feel like I can finally breathe and I've been able to stave off the feelings of bitterness and resentment that seem to creep in at this time of year as a result of trying to take on too much.

But why am I telling you this? Well, maybe you are like me. Maybe you get a little excited, a little overzealous about life sometimes. It's fairly easy to do. But pretty soon we are trying to manage all of the expectations, all of the things we imagine we are "supposed" to be doing. I try to imagine what the Savior sees when He looks at our lives. Does He think it is too much? Does He shake His head as we scream and shout about our stress levels because He knows there is an easier way? It makes me wonder. And it's not just December that's the culprit. The whole year has become a whirlwind that leaves us feeling breathless much too often, I'm afraid.

It's no secret that we live in a time of extreme activity. We are constantly on-the-go. So many things are designed to save us time, but so much of it rarely does. We just cram more into the empty space. It's like an empty closet that we just purged of all the things we never wore and now we can't wait to go shopping. We putter around town going through the drive-thru for dinner, our prescription meds and to pick up cash at the bank. We do it all so we have time to go the soccer game that night, the youth activity, the event with co-workers, the whatever. We try to make a plan for every bit of time so that we can feel productive, feel like we accomplished all the to-do's, that we were "enough" for whoever was counting on us that day. Let's face it, we can't even rest on the couch without feeling like we should log in to our e-mail to see who needs a response. Every minute counts! We

can see that it's a bit unhealthy, but we keep at it anyway. After all, those kids have to grow up and be good at something. The bills have to get paid. The weeds won't pull themselves. Dinner won't appear out of thin air. The list goes on....we justify it all. We feel it's all necessary, it all has to fit. There is room for all of it.

Isn't there?

There is a bit of a buzz word going around these days called "slow living." You've probably heard of it. You probably think it's something about pristine zen-like homes, or walking along the beach in a white linen outfit, or sitting down to a Pinterest-worthy effortlessly styled rustic outdoor picnic dinner table that bears your effortlessly grown vegetables from your own organic garden. That sounds nice.

And while Instagram and Gwyneth Paltrow would have us believe that these peaceful scenes truly are possible on a daily basis and should come as naturally as breathing, that's not necessarily what slow living is all about. Reality is that we have a schedule to keep. People who depend on us. Needs that must be addressed. Swinging from a hammock all afternoon sounds great, but it doesn't get the laundry folded.

If you're confused about this concept of "slow living" and what it's all about, allow me to share this quote from author Brooke McAlary in her book "Slow."

"Slow living is a curious mix of being prepared and being prepared to let go. Caring more and caring less. Saying yes and saying no. Being present and walking away. Doing the important things and forgetting those that aren't. Grounded and free. Heavy and light. Organised and flexible. Complex and simple.

It's about living in accordance with the important things in life. And more specifically, living in accordance with the important things in your life.

It's about cultivating self-awareness, letting go of the excess stuff in our homes, learning how to live mindfully, getting in touch with our personal values, and choosing which advice applies to our circumstances, happily releasing the ideas that don't fit our homes, families, jobs or values.

It's about life. The living part, specifically. It's about paying attention to it and spending time in the noticing. The hand-holding and the tear stains and the sunrises and the uncertainties. The love and the anger and the joy and the envy." - From "Slow" by Brooke McAlary

Jesus was a master in slow living. Yes, He lived simply. He even probably had the white linen outfit. But He definitely still had an agenda. Things on His to-do list. He knew His time was limited and He wanted to make the most of it.

But Jesus understood something that most of us probably do not. The agenda, His to-do list, was not the total picture. He stayed flexible. And by staying flexible, He was able to accomplish some important, unforeseen things. I'd like to talk about some of those things with you today. They are stories you have heard many times before, but they are actually



stories that were not supposed to happen. They are stories that happened while another story was in the works. They are unexpected moments for Jesus. Things that perhaps He did not plan on doing when He woke up that day. I do not know for sure.

- Going to heal Jarius' daughter - interrupted by woman who touched His cloak (Mark 5):

One day, one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jarius, runs to Jesus in hysterics and begs him to come and save his dying 12-yr old daughter. Jesus drops whatever He is doing, obliges and follows Jarius back to his home, but something happens on the way. A woman touches his cloak. She is healed without Jesus even saying a word to her. But he notices. He didn't have to notice. His attention was desperately needed elsewhere. Someone was dying! And the person who asked Him to come was a very important person - a ruler of the synagogue! But He stopped. He did not let the crises of what was waiting for Him at Jarius' home overwhelm Him. He knew it would all work out. But someone needed Him for just a moment. Just one very important, brief moment. And in that brief moment, a life was changed.

- Going to be alone and ended up feeding the five thousand

Another story. Jesus had received some devastating news. His dear cousin, John the Baptist, had been brutally killed and Jesus had just found out from his disciples. Judging by Jesus' subsequent desire to leave the area and be alone to process this news, it deeply affected Him. But even though this alone time was certainly deserved, He did not get it. Five thousand people wanted His attention. They wanted to be spiritually fed, probably at a moment When Jesus Himself wanted and needed comfort. Perhaps He felt drained, like He had nothing left to give in that moment and that some self-care was in order - but the scriptures do not say. They only describe for us His actions in that moment: "He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." (Luke 9:11) But He didn't stop there. He wanted to make sure they were physically taken care of as well. He wanted to feed them! Which was a problem, because there simply wasn't enough food. If you've ever tried to plan a menu for a ward function, you can sympathize with the fact that this is a big ask. Five thousand people. The tabernacle in Salt Lake can't even fit that many. But this didn't stop Jesus. No, He probably used whatever energy He had left and performed a miracle by multiplying the food so that there was enough and to spare.

- The prostitute who came to Jesus while He was at a party (Luke 7)

Another story. Jesus is invited to a Pharisee's house for dinner. Now, you don't have to be an expert in scripture to know that this was a rare event. Not too many times Jesus was actually invited to socialize with the Pharisees. What a teaching opportunity! A chance to show them that He wasn't actually as terrible as they all thought! But someone crashed the party. A woman who was a sinner. A nobody. Riff raff to the Pharisees. And she wanted to see Jesus. Here was His chance to make a good impression, and look who shows up! But Jesus didn't turn her away. Quite the opposite. He doesn't care if people think he's a joke by paying attention to her. He lets her wash His feet. The party guests are disgusted. But He doesn't apologize for His actions, or for hers. Instead He teaches them a parable and

then He forgives her. And before she can incur any wrath or embarrassment from the onlookers, he lets her leave quietly, with her dignity intact.

Jesus was never too busy for people. He knew what things could fall by the way side so that His attention could be directed to what was the most important. When I read these stories in the scriptures, I find myself engaged in the following self-talk:

“If you are too busy for people, you are too busy. If you are too busy for your family, you are too busy. If you are too busy to read your scriptures, you are too busy. If you are too busy to help someone who is asking for help, you are too busy.”

Now, by saying all of this, I do not mean to imply that self-care is not important. Because it is. Jesus definitely took time to ground himself spiritually, emotionally and mentally by taking time to spend alone, to pray, to fast, to spend time in nature. And perhaps this was how He was able to give so much to others. He was already grounded and had aligned Himself with Heavenly Father. It's an important thing to consider as we look around and ask if we are doing enough. We cannot shortchange ourselves or our own needs before we decide to look outward.

Picture yourself on December 31st, 2019. You've had another long year, full of ups and downs. You're tired, pulling out the toothpicks to prop your eyes open so you can say you stayed up until midnight with the kids. You start to think about 2019 and what happened to you. You ask yourself:

Did I show up for what really mattered this year? Am I closer to the Savior now than I was at the beginning of the year? Do I wish I spent more time doing something? Do I wish I spent less time doing something? Did I spend my time really living? Or was I just going through the motions and checking each day off the calendar?

I've always loved this quote by Marjorie Pay Hinckley that puts life into perspective for me a bit and encourages me to really live life to the fullest:

“I don't want to drive up to the pearly gates in a shiny sports car, wearing beautifully, tailored clothes, my hair expertly coiffed, and with long, perfectly manicured fingernails. I want to drive up in a station wagon that has mud on the wheels from taking kids to scout camp. I want to be there with a smudge of peanut butter on my shirt from making sandwiches for a sick neighbors children. I want to be there with a little dirt under my fingernails from helping to weed someone's garden. I want to be there with children's sticky kisses on my cheeks and the tears of a friend on my shoulder. I want the Lord to know I was really here and that I really lived.”

As we head into the new year and a shorter church meeting schedule, the Lord has given us some time back. What will we do with it? Will we see it for the opportunity that it is? And by opportunity, I don't mean that the Sunday nap can just stretch a bit longer. And trust me, I love to nap. In the words of Jim Gaffigan, I am a “nap enthusiast.” But will we take the time and do what He has asked us to do with it and be joyful about the request? I look at this extra hour as such a gift. It's almost like Heavenly Father sees how jam packed our lives are, how many demands are on us for our time and He says, ok. I'm going to make it

a little easier. I'm going to give you some time back. That's something that rarely happens in today's world. And with that time, He asks that we really live. That we spend it with the people we love the most, talking and learning about the things that matter the most.

But why limit it to just an extra hour every week? Isn't there more we can be doing with our families to really connect? Is there less we should be doing of something else to make sure that we are spiritually where we need to be? Do we need to start saying no to some things so that we can say yes to others?

I know that the Savior is mindful of what our lives are like in today's world. He feels our stress. He sees our overwhelm. He wants to help. I bear testimony that if we let Him, if we make room for Him first, our lives will become more balanced, more rich, more fulfilling and the problems will seem less crushing. I am so grateful for His ability to calm our storms, to bring peace to us all, through His simple, unfailing love that is available for each one of us.

Ashley Jensen [Back to Top of the Document](#)



## 57. Baptism Misconceptions

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This next dialog is actually one of the weekly follow up notes I would send to the parents of the 7-8 year olds we taught!

Dear Parents of these super kids.

The thing I like about teaching youth is that I need to understand it deeply to distill it, make it simplified enough to be received, but the truth is - *that's* the way I need to hear it so that I can receive it and make it real.

### **Today's lesson was a simple enough title, "I can Be Like Jesus"**

REALLY? HOW! He walks on water, commands the wind, moves mountains & heals the acutely sick and deformed? Goodness, I'm still struggling with knot tying and occasionally squabbling over toys!

So exactly what do you mean?

But before we got to that, two other short but keen lessons came to the foreground. I wrote a short phrase on one of the student's paper, "Where ever you are - BE THERE, fully." This brought some conversation about the Holy Spirit instructing us as we are prepared , attentive, listening, and eager to receive and respond.

Entering our classroom I encountered Jeff Dance, a good friend and businessman, and I introduced him to our class as a businessman who makes deal- lots of them. The deal....I explained, often has a written contract that is an enforceable instrument, a tangible external proof of the deal, but that the real deal was struck well in advance when the hand was extended and received. (we shook hands dramatically)

What prompted this was a few comments I heard from the kids that tied baptism as THE instrument of salvation and forgiveness; THE day they would be fully clean...This is a common enough assertion but not the best nor the most enabling understanding. So, we discussed how Jesus IS the deal and its *His* hand that's outstretch **right now** to bring the atoning power to their lives **right now**. We again emphasized that Baptism is not necessarily THE moment or the only moment and to wait even a small moment to have His atoning sacrifice work in your life is a day, a week, or months way too long. We taught that forgiveness comes from accepting Christ as Alma the younger did. Baptism then is the outward symbol of that atoning event and the day to be officially numbered with the saints, to enter the 'kingdom of God', but forgiveness and salvation can be today. It was thusly recommended to take His hand **now** as it is continually outstretched.

I recall one precious child bowing her head that very moment. She recounted to me the following week that she had that moment given herself to God. A month later a young fellow approached me after his baptism and stated, "I want you to know I prayed and accepted Jesus as my savior as I was entering the water." I was very touched by that.

**Back to our lesson that day, we hit the topic nicely of Jesus, the boy**, embodied in the song "Jesus Once Was a Little Child." Steve Olsen and I - lead singers of the 'Croaking Frogs' grunge band, tried to sing and teach the song. Add tambourine and bongos and our class will be primary rock stars! But seriously, the lesson asked some giggle questions and some serious ones aimed at seeing Jesus the man; Jesus the boy as real and reachable.

Did Jesus pee his pants as an infant? Giggles but No scripture provided!  
Did he ever mess up some carpentry work piece as his Dad tried to teach him the trade? [Luke 2:52](#) teaches he grew as others - "the carpenter son" (Kids had fun trying to use an ancient draw knife on a beam.)

Did Jesus ever do something that earned a correction from his parents? [Luke 2:41-52](#)

Did Jesus ever get mad and what would be the difference between angry vs losing his temper? This story shows a calm but righteous indignation. He discussed this somewhat here. [John 2:15](#)

Did Jesus ever experience impatience? [Mark 9:19](#)

Did Jesus ever show frustration? [Math 8:26](#)

Turns out Yes is the answer to each question yet he sinned not. Sin starts in the heart and that is the best lesson for us in that we can deeply truly desire nothing but what is right even if our execution in this human condition is less than desired. Jesus, the man, the boy, is the model that is real and reachable. So, let us ask the Holy Spirit each day to reach our reaching and to strengthen our resolve to do right and to be closer to the perfection Jesus exemplified.

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## 58. Our Cluttered Lives

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Today I was asked to help clean an apartment of a newly baptized member. This new saint had made major strides turning away from alcoholism to a productive state now holding a job and attending church regularly – making real efforts to make a new life that included our Lord – and that latter part is crucial as calling upon the power of heaven will be key to any lasting change.

Entering the home, I grumbled - more than once, as I worked to remove clutter and clean grime from surfaces. At first, I marveled that so many folks would stoop to such efforts at cleaning for another whom we barely knew. Trailer after trailer of trash was removed and piles of dishes and so much more.

Then suddenly, it dawned at me that this is exactly what our Savior did for us- experiencing each of our lives, cluttered with sin and foolishness; besmirched with filth of impure thoughts and foul language and years of neglect of things of higher purpose and need.

When I prayed for forgiveness of my bad deeds done and good deeds left undone, did I appreciate that our Savior had to wade through a room full of junk and clutter and washed with his sweat and blood the left over filth so he could take away my guilt and present me anew a fresh opportunity for a new life? As I scrubbed the tangible grime readily managed with a liberal application of soap and water, what sprung to me was Jesus' own experience – begging Father to let this cup pass from him if it were possible. But he did not back away from the effort. He experienced my clutter and yours and bag after bag took the trash out and burned it so that we might not so suffer and be forever encumbered by that unwanted soil and baggage.

The dear sister, who's household was overwhelmed by the season of neglect, prayed a prayer of thanksgiving for the team of saints who came to rescue her physical debacle and humbly begged that we might see her as the Lord saw her; not defined by the mess we saw but by what the Lord knew she could now become; a prayer that well applies to each one of us who came that day to rescue *her*.

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## 59. On Approaching the Mercy Seat, a View to Atonement

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On this Easter weekend my mind is full of gratitude for the Love Jesus offers me. That he rescued a soul so rebellious and proud as mine as the hymn goes. “How was it done?” the prophet Enos asked. That question posed long ago has occupied many conversations and even books. Allegorical approaches often take two approaches that lead to some critique and may even get in the way of those who otherwise might accept the glorious message of redemption and reconciliation. Let me explain the problem and then offer another approach that may help the truth seeker. Before I do that please understand that if the various allegories, flawed or otherwise have brought you to seek and obtain a relationship with the Lord then how could I be but happy for you, but if those approaches leave you with questions that have become stumbling blocks then this next conversation might be very helpful. Those of non-Christian heritage may find this approach to understanding a very meaningful gateway.

Without much elaboration, these are the common approaches/phrases employed

- Jesus died for my sins
- Jesus paid the price for my sins
- Jesus opened the gate and set me free
- Justice was satisfied
- Jesus makes up the difference
- Jesus intercedes and the Father sees Jesus robes and not your filthy rags

To work, these approaches need to resolve some issue.

- Outside of accepting the Savior, Jesus would have to take away our future free agency and alter our makeup.
- Outside of ancient tribal warfare (blood for blood regardless of who’s), we have no acceptable concept where one person can be punished for another and call it justice.
- There is no cosmic sin accountant called “Justice” to be satisfied; unless there really is a ‘volcano god’ that needs virgins sacrificed to keep it appeased!
- Accounting for sin with a ledger (making up the difference) implies a table of punishments and misbehaviors and what does punishment (stripes) mean? When you try to add specificity to this ledger approach it breaks down.

In a somewhat longer article, I wrote a while back a view on the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus that centers on what some term Sanctification; the perfecting of the soul. I refer the reader to that somewhat longer treatment [Forgiveness and the Power of the Atonement](#).

Boiling down the article it comes to this. You need to change to be compatible with heaven and no paying off or hiding or shielding or diversionary tactics or “whipping boy” vicarious punishments will do that. If Heaven is not going to become an instant hell for our entry we

need to get the hell part out of us! If you got past that rather crude way of expressing it – good because good is what you need to be. The question then is how to get there without just becoming a robot or marionet for God. Clearly what he wants is for us to be like Him and apparently as he commanded it (Be Ye therefore Perfect), we can get there...with the help of Jesus.

But what about the many places in scripture speaking to Justice and Payment and so forth? The simple answer is that He did pay a price- a rather steep one to become acquainted not just with grief but with YOUR grief. The atonement was NOT him being punished for your crime but by experiencing your crime, pain grief and everyone else's - that was plenty punishing – to the point of drawing blood. To God, time does not exist and all events were experienced in that Garden experience. That is the miracle – that time and space and events collapsed in a singularity to be personally experienced by Jesus who thereby became savior for us all - placing him in the position of truly the kindred spirit with exactly the means and remedy - just for your unique spirit.

Justice being satisfied in that we are reformed in His image by our willing participation, His guidance and multiplying power. Heaven stays heaven lest it turn into hell – and that would simply **not** be just! Hence Justice is satisfied. This makes sense. This approach is scriptural, satisfying, bridging for all faiths and deep inside just feels right. Let me know if this insight helps or if you have a perspective of your own to add to the conversation.

All My Best and may His Holy Spirit make you His.

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## 60. Blacks and the Church

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This is a collection of links to organizations and research on the both vanguard and regressive history of the modern church and its relation to members of the African race.

In its earliest days the church under Joseph Smith was way out in front integrating the races but after the prophet's death when some black saints began taking multiple white wives the culture of separating people by race was too great a challenge and Brigham Young and others for many decades sought theological cover for finding reason to keep that status quo. This remained until the Prophet Spenser Kimball prayed for and received revelation from God that that policy was in error and should be done away with.

These links discuss these topics.

- <http://www.mormondna.org/mormons-blacks/church-know.html>
- <http://www.keepapitchinin.org/2009/12/28/the-long-promised-day/>
- <http://www.ldsgenesisgroup.org/>
- <https://www.fairmormon.org/archive/publications/what-does-the-book-of-mormon-mean-by-skin-of-blackness>
- <http://mit.irr.org/blacks-mormon-priesthood-and-book-of-abraham>
- <http://blacksinthescritures.com/skin-color-and-curses/>

***"There is a class of colored people who make a business of keeping the troubles, the wrongs, and the hardships of the negro race before the public. Some of these people do not want the negro to lose his grievances, because they do not want to lose their jobs. There is a certain class of race-problem solvers who don't want the patient to get well."***

*- Booker T. Washington*

1911

**4th Nephi 1:15** 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.

16 And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

17 There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

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## 61. Can You Earn Your Way to Heaven or suffer your way out of hell?

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In the topic [Heaven and Hell](#), I broached a topic related to purgatory or spirit prison but did not close the matter. There are those who latch on to a couple verses to the exclusion of others and conclude that one can earn, through their own suffering, a place in one of the lower kingdoms of heaven. This is the same problem Methodists might have with Presbyterians regarding the latter's advocacy of predestination. There are a few verses attributed to Paul that in their plainest read could be employed to argue for God picking and choosing the saved and the damned and then making damned sure of that outcome! Others read the same and find, with just an extra dab of sophistry, a more merciful interpretation in keeping with the general view of a loving Father and children with real agency.

While our access as Latter Day Saints to modern day revelation has helped a great deal to avoid most doctrinal trip ups, as long as there is a man between God and the rest of us there's going to be oversight, holes and ambiguities. It's the nature of language to require some iteration to clear up human errors when transcribing inspiration. This very work (this collection of essays) that I feel had the hand of God assisting me, yet has errors. Its unsettling because we want everything we attribute to God to be perfectly rendered and it may well have been perfectly communicated and yet imperfectly received or remembered and transcribed to paper. My own visionary experienced [finding God as a younger man](#) has gone through several revisions; sometimes adding significant detail missing in the 1<sup>st</sup> tell.

For Latter Day Saints, two scriptures, that have been related to the faith/works debate, get misunderstood enough that folks outside the religion have picked up on the matter; claiming our religion teaches you can work or suffer your way to heaven. The passages are these:

DC19: 16 For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; 17 But **if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;**

DC138 57 I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead.

58 The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God, 59 **And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.**

The root of the misunderstanding is rooted to the conceptualization of punishment. It is common but wrong to assert that God's justice is vengeful actively meeting out pain and

suffering to the damned. (Ref [#Forgiveness and the Power of the Atonement](#) for a thorough treatment on that fallacy)

Another approach sees punishment as experiential – a natural result. Alma described it this way:

Alma 11:43 ...and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

This is what Jesus was referring to. If your sins remain with you, the results of those sins are retained in your spirit. Those feeling of guilt cause us to separate ourselves from God. Those clear recollection of guilt are like an unquenchable fire; hell, if you will.

Ok, but what was the man of God quoted in DC138 saying then? [DC138:59 And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.](#)

Recall, he had just written about Jesus' sacrifice and His gospel of repentance being preached and then he says, "[The dead who repent will be redeemed.](#)"

He speaks of ordinances (like Baptism for the dead) then comes the comment about "[after they have paid the penalty](#)" Its not the best way, but for some pain is a powerful teacher.

Consider what Alma the Younger says about the turning of his heart.

Alma 36:12 But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

13 Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.

...

14...in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

15 Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

16 And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

17 And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, **I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.**

18 Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am bin the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

19 And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

20 And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

21 Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

If we allow the language in DC138:59 to not be sequential to 58 but simply elaborating 58 then both are simply rephrasing what Alma recounted about his experience in hell.. “[as I was wracked with pain...I remembered...](#)” Now we can see the consistency and that pain of guilt and clarity of its ramifications is hell. Hell is a harsh teacher that then brought him to reach out to Jesus, who healed and cleansed him. That cleansing made him worthy of salvation and a reward according to his works. In fine, he did not suffer *for* his sins in the sense of paying of a debt to some sin accountant, he suffered because or as a natural result of his sins. You don’t want Jesus, OK see what a clear recollection of all your guilt feels like...some serious suffering (as I have suffered!) That is what Jesus was saying in DC19 You can learn the easy way or the hard way, but to get into the peace of heaven, you have to be heavenly....Thats why the Holy writ says “the dead WHO REPENT will be redeemed” “and washed clean and shall then receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation.”

It is understandable how a simple read can be interpreted one way or another, but taken in context and in light of all we believe about the central role of Jesus, to make an exception that one could go to any part of heaven without accepting and being cleansed and readied for heaven is out of character; actually unprecedented. A faithful understanding of the love of God and Jesus’ atonement allows us to see the majestic truth that His hand is continually outstretched to all his children; even in death to those who may have previously rejected Him. It is His atoning sacrifice and that alone that can bring us all (who will) home; By His balm we are transformed, sanctified and made worthy and compatible with the mansion He prepared for us.

In other words, one neither earns your way to heaven nor suffers one’s way out of hell to get to heaven. Only through the balm of Gilead, prescribed by the great physician himself and applied by the Holy Spirit, can we be transformed, refined and made compatible (justified *or aligned*) with the heaven we are now made worthy to partake in.

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## 62. Who was Jesus and Why Did He have to Die?

Who was Jesus? How did he do what he did for humanity and why in particular did he have to die?

Setting the stage for that discussion, (see [Essay 57](#)) we begin to understand Jesus by looking at ‘Jesus the boy’ and tried to appreciate what the children’s song “Jesus Once was a Little Child” was trying to convey. Then in (See [Essay 45](#)) we examined ‘Jesus the man’; “How can someone like me ever be anything like Him?” I love this picture of Jesus overlooking Jerusalem, captured by the artist Greg Olsen.

His contemplative mood speaks to Jesus’ perplexity working with His followers who seemed to be a bit slow to catch on as illustrated by his occasional impatience...

**Math 17:16** I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not heal him.” 17“O unbelieving and perverse generation!” Jesus replied. “How long must I remain with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to Me.”



Then, we tackled the big question. Great Men of God have described Jesus as the “final Sacrifice” or augmented the theme with words like “[an infinite atonement](#)” and a host of allegorical approaches have been offered but the basic idea that one person can be punished for another’s deeds seemed unfair and conceptualizing paying off a debt seemed non-effectual. In Alma, the Man of God makes this very point

**Alma 34:8–12** 11 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.

But then Amulek kind of throws up his hands and says that *this* is something else. He doesn’t know how to describe *it* other than to say ‘*its* Infinite’.

**12** But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.

Taken on its face it could be read like “Yes, it’s the wrong concept but if the wrong thing is done infinitely then it becomes a right!” I don’t think that was his intent. He simply did not have the words to explain that *this* atonement would be “infinitely” *different in both its scope method and end effect*. In fine, if the point of punishment is to effect change, how does punishing the wrong person accomplish the goal? It wouldn’t. Jesus’ atonement must mean something different. In fact, the word used is the tell. (To become one with or to unite with)

Those topics were previously addressed in [Essay 59](#) and in much more detail in the seminal [Essays 30](#) wherein we discussed the metaphysical Jesus; His atoning sacrificial experience between all of us and Himself. That miracle, by any human understanding, permits our



effective healing and reformation – even our sanctification, being made ready to experience heaven, having become heavenly.

So clearly to bring his children home, as we also learn in the ‘Parable of the Prodigal Son’, God Holds back nothing to that end. What is taking place is that important! This is poignantly captured in the famous utterance:

For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting. ... For God loved the world in this way **John 3:16**: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

But why then the *final* sacrifice of his mortal life? Why is his untimely, even violent death, integral and concluding to Jesus’ atoning experience? The key concept clarified in the Book of Mormon is that Jesus’ atoning sacrifice largely took place in the Garden of Gethsemane, away from the eyes of the crowd; the pain unseen and unperceivable by all but Jesus.

DC 19 18 Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

Even the great drops of blood went largely unseen as an angel attended him in the ordeal. What the people saw was the subsequent public spectacle; the betrayal, the public lies, the rejection by the crowd, the spitting, flogging and finally the heavy cross and the cruel nails. That was a sacrifice they could palpably understand and empathize with.

Jesus foretold of the spectacle of His final hour paraphrasing ‘I will die in Jerusalem at the hands of the Elders and the Gentiles’ and yet be glorified as to My person’. In this allegorical statement He speaks of the important outcome:

**John 12:23-24** But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

It is said Jesus experienced life *like* us and in the garden atoning experience He actually experienced us; personally, individually. Experienced life like us? How so?

He was born in poverty, a refugee, a blended family, rejected by at least some brothers and then by his whole town attempting to kill him; a recurring theme later. He was a vagabond, a homeless wanderer, experiencing temptations of all kinds, fame to failure. Remember his plea\_ **John 6:67** “will you leave me also”...Triumph in the grand Jerusalem entrance and then quickly back to back tragedy and betrayal. He suffered the death of his earthly father and also his dearest friend Lazareth. Then simply the Holy writ says,

**John 11:35** Jesus Wept.



OK but why die an ignominious death or die at all? I think it comes to this.

**Philippians 2:10** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Based on his life, his personally experiencing you, all will know and confess that nothing we experience was outside the scope of Jesus's understanding. He truly is the kindred spirit. But He was not only like us in life's experience, but also in death. Nephi speaks of Jesus conquering both Death AND Hell His atonement began in that garden but finished on the cross. He Descended below *all* things; nothing held back, even his life.

But If he had to suffer , could it not have been foreshortened? Perhaps, but time means nothing to God and even we ourselves cannot feel time once it has passed but is simply recalled as a series of events.

Of all the gifts we hold dear, life is above all most precious and we cling to it tenaciously, yet Jesus held nothing back. He is my Hero in the truest sense of the word.

**John 15:12** ...love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

As for redeeming Death and demonstrating conclusively that man is a spiritual being having a *mortal* experience, that there is ultimate justice and eternal mercy, He had to first die just like the rest of us and that death needed to be so public that no one could reasonably deny that Jesus of Nazareth died. If a claim is to be made that the bands of death have been broken, the death to begin with needed to be witnessed and by a lot of people!

**Acts 26:26** For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

The key preface for the Book of Mormon likewise lays claim:

**1 Nephi 13:40** ...and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.

I love that line, "This thing was not done in a corner!" To triumph over death, to demonstrate and provide confidence that there is life after death, Jesus needed to return FROM the dead. So, His death could not reasonably be faked. Likewise, Jesus' resurrection had to be witnessed by many people in different locations. Ascending from his last visit (40-day ministry) 500 folks saw him. That his faith propagated so quickly, that all his apostles and thousands of his followers willingly gave themselves to gruesome deaths to defend their faith, speaks to the veracity of the claim that many many people saw and witnessed to their dying breath that Jesus lived AFTER death.

Finally, let me add my own testimony that I asked God the Father in Jesus name if He was and is. He came through the intercession of the Holy Spirit to me in my mind and heart and healed me and revealed a new way of being. I became a new creature after experiencing Jesus. So that's how I know He lives and what a comfort that sweet sentence is. Ref my personal story See [Essay47.How the Scriptures Brought Me to Christ](#)

Ref Hymn by Samuel Medley

I know that my Redeemer lives.  
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead.  
He lives, my ever-living Head.  
He lives to bless me with his love.  
He lives to plead for me above.  
He lives my hungry soul to feed.  
He lives to bless in time of need.  
He lives to grant me rich supply.  
He lives to guide me with his eye.  
He lives to comfort me when faint.  
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.  
He lives to silence all my fears.  
He lives to wipe away my tears.  
He lives to calm my troubled heart.  
He lives all blessings to impart.  
He lives, my kind, wise heav'nly Friend.  
He lives and loves me to the end.

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### 63. OK, But What About Church History?

I have thought long about our conversation I had with an old friend who when confronted by works of opposition to our faiths early history had come to question not only the faith but faith altogether. I was recently introduced to a marvelous historian who runs a fireside style blog site on [Facebook called HistoryOfTheSaints by Rawson](#). He speaks intimately to the roots of those concerns.

Ignoring my own personal unimpeachable interactions with God on these matters, the analytical logical side of me has to manage the conflict of evidence. The naysayers have been doing yeoman's work for 200 years to attempt to build a circumstantial case for a cabal of conspirators; Rigdon, Cowdery, Smith plagiarizing and making up perhaps the grandest fraud of all time. Why such a dedicated effort to bring down another faith is maybe worth its own book, but for my study, the problem rests on the utter lack of real hard evidence. There is no silver stake to the heart such as a claimed "Manuscript Found" nor can you go to a museum to view for yourself the lab certified golden plates. So, we can but look to witnesses...and there are quite a few.

We have in fact a plethora of unimpeachable witnesses not part of 'The Three Amigos' comprising the proposed conspirators. There are so many people beyond the inner trio, who like that inner circle, lost all, and many who became completely, ferociously disaffected from Joseph. It's just flat out unprecedented for so many of a disintegrating conspiracy to hold such a terribly intricate secret to everyone's last breath. Keeping that stupendously complicated lie straight would be quite a deal!

Then we have those who intimately knew the trio and experienced miracles and revelation. Consider how many touched and saw the tokens of the story and never recanted either. Like Martin Harris losing his wife and farm and being humbled many times for his trouble. Such a cabal there never was! Even when everything is falling apart, all is lost and your very life has been nearly lost and threatened again....and again...and for what? Even after the focus of the story, Joseph, is gone, voluntarily going to his certain death (for the lie???), the company comes back to join themselves once again with NOTHING but debasement and humility to be rewarded with. Yet each man, each woman goes to their graves with the truth of the gospel story on their lips. Now that is some kind of spellbinder - I'd have to say.

The remarkable thing is that millions and millions of the world's peoples who never saw the tokens marking the origins of the church and have been challenged to do just one thing, "Ask God?" and they walk away with their own "Golden Plates" experiences that changes their lives forever.

In one case, some fellow or gal oddly spends a good chunk of their life to weave together a tale of circumstantial stories to argue an origin in lies and more often than not the non-existence of God and his hand in our lives. On the other hand, we have numerous folks with personal intimate hands-on knowledge of all the particulars and stuck to the story of an honorable but flawed prophet and gold plates and an alive and very active God.

I just look back using Occam's Razor as a guide for my logic. What is more reasonable or at least plausible?

My hard logic favors the LDS story. My own experiment with God matches that logic so there is no cognitive dissonance as the testimonies match my own reality.

Glen Rawson is a historian and master story teller who draws often from more obscure but verified journals and letters to give you a close in, behind the scenes, view that will make the few stories offered by the haters dissipate like mold under intense light. His firesides should be a must hear to every person struggling with what they been presented as "logic". If someone has woven a circumstantial tale that has caused you to question your own experiences with God, then listen to some of the witnesses who were there. Lend an ear to back stories you probably never heard or as Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story".

In that light, I highly commend [this Video Blog called HistoryOfTheSaints by Rawson](#) for your consideration.

God is real, I've heard all sides to this topic and weighed the evidence and found the naysayers wanting and God's restored Kingdom of Jesus Christ to be exactly what it purported to be.

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## 64. Flattery and Pride

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FLATTERY and PRIDE; It's an unusual but repeated them in the Book of Mormon that for many years I could not relate with - It would describe how a personality would use flattery to gain prominence - I could not understand how that would be and then this year it finally hit me what they were talking about.

We often think about flattery is a direct statement, but that is easily spotted and just as easily dismissed as gratuitous but when flattery is indirectly applied our alerts are not piqued and we can be subtly seduced.

Consider a sports team for your town and how so many people attach their sense of well-being to whether the team wins or losses. Consider how often a politician is promoted; so smart, so successful... like the equivalent of the English Royals - they become celebrities and surrogates for our own popularity or success. Vote for us. We are smart. We are popular and if you support us - you vicariously are smart & popular.

We saw this play out with the election of one of the US presidents. "Oh he's a college professor - He's so smart and he's black"....the implication - if you vote for him *you* must be smart and as a bonus *you* receive absolution for your white guilt! Such a deal; you get Flattered and Pride boost in one pull of the lever!

In contrast consider the election of another president with none of the spit and polish of a politician who appealed to the people and won. His detractors incessantly posited that he was unpopular with both celebrities and especially with Europeans that 'we desperately need approval from as they are always sooo sophisticated with Oh those wonderful accents.' The implication not so subtly delivered was that 'If he's not popular with Hollywood or sport 'heros' you don't want to hook your horse to *that* wagon! What would that say about you! Clearly only rubes and peasants would support such a bumbkin in the Whitehouse.'

And thus by subtle flattery and appeal to pride, the adversary leads even good people carefully down to subjugation. The Book of Mormon repeatedly teaches us to liken the scriptures to you own day to be especially aware of Pride and Flattery. Now I see why.

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## 65. Do You Worship the Great and Terrible Oz?

I had a pleasant, but in the end, a rather disturbing conversation the other day with a co-founder of a Christian based youth organization, Trail Life, aimed at replacing what the BSA organization had provided before its drift to the left.

At some point in our rather lengthy probing conversation he just came out and said it; ironically couching that while he was not the judge he was certain that only possibly a few members of my church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, would be saved and our worship of a “different Jesus, or God” disqualified us from participation in any sponsorship or leadership role in their group!

Some years back on the first climbing adventure with an evangelical acquaintance, my friend admitted that prior to meeting me that, “He didn’t think it was possible for a Mormon to be saved, but feeling the spirit of God in all our conversations he concluded that the only way that was possible was if I was saved; a thought he had never thunk!” I suppose based on that and according to Trail Life’s “non-judgmental” co-founder, I must be one of the very few lucky Mormons destined to squeak my way past the pearly gates after all.

So, what’s all this angst about anyway? When I was a young man, I read a book that dealt with Christian dogmas in early American history. I remember reading the official catechisms of several prominent faiths. Several of them shocked me due to their remarkably uncharitable positions. One, I set to memory said:

“the gateway of hell are lined with the skulls of little children who died unbaptized.”  
“Gosh,” I thought, “can reasoning folk actually believe God to be so obviously cruel???”

I kind of dismissed this until, as a missionary, I knocked on a door in Norway. The man who answered seemed dumbfounded that we would waste our time preaching to a “Christian” nation when, said he,

“...millions of Africans are dying and going to hell from lack of our preaching.”

You might dismiss this as definitely fringe, rather than official as it once was, but I have to relate than one too many a “Christian” minister has taken the pulpit recently and even locally to warn their congregations of the hell awaiting the “un-saved” Mormons. The remarkable thing about such polar teachings is the incongruent assertion from many a sect that all Christian roads lead to Heaven, except that is ... the Mormon road; they are going to hell for sure along with heaps of Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, atheists and other assorted agnostics!

Of those religions professing Jesus, it has been my experience that for most, the egalitarian position that all churches are equivalently acceptable stops short as soon as one’s proselytizing efforts robs one congregation’s coffers of parishioners (contributors). I suppose that may sound cynical, but Christ’s sharpest critics and Joseph’s as well were always those who stood to lose power and money. It truly is the Achilles heel of any religion led by a paid clergy. They are inherently unmotivated to seek truth beyond their own borders.

The lynch pin of their anxious concern is the claim that “how you imagine ‘God the incomprehensible’ in your finite puny mind” somehow precludes the immensity of God to respond with grace to you and to accept your striving to reach him. If you do not visualize

'the invisible God' the way they visualize what can't be seen in the flesh, then that great and terrible Oz will strike you down and roast you in unbearable torment – not 'til you wise up and get the right vision, but for all eternity!

Do I paint the picture correctly or do I exaggerate? I may have spoken starkly and perhaps a bit glibly, but I lay the claim out as their parishioners would have heard it - minus the wise crack about Oz; I'll admit.

When they say "You worship a different Jesus or God" – there might well be something to that. But, does how we worship change God? What does 'to worship' or 'to Love' mean anyway?

The scriptures teach to Love God:

**Math 22:36-37** "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?" Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment....

Let's start with what is meant by those words, "worship" and "Love." The 1st commandment speaks to exactly those words, but words are symbols for thoughts and actions. When we say, "I love a person," there are two paths:

- 1) A relationship involving communication or exchange of benevolence. He grants me blessing. He inspires me, He saves me, Etc. This speaks to a personal, intimate experience.
- 2) An admirable characteristic; a superlative of perfection in some characteristic: Counselor, Everlasting, All Powerful, All Knowing, All Loving, All Wise, Full of Grace and Truth, the Prince of Peace, Etc.

Addressing the 2nd, I just have to ask the reader, if we added to the list of God's attributes these other superlatives - tormentor, capricious, dictator, ferocious, unmerciful, illogical, angry....would those words describe the being that roasts Mormons and Hindus and unsaved Africans alike – and that even for his good pleasure as the Calvinists actually believe and write extensively about??

He who would know called us His children. He claims to love us and extends His hand to us to bridge the gap and that hand is continually outstretched. Is it then consistent with a loving Father that if you can't comprehend his astrophysics and calculous in time that he will beat you with fire brands and pull your fingernails with unending tortures? Is that what FEAR God was intended to mean?

May I suggest that God is NOT a creature of our mental gymnastics – NOT a creature of our construction or puny imaginations. And if your imaginations or visualization as a child changes and expands or even shrinks as an adult, that same God that answered your prayer as a child is still there to reach your reaching as an adult however you attempt to see the invisible power that made us all.

If your God is a god of peace and magnanimity, then perhaps we do worship the same God after all. But regardless of the nature or your worship, God will not change for your imagining nor alter his nature whatever name or language you use to reach Him. He will still be there and I'm confident will reach your reaching because he reached mine and made me a new creature and set my feet on a new path. He replaced my stony heart with



a fleshy one. I know that Jesus Lives because he answers my prayers and saves me and since I am not unique I'm quite certain my experience can be duplicated.

A dear LDS friend Jay Whiting responded to the same critique in this wise – a sentiment I fully endorse,

“I worship the Jesus who died on the cross for me, who suffered and bled from every pore for me, who rose again the third day and overcame death and ...who still lives today! The Jesus whose grace sets me free, who forgives my sins and floods my soul with the Holy Ghost every time I come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, whether it be from godly sorrow for my sins, or the misfortunes and trials of life, or even when the weight of my gratitude and love for Him and all He gives me - causes my heart to break in thanks and praise!”

All my best to you fellow seekers,

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## 66. Diversity or Unity?

In this recent election each party or candidate made every effort to show their special difference - the reason you should vote for them. Fair enough but after the dust settles on these contests the real work of governing and living together in peace and prosperity begins. If we continue to focus on that Diversity Without emphasizing Unity (common goals and aspirations) it can only lead to Destructive Chaos.

But With common goals and Unity, like glue in plywood, the whole is far stronger than the sum of the parts. In a previous post I had pointed out that Our nation's flag, with its stripes, stands for such diversity of people's and regional interests - working together and bound to each other by the aspirational goals of Peace Justice and Liberty for All.

Likewise, those 50 stars represent each state's commitment to those unifying goals declaring that, 'Together We Are Great.'

These are critical understandings as popular culture, businesses and political parties beat this drum of multiculturalism as if in an end to itself and the results are a society that at times seems at the verge tearing itself apart!

You can have peace and prosperity with a unified mono culture or with a unified poly-culture but nothing will go well if the emphasis is on the differences rather than what is in common.

So, tolerate diversity; appreciate its value, even enjoy its variety but above all else, Celebrate Unity! Jesus said it this way, "If you are not one you are not mine" and later reminded his followers that "a house divided cannot stand."

Let us all find unity in the message of 'Old Glory' as we collectively lock arms and strive for the common goals of Peace, Justice and Liberty for All.

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## 67. How Common is Common Sense?

You look at the political map and two things emerge about areas around the big cities where government dependency is high and tech areas where the number of folks with formal education is high. What causes otherwise intelligent people to chose evil and captivity over righteousness and liberty?

It's been my observation that "common" people have retained the most common sense. I'm finding that being highly educated is just a nice way of saying there's a good chance you've been highly indoctrinated and brainwashed. Yes, it may have taken 4 years or even 8 but it's effective at Washing almost any common sense out of a good many of them...not all but all together too many.

It's surprising how many of those, who like myself, are "degreed" can't tolerate even a simple conversation about what I'll call 'the nonsense of human cause global warming' or what is patently obvious - 'the human caused pandemic!'

These educated fools will literally shut the conversation down as heresy. The intellect that both educated and common folk posses is blinded by fanatical devotion to what is no more nor less than the secular dogma of earth worshipers.

They even sacrifice babies on alters to appease the gods of their own making. These modern day high priests of Baal learned well from the ancient dictators on how to appeal to sensuality and devalue persons to no more than commodities soon to vanish.

But those who resist the messages from the re-education camps, who reject the siren songs of their cultural high priestesses manage to retain that God given common sense that tells us we are of Eternal Value; why? because we are the very children of God and what a difference that makes when we recognize our rights are NOT granted by a democratic majority but are inalienable. Thomas Jefferson was spot on when he declared what every 'common' man still understands, that "we hold these truths self evident."

And so it is.

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## 68. Flattery and the Pride Cycle Today

I think there are some folks that so prefer the flattery of smooth-talking politicians they will countenance virtually any evil from communism to tearing baby's apart limb from limb as long as they speak sweet nothings into our "itching ears". If there is any lesson I learned from the Book of Mormon, it was how flattery and pride could be used by smooth talkers. Dangling shiny object, they could bamboozle even virtuous populations into society destructive actions. Jesus warned and advised us to use a tree's fruit as proof - not the outward appearance and language and "to avoid heaping upon ourselves teachers, having itching ears."

FLATTERY and PRIDE is a repeated theme in the Book of Mormon that for many years I could not relate with - It would describe how a personality would use flattery to gain prominence - I could not understand how that would be and then this year it finally hit me what they were talking about.

We often think about flattery is a direct statement, but that is easily spotted and just as easily dismissed as gratuitous but when flattery is indirectly applied our alerts are not piqued and we can be subtly seduced.

Consider a sports team for your town and how so many people attach their sense of well-being to whether the team wins or losses. Consider how often a politician is promoted; so smart, so successful... like the equivalent of the English Royals - they become celebrities and surrogates for our own popularity or success. Vote for us. We are smart. We are popular and if you support us - you vicariously are smart & popular.

We saw this play out with the election of Barak Obama. Oh he's a college professor – He's so smart and he's black....the implication – if you vote for him you must be smart and as a bonus you receive absolution for your white guilt! Such a deal; you get Flattery and Pride in one pull of the lever!

In contrast consider the election of Donald Trump. His detractors promoted that he was unpopular with celebrities and Europeans that we desperately need approval from as they are always sooo sophisticated with Oh those wonderful accents. If he's not popular with Hollywood or sport 'heroes' you don't want to hook your horse to that wagon! What would that say about you! Clearly only rubes and peasants would support such a bumkin in the Whitehouse.

And thus, by subtle flattery and appeal to pride, the adversary leads even good people carefully down to subjugation. BOM repeatedly teaches to be aware of Pride and Flattery. Now I see why.

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## 69. Can God achieve his ends even with flawed People

There is a scripture in the book of Ether about a King Morianton:

10 And after that he had established himself king he did ease the burden of the people, by which he did gain favor in the eyes of the people, and they did anoint him to be their king.

11 And he did do justice unto the people, but not unto himself because of his many whoredoms; wherefore he was cut off from the presence of the Lord.

12 And it came to pass that Morianton built up many cities, and the people became exceedingly rich under his reign, both in buildings, and in gold and silver, and in raising grain, and in flocks, and herds, and such things which had been restored unto them.

I am not suggesting this describes any of the current candidates but this scripture is instructive. This election is not about a Man, it's about a tipping point for a radical departure from the America our founder bequeathed to us.

In an interview with Bernie Marcus, the founder of Home Depot was asked.

"Why are you voting for Trump? He's rough, rude, aggressive—completely un-presidential. I don't understand."

Bernie smiled and quietly replied.

"Well, you know, I thought about General Patton. He used coarse language, his manners weren't pleasing to the ladies, and his language sure offended a lot of Christians. But we needed him to win a war. Trump is our General Patton, and we're in a war we have to win."

I believed then and I believe even more strongly now that our battle is against powers and principalities. And in a war between good and evil, we've seen the demons loosed and the masks come off. Evil forces aren't even pretending to be civil anymore. I am on my knees for my children and grandchildren; I'm daily interceding in prayer for my beloved country, my cherished Christian heritage, and so much more. With all due respect and appreciation for the kind, well-spoken orators, it's time to wake up and welcome our General Patton."

This speech should be heard by every man

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## 70. Communism: Satan's counterfeit for the gospel plan by President Benson

If a party is leaning towards socialism/communism...it is leaning to weaken individual liberty...and constitutional law.

"Communism is not a political party nor a political plan under the Constitution; it is a system of government that is the opposite of our Constitutional government. ...

"Since Communism, established, would destroy our American Constitutional government, to support Communism is treasonable to our free institutions, and no patriotic American citizen may become either a Communist or supporter of Communism. ...

"We call upon all Church members completely to eschew [shun] Communism. The safety of our divinely inspired Constitutional government and the welfare of our Church imperatively demand that Communism shall have no place in America" (signed: Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay, The First Presidency, in *Deseret News*, 3 July 1936; italics added).

More recently, President Marion G. Romney, in the First Presidency Message in the September 1979 *Ensign*, wrote:

"Communism is Satan's counterfeit for the gospel plan, and ... it is an avowed enemy of the God of the land. Communism is the greatest anti-Christ power in the world today and therefore the greatest menace not only to our peace but to our preservation as a free people. By the extent to which we tolerate it, accommodate ourselves to it, permit ourselves to be encircled by its tentacles and drawn to it, to that extent we forfeit the protection of the God of this land" (p. 5).

The truth is, we have to a great extent accommodated ourselves to Communism—and we have permitted ourselves to become encircled by its tentacles. Though we give lip service to the Monroe Doctrine, this has not prevented Cuba from becoming a Soviet military base, ninety miles off our coastline, nor has it prevented the takeover of Nicaragua in Central America, the surrender of the Panama Canal, or the infiltration by enemy agents within our American borders.

A Witness and a warning

***Ezra T Benson:*** was President of the church when He testified of this truth. [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## **71. Cancel Culture by Unknown Author**

I used to think I was pretty much just a regular person, but I was born into a two-parent household which now labels me as "Privileged". I am a fiscal and moral conservative, which by today's standards, makes me a fascist because I plan & budget. But I now find out that I am not here because I earned it, but because I was "advantaged" and stayed in school..


I am heterosexual, which according to some folks, now makes me a homophobe. I believe the Lord did not give me the heart to judge others. I am not a Muslim, which now labels me as an infidel. I believe in the 2nd Amendment, which makes me a threat to the liberals. I am older than 40, making me a useless person with outdated ideas and values. I think and I reason, and I doubt much of what the "mainstream" media tells me, which makes me a "Right-wing conspiracy nut".

I am proud of my heritage and our inclusive American culture, making me a xenophobe. I believe in hard work, fair play, and fair compensation according to each individual's merits, which today makes me a target of socialists and Antifa. I believe our system guarantees freedom of effort - not freedom of outcome or subsidies which must make me a borderline sociopath.

I believe in a strong defense and protection of America for and by all citizens, now making me a militant. I am proud of our flag, what it stands for and the many who died to let it fly, so I stand and salute during our National Anthem - so I must be a sell out. I kneel only for The Father, which makes me racist. I think that all lives matter, which labels me as a racist. I think the riots and destruction of property around our country are wrong and are just an excuse to push a political agenda, so I'm labeled a racist.

I support our law enforcement, servicemen and women, which labels me as an Uncle Tom.

I question how fear is being used to control us during the COVID-19 pandemic and think the crisis is being used for political gain, so I'm labeled careless and non-sympathetic. Yet I know the virus is real.

Liberals have tried to make me feel bad about who I am! Based on everything above, some want me to believe I am a bad person; I'm not, I'm a good person who loves my God, my family and my country  God bless America!

**Unknown author**

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## 72. Manifesto For Peace and Change

The narrative that some are being oppressed based on race pushed by the BLM movement was spearheaded initially by Obama and currently is enthusiastically being backed by the Democrat party as our cities burn. Others, not aware of the communist agenda behind BLM, have fallen in line, either believing the propaganda or in some cases essentially buying protection from the mob.

But there is a deep wound being created and enlarged daily by telling people they should be aggrieved. Like the stories in the Book of Mormon, segments of the society are being taught to hate and feel ripped off. Sideling up to the BLM narrative in any way is setting the stage for our society being torn apart.

This man's hatred ([Ref Article](#)) springs from the BLM movement.

To turn this emerging civil strife to a healthier place, where we can all live in peace and prosperity of our own devices, these 4 points are made manifest:

- We need to educate, embarrass and or shame ANY movement or action (starting with this one) that is based on anything beside the content of a person's character.
- We need to remove from the Law books ANY vestige that accounts for or provides advantage based on anything beside the content of a person's character.
- We need to outlaw any employment application that accounts for or provides advantage or disadvantage based on anything beside the content of a person's character and his skills for the job.

We need to remove from office anyone who does not support this manifesto.

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### 73. What This War is All About?

I have always been pointed and outspoken, but of late I have been rather strident (perhaps too strident for my more liberal minded friends) about the war we are entering. Yes, I said war. In a moment I will bring to bear what 3 modern day prophets had to say about this, but I must first speak to a psych-ops that has been perpetrated on our population, preparing the minds of many of our people for the unfolding events of late bringing us to the edge of a political revolution:

In a discussion recently, a couple friends claimed to Not be trying to push a opinion, just a conversation...yet by the things posted and commentary that's exactly what was taking place, but why would there be a claim of some moral superiority to feign some aloof detachment from the obvious position being asserted?

There has been an idea pushed about for some years now that to be uncommitted in a thought was somehow equivalent to being open minded and thus a place of moral superiority. But I think it no virtue to be *Unable* to draw informed conclusion and act and advocate thereupon.

Perhaps more in the last 50 years, notably, our schools have impressed the idea that there is no justification for violence. If a kid fights back to defend himself, both kids are suspended without question. While it might be just practical, avoiding the "who did what to who 1st," what is overtly taught is that you do Not have a right to defend yourself period; that sovereignty is transferred to the teachers or administrators no matter what the circumstances.

Even judgments are argued to be suspended in the name of tolerance of differences and promotion of "diversity" thus training up a generation with the inability to judge anything.

The adversary would have us believe that there is no absolute right and thus, no absolute wrong. This is the basis for the wave of moral relativism sweeping the western world. The society's PC police will take care of the thinking for you. Our intellectual sovereignty is expected to be transferred to the collective.

Covid has actually been a very useful tool to reinforce the abrogation of personal choice and to prepare the population to total dependency on the state. They are taking away freedom of choice. They are taking over business and outlawing religious practice. Any question as to motives or methods is met with almost religious fervor and even violence.

The LDS people have a somewhat expanded understanding as to WHY the devil rebelled and it had to do with proposing to forgo man's freedom of choice – Lucifer would guarantee at least outward righteousness and for that feat, he would ascend even greater than God....Do you see now why there is so much alignment with the former Slave Masters, the Democrat elites and the Communist dictators?

The red thread running through them all is the "moral" justification for power and control over the underclass and pride and arrogant self-exultation on the part of the would-be ruling class. Believe me Democrats feel great self-satisfaction spending your money to attempt to fix some underclass's problem. Just the attempt is sufficient to achieve the euphoria of the power trip; results can always be improved with more money... next election cycle.

Please listen to what the prophets said!

The Prophet Ezra T Benson wrote,

"It is a time, therefore, that every American become alerted and informed about the aims, tactics, and schemes of socialism and communism which are essentially a war against God and [his] plan for [our] salvation, which is based on freedom of choice."

The Prophet David O McKay added,

"No true [Christian] and no true American can be a socialist or a communists OR support programs leading in that direction! These Evil philosophies are incompatible with Americanism and the true gospel of Jesus Christ."

Apostle ,Statesman, Legal Professor, Ruben J Clark said,

"The paths we are following, if we move forward thereon, will inevitably lead us to socialism or communism and these are like two peas in a pod in their ultimate effect upon our liberties...We may first observe that communism and socialism –cannot live with Christianity, nor with any religion that postulates a Creator such as the Declaration of Independence recognizes.... under statism God must go and with Him goes freedom of conscience and of religion..."

To ignore these prophets is at one's peril and unfortunately my fate is linked to those about me. "I told you so" will hardly serve to assuage my anguish if the socialist/communist take the unfettered reigns of power over our lives this November. They are not even hiding the intent of the Sanders Socialist-communist platform!

Hear the words of these prophets if you cannot hear mine. Complaining about harsh sounding tweets as a reason to allow the communists to finally take over openly is going to sound mighty hollow. Let it not come to that. This will not be a choice between the lesser of two evils but simply which choice leads to cherishing the American way and preserving our freedoms vs one more catastrophic failed attempt at statism.

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## 74. God is not a respecter of persons. Neither should we

I watched these crazed rioters harassing and brutalizing others in the 'holy' name of anti-racism and saw even Governors and a former president pandering to the crowd self-righteously fanning the flames of anger by instantly assigning racists motive to every unpleasant encounter of a black tinted individual with police.

The worst part of Racists (clannish or tribal) attitudes is it's as infectious as Covid and is not reserved for any particular color of skin. In a recent post, a drunk white fellow was describes ranting obviously feeling threatened by all things black and was lashing back with crazed anger. Once you start this cycle rolling it can pick up momentum from all corners. It only stops with me and it stops with you.

As a young preteen (white), I was attacked by a jealous crowd (like 50) brown skinned individuals. After getting robbed and roughed up I escaped running bare foot across a field strewn with broken glass....I learned for the 1st time that one of these was not being treated like the others. I had never noticed! That's how I was raised; Jesus loves everybody...

As a high school kid walking through a doorway at school I was clobbered on the head with high heeled shoes by a group black girls. I was reminded again that one of these was not like the other. Fortunate for me I was raised in a home that knew Jesus and understood "Father Forgive them for they know not what they do."

Not everyone has that training and exposure to a more forgiving path. So, the takeaway besides inviting to "meeting" is to follow MLK's advice and behaviorally try to stop judging and treating each other by skin tone. When we identify by color, like BLM does, we *emphasize* color. For good or evil we are racist when we treat people better or worse by reason of skin color.

When we hurt someone OR benefit someone because of skin tint, we are racist either way. You might think it's helpful and altruistic and even justified to make special considerations to a person of a different skin tone, but if you do your actions are racist by definition; for your supposed good or evil.

I recall a classic Star Trek Episode where they encounter a warring people who are black on one side and white on the other. Kirk is perplexed and then flummoxed while negotiating with the two factions when finally, one of them points out that the other fellow is white on the wrong side!



From an interview with Morgan Freeman:

Mike Wallace: "How are we going to get rid of racism....?"

Morgan Freeman: "Stop talking about it. I'm going to stop calling you a white man, and I'm going to ask you to stop calling me a black man. I know you as Mike Wallace. You know me as Morgan Freeman. <https://www.cnsnews.com/.../flashback-morgan-freeman...>

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## 75. On being Committed?

One general comment. There has been an idea pushed about for some years now that 'to be uncommitted' in a thought was somehow equivalent 'to being open minded' and thus a place of moral superiority. But I think it no virtue to be unable to draw informed conclusion and act and advocate thereupon.

In my writings and public addresses, I don't discuss for amusement or to pass the time and I don't view being uncommitted to a viewpoint as a particular virtue, just an uncompleted journey.

I discuss to pass on information or to make a point if I think the data warrants that *now* informed opinion. I hear discussion to get information and logical connections and occasionally are persuaded by new data and logic to change my conclusions.

In fine, I follow the data and I strive for logic. Anyone should feel free to keep adding data and argument - preferably free of obvious logical fallacies and if I happen to trip into a fallacy myself(yes it happens), call me out on it (with verifiable data and logic). I can take it and even appreciate it!

**Paul Felt**

Steve, I hope you don't mind if I share your first paragraph in my seminary class? I'll be mixing it with James 1:8 and back to Alma 27:14... Good stuff.

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## 76. A Friend Offered "The Mormons got it right."

A Friend Offered in a conversation on social media, "The Mormons got it right" Then someone asked simply, "I'm intrigued. What did they get right?" Good question and intrigued myself I offered this exchange for consideration:

"I cant speak for my friend, but its been quite fulfilling for me. This may be a bit long to craft a brief synopsis but this comes to mind.

1) Despite the bold claims of being the restored Kingdom of God and a huge missionary outreach, it actually makes no claims of exclusive access to God or salvation or even truth, though its a great place to find all of the above.

2) The focus on Jesus is so pervasive and very much on sanctification. What I mean by that is readily found in Rom 8:16 that we are children of God with great potential because, like God, we have a spirit.

3) This very literal interpretation of the Bible (no quote marks required) makes it astonishingly clear why Jesus would take such extraordinary effort to save us; a nonsensical position if we were just Talkie-gadget 2.0. When our potential as true children is appreciated, the whole world and our troublesome experiences are seen in a whole new uplifting light.

4) With a proper understanding of who we are to God, that which was intolerable we now see a blessing to be found worthy to experience! that when He appears we shall see him, (WHY?) because we shall be like him.

5) In other words, the atonement of Jesus was not to pay off some cosmic sin accountant, but the price [Jesus paid to be acquainted with our sins](#); "By His stripes we are healed. Notice the emphasis on *becoming*, being healed. He experienced us personally and is the kindred spirit, the ultimate physician with just the right medicine for each of us.

He knows how to speak "Steve-speak." because he experienced me. Many focus on loose language about paying for sins, making Jesus to be a sort of sin smuggler (forgive the crudeness of the analogy) but Jesus' entire ministry focused on *becoming* compatible with heaven and made no such promise that with a snap of God's finger you would cease to be you.

6) Our Christian experience should be making changes daily; incrementally bringing us back to God. Too many who get "saved" are handed their "get out of hell free" card and use it freely! crucifying Jesus anew as the Bible warns. The restored gospel's emphasis (certainly not unique) on *becoming* is healthy and often refreshing.

7) Last in a list that could be much longer, is 'order.' Priesthood or the power to act in God's name, is not a free-for-all grab bag. When we get sent to do His work it's not because we lobbied and got the most votes it's because we were called and responded to that call. His house is a house of order."

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## 77. Patriotism Means What?

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What does a flag stand for... ?

Nearly 20 years ago at the beginning of the Iraq war, some folks who found fault with our nation began to protest. I found this blank ugly vacant rock retainer wall in Preston WA near our home & began putting up patriotic themed messages supportive of our troops and their mission. It became a safe place to show our love of America. In little time other patriots joined the effort and I looked on with admiration to what those patriots added.

Not all those in our midst love or appreciate America though or perhaps just focus on its deficits and at least once placed a mocking disparaging comment. In the local paper and a personal note to the individual, I publicly informed of the history and intent of that spot and I am pleased to say that for these many years that intent has largely been honored by our local citizenry.

Recently with the angst of Covid detention raising tempers and tragic events that were used to showcase grievances, a beautiful sign honoring the goals of 'Peace, Liberty & Justice' was briefly sarcastically editorialized/graffitied by what must clearly be a fundamental misunderstanding of what our nation's flag is.

Our nation's flag is NOT a monument to an accomplishment. It is a banner to rally about and toward to fight for a cause. In the last verse, seldom sung, of our national anthem are these words: "Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."

I love the sentiment that we can be justly pleased that God's blessings have yet manifest itself in so many ways that the masses of the world still flock to our shores- and for good reason - but I also love that sentiment because those who see the glass 1/2 empty, a promissory note not fully backed by those precious goals of Peace Liberty and Justice, can also rally around that flag that represents those ideals in perfect form.

Prudent citizens are able to see both sides; the progress and the deficits and are thankful to be in this great nation that deeply desire those ideals and it's people pray daily to "mend its every flaw" as the song "America the Beautiful" aspires.

To that end, to clarify the meaning of a flag, I recently added another flag just above the stated goals of "Peace Justice Liberty" with the words interwoven in the stripes and referring to the many displayed flags...

"Symbolizes Our Unity in Striving Toward Precious Ideals of..." "Peace Justice Liberty" which I think may be helpful to many.

May God bless America and soften our hearts one to another as neighbors that we as a people remain worthy of His protective hand.

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## 78. On seeing God

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Today, at church we were studying modern revelation and in particular what is called 'the 1st Vision' where Joseph Smith testifies that he saw God the Father and His Son Jesus. This has much troubled the broader Christian community, who more generally would argue, 'that's impossible,' referencing Exodus 33:20

"You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live." Ironically this was followed by the elders Seeing various parts of God...."

So you can See God....sometimes...under certain circumstances!

The problem with taking that "cannot see God" too broadly is that there are multiple places where the Bible recounts others SEEING God, in some cases explicitly 'Face to Face'. For example, Genesis 32:30 "...

"I have seen God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Even more illustrative, we have Stephen in the New Testament being stoned to death for this pronouncement, Act 7:56 ""Look," he said,

"I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."...

The narrator quoting what Stephen was heard to say was obviously trying to reconcile the "You cant See" with the "I just Saw" event by adding

"...and saw 'the glory of' God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "

It really takes a linguistic origami exercise to make that say something other than its plain meaning that *two* figures where seen.

Furthermore, if one is to argue that Jesus IS the Father and one is just a different manifestation but both are God, then clearly one CAN see God.

It follows then if one can argue that Stephen *can* SEE Jesus standing on the right hand of God, that same means would certainly be available to Joseph Smith. The advantage though is that this time the person having the visionary experience with Jesus on the Right hand of God lived long enough to write his 'own' descriptions of what happened to him rather than being interpreted by someone not actually participating in the event.

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## 79. Experimenting on God Making it Real!

**Discovering Christ** in and through the Book of Mormon & Bible

[Mosiah 5:13](#) For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?

Takeaway – If you want to know God you have to experience God

**Experiencing Christ** by:

- Personal Connection through Prayer and Scripture Study and Fellowship
- Forgiveness, Redemption and Sanctification
- Service to others and family

**Following Christ** by *Staying Focused on the Lord, Avoiding Pitfalls, Building Bridges,*

- Sharing, Reading, Praying & Serving; Keeping your eye on the ball by staying involved
- Avoiding Spiritual Crocs; Pitfalls that damage, blind and deviate your course
- Relishing uplifting experiences that build Brotherhood/Sisterhood

**Testifying of Christ** by *Recognizing and Sharing Experiences*

[Alma 32:21](#) And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.

[Alma 32:28](#) It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, **yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.**

- Shared Enlightenment – Like a great recipe - it was Delicious to me
- Outreaching to other seekers and the lost

**“TESTIMONY” can be intimidating** for a person wondering, “What do I have to offer? Where is my burning bush?” 1<sup>st</sup> of all, it’s Ok, maybe even preferable, to drop the formality; It doesn’t have to be a prayer structure. It may not even be doable to couch it so.

And for the most part few of the faithful have seen the parting of seas. Has there been a time when you felt close to God? – What was it that happened? If you felt that then can you feel so now? A burden was lifted. Guilt or remorse was transformed to joy and confidence in a new direction.

**Building “testimony” means gathering experiences with God and remembering what happened.** What about service and how you felt really good about it and it made you happy – even transformative? For example; I felt the Love of God today in our meeting. Our experience sharing dinner with Godly friends left me lifted and enlightened. I experienced a crystallization of knowledge and joy and complete comfort in that knowledge. Doubt vanished. I found a new direction. I became a new creature. I found strength to overcome.

**Just tell us what happened to you. What did you see? What did you feel? What did you experience? How were you enlightened? What burden was lifted? How have you become a better person? How were you changed? How were you healed?**

Experiment on God to find out **what is real.**

# Scientific Method for Ferreting Out Truth “I am the truth”

To discover is to un-cover what is already true Ref Alma 32:16-43(27)

## God is the ultimate scientist

God Is an astrophysicist	Let there be Light	Gen 1:3, Moses 1:4, Abr 1:31, 3:10, DC 88:12
God is an Geologist	Let waters ... gather...let dry land appear	Gen 1:9
God is a Botanist	Place vegetation on the earth	Gen 1:11
God is a Biologist	Place animals- multiply in their own sphere	Gen 1:20-25
God is Surgeon/Molecular-Biologist	Take a rib and fashion a woman	Gen 2:21; Moses 3:21
God is our Father	Let us make man..they have become .. us	Gen 1:26;
God is the great Physician/ Healer	he know[s].. how to succor his people	Alma 7:12, Jeremiah 33:6 3, Ne17:7

## God authored, approves of and uses the Scientific Method (In other words “follow the data!”)

Prove me here with	3 Nephi 24:10 (Malachi 3:10)
Trial of your Faith more precious than gold	1Pet 1:7
Witness (knowledge) comes by trial of faith	Ether 12:6:7

## The Scientific Method is God’s Method (Alma 32, James 1:4-6)

Hypothesis	A statement of faith in an idea or principle	Alma 32:26
Method	“Trial of your faith”	Alma 32:28
Analysis	“If you feel the... you must <i>conclude</i> ...”	Alma 32:29
Conclusion	Ye have tried the experiment and <i>know</i> !	Alma 32:33
+ Next Steps	“Oh then is this not real?”	Alma 32:35,42

## Experiment:

**Hypothesis:** God Exists and will make Himself known to those who sincerely seek Him. IE being willing to respond and change to *His will*. **In other words, you are 1/2 the experiment.** Math 7:7 Ask, Knock, Seek *Failure to experiment with Light leaves one IN Darkness* John 8:12, Math 13:12, 2Ne28:30

## Method -Procedures:

- Serving Fellow beings
- Immersion in His written word
- Prayer-Meditation
- Following His commands cheerfully - Experiencing is not just showing up

**Data Record Experience:** (James 1:2-8 ) listening, use your God given senses; Taste, Feel, Touch, Experience, Meditate, seek epiphany and the confirming spirit of peace/enlightenment

**Analysis/review/retry:** What did you experience? What did it mean or do within you?

- Clarity? Luke 24:32
- Peace? John 14:27.
- Enlightenment/Epiphany? Psalm 18:28, Daniel 2:22
- Forgiveness? Strength/Resolve/Determination, Love, Patience, (Alma 26:6, Alma 36:19)

**Conclusion:** If you have discovered a power greater than yourself, what will you do with that knowledge? How will that one key anchor you in the storms of difficulties and future



doubts? How will it propel you to experiment and bootstrap to become greater than you were? *Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)

## 80. What's all this Sex Stuff About anyway?

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In the secular world, IE "In the world", sexuality has always been a blur - almost since Adam and Eve left the garden. The LGBTQ... list of blurred acronyms keeps growing yearly to encompass near every variation on possible forms of human sexual expression. Even science is set aside in preference to whatever is socially convenient. **They have no datum for truth and thus no bounds to their imaginations.**

Theological apologists search for useful explanation as to the strictures nearly all religions have placed on sexual expression. But they generally do a shaky job of the explanation. Consider this opening paragraph from an article offered by 'Focus on the Family' ([Link](#)) an organization I also highly value.

"If God is both genders - or *contains* both genders - shouldn't people be free to choose their own gender identity? ...doesn't this mean that God is *androgynous* - male *and* female at the same time? If this is true, wouldn't it further suggest that human beings made "in His image" have the prerogative of being *either* male *or* female - or perhaps *both* male *and* female - according to personal preference?"

The rest of that short article uses some reasonable sophistry to claim that 'only the union of male and female is the "*locus par excellence* of the image of God in man."' He concludes with, "*This is why it is so important to maintain the distinction between male and female as originally designed and implemented by the Creator.*" In fine, speaking like a sociologist, he claims, 'this is the best way' but note while true, this is hardly something that smacks of eternal significance, like say salvation!

There is great irony in that author's sociological approach at finding reason in God's command to only join 'male and female.' It sprung from clinging to a self-imposed maxim to assiduously avoid what God keeps saying "God" is; an entity that is a unity or as Paul said, "a Godhead!"

In the garden, God said, "*let Us make man in Our image. Male and Female made He them.*" Later "*Look (who is he talking to?!) Behold, the human is become as one of us.*" **Gen 3:22**

That followed from this statement "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother*" **Gen 2:24**

Think about the fact that there is an eternal spirit that animates us and IS who we really are with or without this outer crust. That eternal spirit is what places us in the realm where God Almighty calls us "*gods and children of the most high.*" **John 10:34, Psalms 82:6.**

Now you can say, "God didn't really mean what he said or that God should have chosen His words more carefully," but I would not want to be in that position of either blindness or arrogance. How about we just accept what He said for once that His "oneness" is a descriptor of one of the attributes describing the Godhead.

Consider what Jesus said, speaking to His Father,



**John 17:21-23** That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

**22** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

**23** I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Ironically, for how the question was posed, Jesus Himself also quoted the same passage. This understanding IS the ONLY rational justification for the scriptural strictures that only male and female sexual expression joined in marriage is sanctioned by God. Clearly our male and femaleness is something of eternal importance.

**1 John 3:2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

**2 Corinthians 6:18.** "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

It is a logical fact, things that are eternal don't have a beginning or end. By extension, if our intelligence itself is eternal and that's what make you unique and real it's reasonable to deduce that even the didactic nature, our male and femaleness, is also eternal and unchangeable.

Put all that together and you can see why God in the Old Testament and Jesus (also God) claimed that We (male and female) are the Children of the most High!

While not found in the canon it had become all but cannon by the Church published songs - beautiful hymns like "Oh My Father" penned by the inspired General Relief Society President Eliza R Snow containing these famous lines that read:

3. I had learned to call thee Father,  
Thru thy Spirit from on high,  
But, until the key of knowledge  
Was restored, I knew not why.  
In the heav'ns are parents single?  
No, the thought makes reason stare!  
Truth is reason; truth eternal  
Tells me I've a mother there.

4. When I leave this frail existence,  
When I lay this mortal by,  
Father, Mother, may I meet you  
In your royal courts on high?  
Then, at length, when I've completed  
All you sent me forth to do,

With your mutual approbation  
Let me come and dwell with you

This is a rather ennobling understanding and finally explains why you are so important to God and not just Talky Gadget 2.0. Can you imagine suffering an ignominious painful death for a toy. No, the truth is so much more grand and enabling; even glorifying as He said.

**Moses 1:39** This is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and Eternal Life of man[kind].

It could be equally asserted that the work of the devil is to thwart that work and what better way than for him to confuse God's children as to their possible destiny and capability, to busy them in the present with amusements and pleasures and so lost in the fog we might wander from the brighter path and so lose our birthrights for a bowl of pottage as Esau did as recorded in Genesis 25:29–32.

It has been argued from the DC 132 that only those who show themselves capable of handling the great powers of Life and Death will have them in the hereafter. So, we can then see the theory - the doctrine behind the rules!

Is there room to recover from a wandering path. Yes! But like breaking my leg its not an easy path back and too many never do make it back.

**Shall we not rather keep a vision of who we are and what is our immense possibility as Sons and Daughters of the most High God and Live? Knowing who we are and appreciating our noble heritage is key to being true to that heritage and those eternal possibilities as Sons and Daughters of loving Heavenly parents; male and female.**

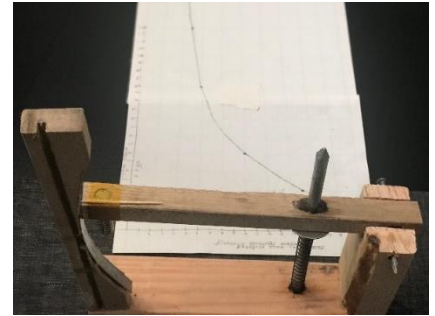
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## 81. Regarding the power of SNAP.

When we were young, our guidelines were rather simple in regards to the opposite sex; not much theory, just a line you weren't to cross. In practice, however, too many young folks crossed that guideline; even some who had at one point known the Lord. What they may not have known was the power of SNAP.

Our apostles have admonished us that "The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. ... That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel" Apostle Boyd K Packer.

Theory is another word for Doctrine. It's the reason behind the rules. Let's discuss the theory of 'magnetic attraction.' At some distance, the forces from a magnet are so small they cannot be felt at all. Only when quite close can one begin to feel even strong magnets; but cut that distance in half and the force is so strong the magnets will likely be pulled from your fingers and "SNAP!" This is because the forces are not linear but exponential. Halving the distance doesn't double the force - it quadruples it and at some point, even 8 times to force and so forth for each halving of distance. It becomes almost impossible with just your hands to control it. You can try this by hot gluing a couple magnets to popsicle sticks. Each person holds one of them at their ends so as to sense the earliest sensation of the forces and then see if you can halve the distance without...SNAP. You might glue a bit of paper or felt on one magnet's face to protect the magnets from their smashing encounter!



From some scrap laying around in the shop we made a crude apparatus to measure this relationship of force to distance with a couple neodymium magnets. Within 2 halvings, the force was flying off the chart!

Too many a young couple have found their way to the Bishop acknowledging – they had no intention of things going as far as they did. They simply had no idea of 'the power of the force' behind SNAP. They thought they were in control when they first felt the attractive force - what some call 'Animal Magnetism.'



Like real magnets, 'animal magnetism' is also an exponential force and just like the magnetic force it too is both invisible and yet very powerful. It was designed that way by God to bring men and women together – strange and both similar and yet dissimilar creatures like North and South poles to compliment each other and to hold tight together once joined.

If you are not ready for that, having joined FIRST in the bonds of marriage, then the only logic is to immediately step back when those forces/feelings are FIRST encountered - like Joseph of Egypt did when encountering a woman who wanted to entice him with *her* 'animal magnetism.'

**Joseph backed away and got some distance; the only sure way to escape the power of the force. *Brother Steve* [Back to Top of the Document](#)**

## 82. Is quantum entanglement proof of God?

'Proof' is actually and remarkably subjective, but the concept is consistent and explanatory of some of the things God is claimed to be able to do and did. For example, given our understanding of superposition of quantum wave states, the theoretical Big Bang could never have had its birthday day without a Super Consciousness switching its state by observing it. In other words, the Big Bang needed a blasting cap! That's what the Science speaks to. The Bible has it this way, 'God Spoke, and *then* there was light!'

Or how about God's acclaimed ability to communicate instantly over vast distances...If we believe the claim that nothing including communication can take place faster than the speed of light, that would be miraculous. But what if miracles are just our way of saying, 'we don't know how....yet.' But, a hundred years ago Einstein opined about "spooky interaction at a distance" a sub-space quantum behavior that is now a demonstrated reality.

If God can impact the superposition of wave states and we are claimed to be his children, then can we too impact the wave states /quantum behaviors? Turns out this too has been soundly demonstrated.

New Experiments continue to stack up showing consciousness affects matter. In over 600 experiments by university labs over several decades this effect has been thoroughly proven. Said, Dean Radin Ph.D at University of Arizona, "Consciousness is an active participant in reality". (Ref <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRSBaq3vAeY>)

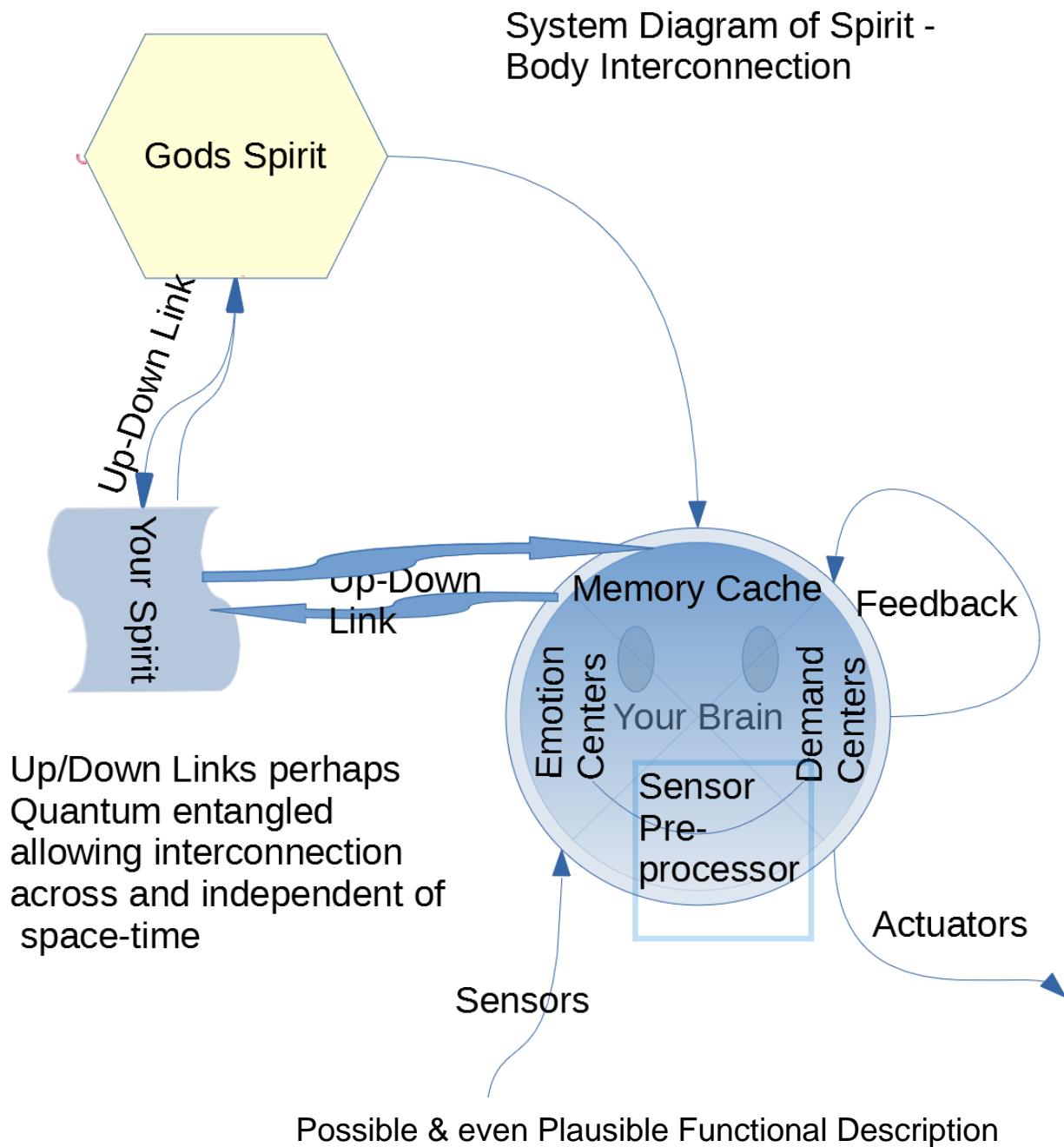
Beings of Light: A decade ago I proposed that all matter was constructed of electromagnetic waves; not that matter had wave like properties, but that is waves – light that instead of flying along in a straight line was wrapped on itself much like a baseball is wound by string, head to tail, to create a local energy minimum that was or for the most part stable. Unwrap that ball and a huge amount of energy is released as we observe in nuclear reactions. The quantity thereof is not surprisingly proportional to the speed of light squared....hmm just like all energy equations like momentum – all velocity squared... nice that it all fits together! So, the particles are simply waves wrapped on themselves to give then shape - "standing waves" or a stationary force field. In scripture God called us such beings, using words like "Light and Truth" to describe our core being....[Ref DC93 Discussion here.](#) Perhaps there is additional reason when God revealed himself that He is always described in terms of light – brighter than all description!.

Regarding Consciousness, it is beginning to be acknowledged that even our neurons perform their functions impacted by quantum effects at their synapses. The Origin of agency and consciousness as a topic was taken up in my [essay 54. Deductive Proof: there is more to Man than meets the eye](#)

Another quantum affect predicted by the ancient ones was the odd assertion that there is "No empty space" expressed dramatically in the most unusual LDS Hymn [IF You Could Hie to Kolob](#). What an odd assertion to make in 1800s by some backwoodsmen! How would they know about neutrinos popping into and out of existence and the endless universe and mult-ivers....

...unless the great Consciousness (God) so revealed it to those simple but inquiring minds? It may be that that attribute; the seeker, the asker, the one ready to receive, is the one who does!

If one says 'they have the answers' there is no room to add - which is why Jesus said, "Seek and Ye shall Find. Knock and it shall be opened." So it is with Light and truth; it is only poured into the cup that is not already full.



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### 83. Is It Possible for Compassion to Ever Be Misguided?

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I was teaching an adult class in Gospel doctrine. Previously I taught the New Testament and this year we are examining the Book of Mormon. I felt led and inspired to teach a lesson one Sunday taken from a story in the Book of Mormon that I fully anticipated could be discomforting to at least some of the audience. I petitioned the Lord as to how I could reach his people in a way that might elicit change and not simply bring out anger in the self-convicted. The lesson focusing on the story of Korihor as detailed in Alma 30. This fellow was the original secular humanist. He denied life after death, Christ's atonement and any moral rules - "law of the jungle" and strength of your own arm where the only limits.

He goes about preaching his gospel of self-gratification until the wave of adultery came to the attention of the authorities and he is brought to the court to answer for what amounts to in today's parlance "inciting to riot" or in this case adultery. (a punishable offense before the law in those days)

Alma, the chief judge tries to reason with Korihor (who reiterated his atheist claims). Alma points out that nature itself witnesses that there is a God. As the story progresses Korihor demands a sign from God – who accommodates him – generally not a good thing as he loses his voice! In writing, the now penitent Korihor, confesses that he was deceived by the devil (and this the key takeaway) because it appealed to his 'carnal nature'.

It was this aspect I found most intriguing- why do otherwise good people justify in some circumstances a lie or countenance evil policies? How are we as individuals deceived? Mormons are generally pretty conservative but here and there I found some individuals who would countenance abortion – even partial birth abortions! Some people of faith actually supported laws that enabled and promoted homosexuality. Some voted for known adulterers and communists and wore it like a badge of honor! How could that be that people with so many shared moral values could possibly execute the practical aspects of their public life in a way so contrary to their stated beliefs .... and then this story of Korihor finally spoke to me.

It came to me that appealing to one's carnal nature can encompass other, even altruistic, aspects that are not thought classically as self-gratifying. If you for example, had a son who engaged in the sin of homosexuality, out of natural compassion, out of our desire for mercy for our loved one, it might simply be natural to soften and bend and accommodate, perhaps even justify and finally enable. See it? It is our compassionate nature we are placating! Compassion in some circumstance is good, but there are some cases where "tough love" is the truly compassionate act. It is really the same lesson we should have taken from the story of the Priest Eli and his wicked sons as detailed the Old Testament (next year's study!). I don't gather that Eli was a fellow acting out of bad intent but I see now that **he acted out of misguided compassion.**

It is a classic dilemma – can you do wrong to accomplish some perceived good? I think it's not generally possible. The 'means' *and* the 'ends' both matter! Compassion for the dilemma of an unwanted pregnancy cannot be the source of legitimacy for abortion as the enormous negatives outweigh the anticipated relief. Allowing a sexually confused individual access to the wrong sexes' bathroom might seem like compassion for the confused individual on one level but actually fails that individual on more other levels and harms others who the bathroom was created for in actuality. You cannot do wrong and be

right. It was prophesied that in our day people would change the language calling light dark and darkness light. Perhaps one of the reasons we see this happening, even to intelligent people of faith is to accommodate the very false compassions discussed here.

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### **84.Thought for the day... "I'm ready to go Now!"**

When Brigham Young asked for volunteers to leave within a couple days to be avant garde to the famous handcart rescue effort, Ephraim Hanks famously responded, simply, "Brigham, I am ready to leave now!" This astonishing statement was repeated by two other individuals who had been preparing for much of their lives to be the Lords' minuteman.

Without any earthy person asking, they had showed up ready and loaded for a very serious journey! They heard the voice of God and responded immediately.

When life gets crazy, can we stay ready to hear the Lord's call? – Let us live our daily walk in such a way to always be able to say, even in a moment's notice, "I'm Ready to go, now!"

Part of 'being ready to go now' is preparation physically, but other aspects are intellectual, psychological and obviously -spiritual. But even real believers, fully desirous to serve, may not be able to bear the load if they are not prepared to carry it!

I have taken special note that boys that eschew outdoor challenges are often the same young men that struggle with the challenges of missionary service later on; they are simply not prepared. Conversely, I've seen boys scared of simple things and unreasonably shy, blossom by accepting those challenging, uncomfortable activities and then go on to take on such callings, being successful in His service and return masterful speakers, ready for life as real and godly men.

If we are to be God's hands and ministering angels, here or in the here-after, we need to be ready to go!

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## 85. Is Darwin's Natural Selection Idea Real Science?

**Origin of the Cell?** Darwin missed the mark entirely by titling his most famous work "The Origin of Species" in that nowhere in his work does he add or argue more than how a given species might adapt and tweak its basic structure to the circumstances. It all assumes that the immense complexity of a single cell was achieved just one tweak at a time. It's important to note that even that narrow part of his theory has never been demonstrated. But more importantly, what Darwin could not have known is that even that one cell comprises an entire city of structures and interdependent services that in and of themselves do nothing - but only altogether form the miracle of life. He only offered an overly simplistic idea as to how life might change; not how it could start.

**The Cell is a city of interdependent complexity:** Take even a small part of that complex away and the cell can't function. Just to name a few of many, the lauded DNA instruction set itself is quite useless without RNA and a variety of small mechanical agents that work like tug boats to transcribe instructions and even repair bad ones! Without the cell wall, one of the many parts to this little city, providing a safe confined environment (with special doors) with all the agents safely in place, the DNA can't do anything.

The scant few experiments attempting by random processes to construct a couple DNA scraps from amino acids, could not accomplish anything even if it were possible (given enough time like they enjoy repeating) if the city-like cell was not already in place. This chicken/egg problem is truly a conundrum that does not appear to be solvable. This writer has not heard of even a lame attempt proposed let alone a persuasive one. The problem is so profound that for those who claim science as their religion and go about preaching Natural Selection as the means to the ends demonstrate great religious faith indeed. There are simply no facts or postulates to address this sequence dependency -It's an impossibility not just an improbability and so far, we are not even discussing probability. That is another conundrum for the religion of Darwin.

Accompanying sweeping gestures of the hands by these secular religionists comes the phrase, "given enough time, anything is possible." But is that true? Consider these two key factors Probability (likely hood of making the thing) and Entropy (probability of it falling apart) This latter effect is universally ignored by the "faithful." Let's examine each aspect.

**Probability** For something to happen, it needs,

- A means - We can grant that random chemical processes can produce amino acids
- Opportunity -There need to be interactions with the building structure. In other words, it's not sufficient that it can happen somewhere, it has to happen here, and it has to happen now. So, the probability of the event is reduced by the time and spatial requirement. This adds many orders of magnitude of improbability.
- Repeat, Restart - That sequence must be repeated randomly requiring immense numbers of iterations! Only 1 sequence in  $2^{77}$  possibilities actually works to make just one of the simplest strands that could code a single simple protein structure.



To appreciate how **improbable** that is – even without including the impact of space and time on that sequential built-up, that number is close to the estimated number of atoms in the known universe! There simply are not enough chances even in 14 billion years to shake that bag of parts enough.

**Entropy**:...but even if there were... then there is that bugaboo ‘entropy’ – which really is like a silver stake into the heart of the Darwin-inspired Vampire.

The Cell is an exceptionally protective, well-organized environment for a very fragile and exceptionally complicated molecule. The cell is a hive of very carefully integrated activities. If DNA were to be just laid out in an open environment, it breaks apart very easily.

**DNA is** vulnerable. It breaks down in sunlight and water, and there are enzymes that naturally destroy it. Bleach, rusted iron, excessive heat, and UV – all present and abundant in the very soup the Darwinist suggest this grand secular miracle occurred.

Probability of random assembly vs forces of entropy? It's like trying to build a skyscraper high tower of little wood blocks in a room chock full of two-year-olds. Who do you think will win?

So if its only being put together at one rate by a proposed lightning bolt soup environment which is a very slow rate (if at all) but it can be destroyed by....water? light? and very easily and quickly *then we can conclude that time is NOT the friend of random evolution but its ardent enemy.*

To state it more formally, Entropy is a much stronger function than random probability in a chaotic environment.

**God does not make junk!** Scientist and their hubris seems to be the common norms. For many decades after DNA was 1<sup>st</sup> discovered, the whole conversation was about the sections coding proteins called Genes and the rest of the strands in-between they literally labeled “junk DNA” proudly offered this chestnut, “See we are 98% the same as monkeys” A generation grew up and many died with that flawed view. They failed to appreciate that the protein section were like sub-routines in software and that JUNK in-between was actually part of the Main program. It would be many decades before we would start to see there are sequences and timers and counters coded into that 3-dimensional ‘gibberish’

As scientist realized that proteins were not strings but 3D Lego blocks, we suddenly realized that those so-called non-coding “junk” regions were performing all sorts of critical function from being instructions on how to use the genes to scaffolding to allow the string to fold into immensely complex shapes. Like origami, these spirally wound strings fold into immensely complicated 3D structures with a function, thus there is a mission and means. This is why it is so improbable to randomly find a working DNA sequence (1 in  $2^{77}$  for a

simple one). The slightest tweak in much of the structure and it can't fold properly (imagine if one of the Legos had a bump just a smidgeon offset!) - it falls apart.

**Irreducible Complexity:** Up to now, we have examined the very thing Darwin himself mentioned he was most concerned and vulnerable about; the actual 'origin' part. I used a term that Darwin did not – “Random evolution.” Darwin’s idea was one of “Natural Selection”. Some small tweak could give you a longer beak and that gave your progeny better access to food and more of them survived thus moving the species in the direction of your genetics tweak....that was the gist of the idea.

But that idea had problems. One problem is that small variations (like beak size) might actually be accommodated in the code itself (called gene expression) without the need for mutation. The second was deeper. The deepest problem Darwin failed to address was in explaining species jumps wherein a whole new feature is introduced. The coding (that Darwin had no idea about) to create even a simple new protein with hundreds, thousands or millions of new “Lego blocks” all predesigned to play together is mind-bogglingly complex.

If you are waiting for untold thousands of random mutations to stack up - that’s not going to happen in a single generation or even many generations and almost any mutation is far more likely to kill or debilitate the individual or it’s progeny. Let that sink in. As we know from sad experience when a mutation occurs we all know it can debilitate or kill the unfortunate victim.

Therefore, there actually is NO force driving natural selection for an immense period of time but instead there are huge negative forces killing off the predecessors with partially mutated code. Remember that just one or even many mutations are not going to make a new and useful feature. Much more likely to just kill you. No initial natural advantage to selectively and preferentially be passed on the future generations.

In the book, Darwin’s Black box by Dr Michael J. Behe, this concept of “irreducible complexity” is deeply studied. This molecular Biologist’s challenge to the science community shook the ‘science is my god faithful’ to their core and remains largely unimpeachable as a valid critique to this day.

#### **To recap:**

- 1) Darwin failed to provide ANY explanation for actual origin.
- 2) At a molecular level the cell is a city of activity. The much-lauded DNA needs that safe city in place for it to do anything. Even making DNA (they can’t) does nothing by itself.
- 3) Probability theory demonstrates there isn’t enough time in the universe even if the deck of chance was shuffled in your favor.
- 4) Probability has a mortal enemy called Entropy and entropy is a much much MUCH bigger dog in this fight
- 5) DNA Codes in 3D and vastly increases the complexity of achieving useful results from random process. Proteins are 3D Legos of immense complexity.
- 6) There is no junk DNA – Useful and critical roles for so called non-coding regions are now being understood as such that previously looked like junk (their words) to the earlier Darwinian priest class.
- 7) Irreducible complexity deprives random evolution and its cousin Natural Selection of its key forcing function. “Natural selection may not even explain small changes as there may well already be legit coding for selecting, for example, a longer beak. For certain though, natural selection as a scheme,

simply doesn't work when it takes a million code changes, not just one or two to make some new useful feature.

**We clearly demonstrate that the theory of Random Evolution or Natural Selection, when examined in the light of modern science, and a bit of common sense has no logical foundation to explain either the origin or the significant changes. Those philosophies survive like some other religions - by faith alone!**

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Additional reading or listening:

- 1) [Darwin's Black box by Dr Michael J. Behe](#)
- 2) [Life's Origin: James Tour and Stephen Meyer](#)
- 3) [Cell Construction & Assembly Dr James Tour](#)
- 4) <http://darwinsmaths.com/>
- 5) <https://www.icr.org/article/493/>

## **86. Vengeance vs Revenge**

I have written more extensively in these essays about justice and mercy, (see essay 30) but a corollary topic is Mercy verses Revenge or Vengeance; the difference being commonly referenced as punishment being delivered personally or by a third party like God. vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord. Does that make God then out to be a sort of executioner? In the common modern use of the word, that disparaging interpretation could be implied and so perplexed me a bit as incongruent to the merciful God we prefer to understand.

So I dug in a bit to better understand the words finding their French and Latin roots and - well my eyes were opened!

Vengeance means to see and act or care; exactly what we anticipate from a loving God.

## **87. Of Church and Politics July 4th Flag Raising speech**

I am wearing my "I am the Chosen Army" T-Shirt to remind that while our founders may have given us this remarkable nation with liberty but it is up to us, each generation to keep it. We were reminded last week that there is no political litmus test in our church but that the brethren...

["teach correct principles and allow the people to govern themselves."](#)

but that freedom to self-govern does not promote "safe-space" to ignore those "correct principles." For example those same prophets have repeatedly denounced socialism, communism and like trendy 'isms as antithetical to gospel principles of liberty. The other day, I had a pleasant but poignant conversation with a young BYU student who said of his political leanings:

["I compartmentalize my faith from practical realities"](#)

This came across as a sort of ethical schizophrenia wherein his trendy but fake woke was in reality a walking waking nightmare. I learned upon further conversation that by this mental 'slight of hand' he dismissed one "correct principle after another, such as the lives of the unborn, the expectation of work ethic, sanctity of marriage as God defined. Even taxation as God taught was compartmentalized away. I suggested in a somewhat more gentle manner that the correct principals of our religion should inform all those very decisions and not to be sectioned off as only relevant on Sunday.

Our Church is more than just a philosophy. It is also community and culture, and has a unique revelation identifying this land as a land of promise. Its' founders testified as to the 'hand of providence' that attended their work. This nation's constitution, incorporated the best ideas learned from thousands of years of failures and not just a little divine inspiration; this fact, God Himself attested to.

From extensive study of history, our founders understood that power corrupts both individuals and communities and so they built in layers of safeguards to keep both king-men and tyrannical mobs at bay. They codified in that remarkable document the ability in the future to right every wrong, including a few glaring ones.

Correct principles drawn from our common history will be as Patrick Henry said, "Like a lamp unto our feet - guiding our future."

Last July, my wife spoke about Lincoln and how he received a copy of the Book of Mormon from his new war ally Brigham Young. A book, "The Lincoln Hypothesis" documents that Lincoln's copy of the Book of Mormon has dogeared pages where God speaks of this land of promise. From those correct principles, found on those dog eared pages, I can appreciate why Lincoln would have radically changed his presidency's goal from power and control to serving God and treating ALL his children as equal under the law . When he did so everything changed. Rapidly! Battles turned in the Union's favor; often miraculously. His addresses like at Gettysburg carry the feeling of reverence and reconciliation – not conquest and subjugation.

Lincoln Learned correct principles and upon applying them, with God's help, changed the course of the world's history.

History and correct principles go hand in hand for the enquiring mind. But that constitution, we hold as divinely inspired, is being eroded and redefined and the knowledge canceled. For example, in the case of the 16<sup>th</sup> amendment that allows one man to be taxed differently than another – they simply set aside and tossed a protection to treat all men equally. Do our young minds appreciate that was actually the brainchild of the founder of communism, Carl Marx, not George Washington?

To preach correct principles then we must both educate ourselves and our family as to what political forces were responsible for rejecting our founder's inspired wisdom! Regarding the battle for our children's future, President Reagan alerted:

["Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction..."](#)

Each generation must be taught its history so as to learn those correct principles as Lincoln did from those dog-eared pages of the Holy writ.; not have it canceled and lost

from memory. We should emphasize the good, but also learn from the bad and yes even the ugly. a

Our people must be taught their history and to seek God and value Liberty or become in one generation “a people who knew not Joseph and find themselves in chains to a new pharaoh. Even as I speak, what was deplored as evil only a few scant years ago is now preached as saintly good in our very public schools. I can’t help but hear the echo of Joshua crying out to the people of this day:

Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to defend the words of the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods of Darwin and Marx, which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the politics and social norms of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, I will teach my children to believe in this heaven blessed land and to serve the Lord.

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## **88. Agency vs God’s Interventions; Time and Revelation**

This note is really just that – notes of a conversation with my brother. On the way home from our father’s impromptu Memorial at Sunny Rose, my brother and I continued our most interesting conversation on free agency & God’s intervention/non-intervention that we had started on the way south. We also delved deeply into the arguments surrounding atheism using the article I put together about Agency as a key focus.

He brought up the classic question about “Intervention and the benevolent God”. It became apparent from our conversation that the single determinant as to the likelihood of intervention from God was its impact to agency of others. While there are a few recorded events where God does part the sea for the strategic preservation of a people, this is very rare. What is far more likely might be some intervention, healing or guidance which benefits but does not hinder anyone’s action.

We also discussed time in the context of why couldn’t God foreshorten suffering while not directly stopping it an interrupting agency. It was determined that if the idea was to provide a non-big brother experience – that such intervention, even foreshortening suffering would be obvious prima fascia evidence of deity.

But that led to a discussion about the theory of time and I posited that that time doesn’t exist anyway and is represented as a series of singularities. You don’t perceive time in the past but only in the present. You do not and cannot “feel” the passage of time in an event already in the past. The flow of time is perceived thus as wave of singularities -each representing past events. No matter how “long” the event was, once its in the past it is perceived as a singularity. Thus foreshortening of some tragedy or harm is not even useful. This is consistent with the concept of Christ’s atonement allowing him to examine and experience all events – even events that are in our “future”.

It explains why we don’t perceive past events as passage of time, but as events – as singularities. Like sex or any other appetites that seems to demand our attention and we relish the moment and immersion, but after the meal or pleasure is over, you are hard pressed to even feel the former demand! It’s now a memory of an event regardless of the

duration. The same is true of pain and other displeasures – even great tragedies lasting years collapse to singularities and are not relived as current reality.

In fact, those who by mental illness live in their memories have distorted existences – a break from reality.

Our last matter in this far ranging conversation addressed when God does and does not reveal....Suggesting that revelation from God is often reserved for those ready and willing to accept the knowledge and act upon it – otherwise the very receipt would be a sort of condemnation to the individual casually making the request. When you are resonant with God...power flows. That's the way physics works too.

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## **89. In Whom Is Your Faith Placed?**

In one-off, little churches, if the pastor messes up, they just fire the person and hire a new teacher and few think the whole of the organization is worthless as most of these groups eschew making any such claims of authority. They know they have no such claim! This was a necessity as few claim any sort of grand supernatural event attend their founding and only the most amorphous ongoing divine influence is posited. As expected, with no organizing and rectifying influence, a thousand different denominations dot the Christian landscape. When Jesus asserted that His house was a house of order, this current structure hardly seems to satisfy that maxim. Perhaps this ramshackle shanty town actually isn't His house after all even through the inhabitance are often doing the best they can. Jesus actually had a very charitable view to those who sinserely used his name, "but did not walk with us."

When Joseph Smith asked which of the many churches he should join, he was instructed to join none of them but that he would become and instrument in the Lord's hands to restore His kingdom one more time – one last restoration after many - in preparation for His second coming in final glory. The building of His kingdom would begin again in humble circumstance, among the simple and humble, but hard working and upright. It would not be the great and the mighty nor the learned of the time but by those who were supple and teachable.

We all know that even at our best we have disagreements and misunderstandings. We make technical and strategic mistakes. Sometimes we are humble and reaching for advice and wisdom and other times we are full of ourselves and certain of our way; though it leads to a pit. It would be awesome if none of our leaders, our parents, our friends ever devolved to our more human flawed states but reality says that should be the expected state; at least occasionally. Just recall a bit of in house squabbling that may have taken place at one's home....those same people are running board rooms and temples.

Certainly, the Holy spirit should be making a sizable impact, making us more divine and less the flawed human, but while we never quite escape the grip of this flawed flesh.

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## 90. Is Darwin's Natural Selection Idea Real Science?

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**Origin of the Cell?** Darwin missed the mark entirely by titling his most famous work "The Origin of Species" in that nowhere in his work does he argue beyond how a given species might adapt and tweak its basic structure to the circumstances. It all assumes that the immense complexity of a single cell was achieved just one tweak at a time. It's important to note that even that narrow part of his theory has never been demonstrated. But more importantly, what Darwin could not have known is that even that one cell comprises an entire city of structures and interdependent services that in and of themselves do nothing - but only altogether form the miracle of life. He only offered an overly simplistic idea as to how life might change; not how it could start.

**The Cell is a city of interdependent complexity:** Take even a small part of that complex away and the cell can't function. Just to name a few of many, the lauded DNA instruction set itself is quite useless without RNA and a variety of small mechanical agents that work like tug boats to transcribe instructions and even repair bad ones! Without the cell wall, one of the many parts to this little city, providing a safe confined environment (with special doors) with all the agents safely in place, the DNA can't do anything.

The scant few experiments attempting by random processes to construct a couple DNA scraps from amino acids, could not accomplish anything even if it were possible (given enough time like they enjoy repeating) if the city-like cell was not already in place. This chicken/egg problem is truly a conundrum that does not appear to be solvable. This writer has not heard of even a lame attempt proposed let alone a persuasive one. The problem is so profound that for those who claim science as their religion and go about preaching Natural Selection as the means to the ends demonstrate great religious faith indeed. There are simply no facts or postulates to address this sequence dependency -It's an impossibility not just an improbability and so far, we are not even discussing probability. That is another conundrum for the religion of Darwin.

Accompanying sweeping gestures of the hands by these secular religionists comes the phrase, "given enough time, anything is possible." But is that true? Consider these two key factors Probability (likely hood of making the thing) and Entropy (probability of it falling apart) This latter effect is universally ignored by the "faithful." Let's examine each aspect.

**Probability** For something to happen, it needs,

- A means - We can grant that random chemical processes can produce amino acids
- Opportunity -There need to be interactions with the building structure. In other words, it's not sufficient that it can happen somewhere, it has to happen here, and it has to happen now. So, the probability of the event is reduced by the time and spatial requirement. This adds many orders of magnitude of improbability.
- Repeat, Restart - That sequence must be repeated randomly requiring immense numbers of iterations! Only 1 sequence in  $2^{77}$  possibilities actually works to



make just one of the simplest strands that could code a single simple protein structure.

To appreciate how **improbable** that is – even without including the impact of space and time on that sequential built-up, that number is close to the estimated number of atoms in the known universe! There simply are not enough chances even in 14 billion years to shake that bag of parts enough

**Entropy**:...but even if there were... then there is that bugaboo ‘entropy’ – which really is like a silver stake into the heart of the Darwin-inspired Vampire.

The Cell is an exceptionally protective, well-organized environment for a very fragile and exceptionally complicated molecule. The cell is a hive of very carefully integrated activities. If DNA were to be just laid out in an open environment, it breaks apart very easily.

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So if its only being put together at one rate by a proposed lightning bolt soup environment which is a very slow rate (if at all) but it can be destroyed by....water? Light? And very easily and quickly *then we can conclude that time is NOT the friend of random evolution but its ardent enemy.*

Probability of random assembly vs forces of entropy? It's like trying to build a skyscraper high tower of little wood blocks in a room chock full of two-year-olds. Who do you think will win?

To state it more formally, Entropy is a much stronger function than random probability in a chaotic environment.

**God does not make junk!** Scientific hubris seems to be the norm and when DNA was 1<sup>st</sup> understood a little the mantra was Genes and just junk DNA in between so-called coding sections and “see we are 98% the same as monkeys” ...fast forward decade of such misinformation and now we see there are sequences and timers and counters coded into that 3-dimensional gibberish. It was like hearing a foreign language and to the science faithful it was jabberwocky speak. But as we realized that proteins were not strings but 3D Lego blocks, we suddenly realized that those non coding “junk” regions were performing all sorts of critical function from being instructions on how to use the genes to scaffolding to allow the string to fold into immensely complex fashions, like origami into a building 3D blocks with a function, a mission and means. This is why it is so improbable to randomly find a working DNA sequence (I in  $2^{77}$  for a simple one). The slightest tweak in much of the structure and it can't fold properly and it falls apart.

**Irreducible Complexity:** Up to now we have examined the thing Darwin mentioned he was most concerned and vulnerable about; the actual ‘origin’ part and I used a term Darwin did not – “Random evolution.” Darwin's idea was “Natural Selection”. Some small tweak could give you a longer beak and that gave your progeny better access to food and more of them survived thus

moving the species....that was the gist of the idea. The problem was in explaining species jumps wherein a whole new feature is introduced. The coding (that Darwin had no idea about) to create a new protein of the hundreds or thousands of new “Lego blocks” all predesigned to play together is mind-bogglingly complex.

If you are waiting for untold thousands of random mutations to stack up that’s not going to happen in a single generation AND NONE of them kill or debilitate the generations of progeny, then there is NO force driving natural selection for an immense period of time. In the book Darwin’s Black box, this concept of “irreducible complexity” is deeply studied. This molecular Biologists challenge to the science community shook the ‘science is my god faithful’ to their core and remains largely unimpeachable as a valid critique to this day.

**To recap:**

- 8) Darwin failed to provide ANY explanation for actual origin
- 9) At a molecular level the cell is a city of activity. The much-lauded DNA needs that city in place for it to do anything. Even making DNA (they can’t) does nothing.
- 10) Probability theory demonstrates there isn’t enough time in the universe even if the deck of chance was shuffled in your favor.
- 11) Probability has a mortal enemy called entropy and entropy is a much much MUCH bigger dog in this fight.
- 12) There is no junk – Roles of so called non coding regions are being understood only recently that looked like junk to the earlier Darwinian priest class.
- 13) Irreducible complexity deprives random evolution of its namesake forcing function “natural” For anything beyond exploiting what may well already be legit coding for selecting a longer beak, natural selection as a scheme simply doesn’t work when it takes a million code changes, not just one or two to make some new useful feature.

**We clearly demonstrate that the theory of Random Evolution or Natural Selection, when examined in the light of modern science, and a bit of common sense has no logical foundation. It survives like some other religions - by faith alone!**

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## 91. Religious Exception to mRNA

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### Prophecies

Prophecies that none will be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast, are being fulfilled as demands for Papers, QR codes, RFID chips are all proposed and becoming used to block commerce and employment. When some establishments began prohibiting non-vaccinated persons from entering their stores and companies (my firm Microsoft announced that unvaccinated employees would be fired), then the ancient prophecies of our day came to mind that this may be fulfilled in my days, "that no one will be able to **buy** or to **sell**, except the one who has the **mark**, {either} the name of the **beast** or the number of his name." Microsoft even owns a patent of a behavior motivating concept whose patent number actually is 060606

### Use of Force

- 1) Use of force and coercion is the hallmark of Satan. The devil's path was always coercion and lies and suppression of light. So when slews of doctors and scientists and even my own brother, a medical Dr genius in his practice serving many dozens of covid related patients, were deplatformed and threatened - I took notice.
- 2) When I was personally threatened with loss of my livelihood if I did not accept 'the mark'....I had to think long and hard if my economic security was worth giving up liberty and religious convictions...

### Liberty or Death?

What price would I be willing to pay to 'go along to get along.....' or would I like Patrick Henry demand "Liberty or Death." Benjamin Franklin once said: "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." There is evidence that those who have fallen for this experimental medical craps shoot may rue the day they did.

### Fear

This fear based situation will never end until we stop living in fear. "God hath not given us a spirit of fear" There is no mass crisis and well validated prevention and therapeutics are available; peer reviewed and deeply documented by medical researchers.

### LSD Leadership Statements

I can appreciate that not all have the same information and such and could come to different conclusions so I don't fault our leaders for expressing their personal views publicly - but is that to be interpreted as policy? As doctrine, the word of the Lord?

### Faith VS Proof

To whom are we to be placing our faith in? I'm an engineer by trade and I prefer to use faith for God but data for government. President Reagan recounted, "Trust but verify." I would add to that, "When your trust has been shaken; "Verify, then trust!"

## Parallels to Persecution of Jews, Prewar Germany

As this man made crisis has devolved to a coercive divisive political tool by some, it began taking on the feeling of 1938 with Stars of David on the sleeve being replaced by QR codes and papers and even chips. [French Distopia and soon USA](#) This is really just a page out of a very old playbook taken from 1938 Prewar Germany [See Article](#)

## How did this virus come about?

[Never Been Found Naturally': Unique Genome Indicates COVID-19 Is Man-made, Say Top US Experts](#)

I began to be apprised as to how Dr. Fouci and his ilk in quiet labs across the world had been tinkering with God's gift of life for a long time. In fact making Franken-Viruses was a life's work for the 'good' Dr Fouci. Like 3-year-olds in a chemistry lab, sooner or later a test tube dropped and Pandora's box escaped; in this case from Wuhan to plague the world. But the plague, like Caesars' dagger, had far more fingerprints than just Chinese. Fouci's fingerprints and many others were all over the bloody knife.

US, Canada, France, and many other nations secret labs had been amplifying viruses for reasons that span the range of altruism to weapons. With so many fingerprints on the Covid dagger, it's no small wonder that many involved circled the wagons in self-protection to blame nature's God. But then, true to Satanic schemes, one if not the chief instigator of this plague, then steps forward, wiping Caesar's blood from his hands, and presents himself as the savior of mankind. An Anti Christ is someone who presents as a false savior, more like a mirror image or mirage. For a lost people, many who had replaced God for Government and now lived in fear of death, Fouci, one of the chief contributors to the plague, ironically became their savior.

## False Christ

Dr Fouci turns out to be one of the co-creators/contributors of this Pandoras box and is not my Savior and the government who paid him for this monstrosity is not my God. Why would anyone put so much faith in government? This would not be the 1<sup>st</sup> time Government used a population for medical experimentation...for the good of the people of course.

Those are some of the reasons why I asked for a religious exception.

**My request was denied.**

[For a more thorough treatment of my objections - Link](#)

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## 92. Only The gods Can Choose

A few years ago my wife and I were teaching some pretty young kids, 7-8 year olds, the concept that they are the children of God. The fascinating takeaway from being a child of a being who is understood to exist for all time, is the necessarily conclusion that we exist essentially outside time too. We too must be a being with an infinite nature, else it is a logical inconstancy!

This philosophical mind bender is actually at the heart of the source of agency. I argue that only the gods can choose! If it is created, no matter how wonderfully, it must be deterministic or at least dependent and thus predicable. It is simply a logical impossibility for God to create man and then step back and claim He is not responsible. Glibly tossing out that he gave man agency only begs the question of what means to make something called agency and then claim you are not responsible for the algorithm?

The only answer is consistent with the first assertion that agency is root to the nature of intelligence (life force), the heart of what many call Spirit and that intelligent force is co-eternal with God.

If this seems pretty heavy for a kid...the trick is to distill. If a child can understand it, the sheer elegance deserves appreciation.

Try this experiment.

- 1) Look at an object on a table and consider it.
- 2) Stop thinking about the object, but allow yourself a single regression where you visualize yourself sitting at the table thinking about the object.
- 3) Stop thinking about the virtualization of yourself thinking about yourself thinking about the object, and consider yet another iteration of yourself thinking about thinking about thinking....

As you can see, like planning multiple chess moves, it is possible to take the adage, "I think therefor I am" to an infinite level of regression. A machine cannot do more than calculate and produce predictive outputs; it cannot even think the 1st iteration, let alone the regression.

If we are wholly created machines, whether Darwin or even if God was the designer, it could not think nor extrapolate himself from himself. The only thing that makes agency possible is that the 1st assertion is the truth. We are in fact the children of God and if children then Heirs and all that implies. Rom 8:16-17

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### 93. On Enos' unanswered query. "Lord, how was it done?"

Reflecting on Enos' unanswered query. "Lord, how was it done?" we previously explored and clarified the Language of Atonement and attempted to move beyond the common allegorical approaches to a more direct functional explanation.

See that detail in these essays

30.	<a href="#">Forgiveness and the Power of the Atonement</a> .....	105
59.	<a href="#">On Approaching the Mercy Seat</a> .....	206
93.	<a href="#">On Enos' unanswered query. "Lord, how was it done?"</a> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
94.	<a href="#">Examining Key Gospel Words leads to understanding!</a> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
95.	<a href="#">What is Hell and How Can Jesus Get the Hell Out of You?</a> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
97.	<a href="#">Appeasement Theology</a> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
98.	<a href="#">Learning Heaven</a> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
61.	<a href="#">Can You Earn Your Way to Heaven or suffer your way out of hell?</a>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
86.	<a href="#">Vengeance vs Revenge</a> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

**Also:** A scholar's review of Penal Substitution Theology (PCT) by Stephen D. Morrison (see <https://youtu.be/s8DZYeCvaM0?si=5TTTrEa7lQ6vC2as>)

There is yet another functional aspect that deserves a deeper dive regarding our part in the process. My wife, who has spent so much of her life in compassionate service, pointed out that a person has to be ready to receive healing – it is not just 'done to you' She was addressing as example situations of extreme loss and hurt; "the walking wounded" to use an Army term.

In the story of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed, He said, power left me (was transferred from me) but then pointed out –her faith healed her. Both actually transpired. God's will and power coupled with her faith. Each variable played a critical role. This calculus is explored in [53: The Algebra of Faith Healings](#). This is crucial to appreciate that God's timing may not be ours but being prepared with faith to receive is imperative.

Like hearing God, we need to be tuned in to be resonate with God. We are part of the equation. If you had experienced, for example, a great loss at someone else's hand and vengeance festered in your soul and yet you wanted peace and relief – there might not be any place for that relief presuming God wanted to send it! Peace, Happiness, Joy, Comfort are emotional states that accompany thoughts and actions, but are not thoughts per-se. For God to impact that, we need to be ready to receive by making room. This is why the Lord said, "Vengeance is mine!" He's not being selfish or off putting, He's letting us know he cannot resonate with our emotions and provide that influence when there is no room for His influence!

I hasten to repeat that God is a key part of timing. Sometimes a good desire is met at once and other times not. That can be frustrating. Paul wrote that God left a thorn in his side (we think a physical ailment) that he opined helped to keep him humble. That may or may not have been God's motivation. His mind is not our mind, as the saying goes, but he came to accept that trial and to bear it gracefully.

There are multitudes who have righteous desires that at best are not met in our time expectations. Children, Spouse, Job, physical or mental health. After a couple years of my company failing, then being unjustly fired from another, then being let go for refusing a MRNA shot...I was inspired to pull up our tent stakes and move to Missouri. Each of those events brought me to a new place mentally and emotionally and finally physically. I work hard, plan when and where I can for success, petition the Lord for my flocks and herds and family while striving to accept His will. The challenge is to not fret with angst when the timing or direction or events don't pan out. I'm not perfect in any of that, but I know the formula, and just keep striving to align with what I know better.

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## 94.Examining Key Gospel Words leads to understanding!

I may have related how we spent literally hours defining language with one of my Baptist minister friends that enabled a lengthy and enlightening conversation sans argument. From that experience I've come to be firmly convinced of that value - to focus on the meanings of the words we use:

With one understanding, the phrase - "He paid for my sins" is allegorical, metaphysical, beyond our grasp. We can't really articulate - "what is a stripe exactly?" or how that would fix anything anyway. With another understanding of that same phrase - that it was punishing to experience us" the event clarifies, is tangible, understandable - albeit the massive scope is beyond the view, its application to us is fully grasped.

Words are mere symbols for concepts or things and as long as both sender and receiver have the same translation for those symbols a unity of understanding can take place. But this condition is actually more rare than we'd like to believe and is responsible for many a court case finding its way to our supreme court.

Consider the terms: Mercy, Justice, Atonement, Price and Payment

What if Mercy didn't simply imply a condition of undeserved generosity but meant additionally - applied love; a forward-thinking outcome-based emphasis?

What if "Justice must be satisfied" didn't refer to retribution or revenge or placating an angry god in need of appeasement by sacrifices nor balancing the scales of cosmic Ying and yang?

What if Justice simply meant that things are and remain what God has defined them to be. Heaven is heaven and remains a place of superlatives like peace and goodness (also defined by God). If you go to heaven its because you are heavenly.

What if Atonement did not mean punishment as some sort of appeasement but instead meant precisely what the concatenated parts of this interesting word communicate; to "be-One-Destined" or "Destined to be one."

What if terms like Price and Payment are describing not some arbitrary unrelated physical torment like scourging (by his stripes (allegory) we are healed) but the process of God connecting with us intimately, Jesus' incurred ardor and difficulty in the task of so experiencing us that He becomes the perfect counselor, the physician with the right medicine that when applied is sanctifying and correcting?

Certainly, that would be a virtually infinite task for correcting billions of souls such that they are or become, through that effort, compatible with the assigned heaven – thus satisfying the concept of justice. Heaven stays heaven!

Forgive the crude vernacular but What if the Good News of Jesus is not that he's the ultimate virgin sacrifice to an angry god that must be paid off and appeased so that favors of heaven are showered on the adherence but instead that Jesus and the Holy Spirit and our Heavenly Father have arranged a sort of clinic – a process – a means for the children they love to be cured of sinful tendencies to the point that we never desire to do or knowingly pursue wrong?



Even if our execution in this world may be flawed, our desires really can be perfected. What if when the shackles of this earthy veil are lifted our execution will likewise be perfected?

Would that not be Good News indeed?

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## 95. What is Hell and How Can Jesus Get the Hell Out of You?

(or get you out of hell if that's where you are hanging out)

A friend was somewhat confused about one of my essays touching on Jesus' Atonement for us. This was written in some response to that:

Alma speaks of hell as a condition of anguish and then informs of Jesus' intercession in our behalf - referring to hell as having "a clear recollection of all your guilt" IE being immersed in the full ramifications of all your sins. (Alma 36:16)

It is said that *that* clear immersion in that ugly truth will be so heavy to bear that you would feign have the rocks cover you up than stand in the presence of perfection in that tarnished state. But it is also stated that Jesus went down to hell and back... to rescue souls as rebellious as ours. (Alma 12:14, 1 Peter 3:18-21)

Alma said Jesus suffered all things both body and spirit THAT he would be able to succor us. Ask yourself what would cause even Jesus to sweat great drops of blood – it wasn't physical stripes (ref Isaiah) then what? When Jesus said how he suffered – many had similarly suffered bodily of that cruel cross. That alone could not be it. Bleeding from his pores happened before the scourging and final physical traumas. (DC 19)

Alma offers that Jesus suffered (Alma lists off several forms of sufferings and sinful states) THAT he might know how to succor His people. NOTE that Alma does not glibly assert that "hey, He's God. He can do anything"....no he offered that there was method – there was actual experience. The record says "He took upon him the sins of His people. Well, let that sink in! HOW would you do that except to literally take those experiences IE 'experience' those experiences THAT He may know HOW to succor His people! It must be appreciated that Alma heaps suffering which is independent of sin and actual sin of your own in the same bucket that he suffered for.

Clearly, even if there was some eternal law that demanded somebody (anybody) be punishment for sin, then why also punish the innocent as sacrifice for sufferings? How is any of that going to help anybody let alone satisfy this eternal angry-god law concept? That's quite an angry god that needs someone's arbitrary pain even to address suffering. Let that sink in. That was exactly the horrid concept that the God of the Old Testament ordered the Israelites to utterly destroy where the people were literally burning their children to enhance crop production and other desired favors of Baal and Molech.

Do you see it now? The great miracle is not like some virgin sacrifice to pacify an angry fabled god. The great "infinite" miracle that Amulek called appropriately 'the atonement' is that He didn't just experience stuff 'like' what some of us experience, He vicariously experienced each and every one of us in all time. If that wasn't punishment, then we need a new word. "By His stripes", that punishing experience, he came, as Alma said, "to know how to succor his people." Alma 7:11 Alma 34:8-12 He is called the physician, because he has the cure for the disease. He is not paying off some fine so the Father will look the other way, He has the cure to change and refine and thus make compatible with heaven.

Sometimes a person in some acute, perhaps unique pain, will fly back at someone who dares suggests 'they understand' with, "You could not possibly understand what I am going through." Yet, it is argued in many scriptures that "Jesus Knows YOU!" I hope this helps you understand

how this is possible for Him to know you intimately. His experience in that Garden was transcendent in scope and depth. Yes, He experienced YOU. (DC 19)

I hope this helps you to be motivated to reach out to Jesus, as Alma the younger did, that Jesus may bring you the specific Balm of Gilead you need. He knows the medicine and how to apply it uniquely; just for you!

Enos asked, "How is it done?" When you pray to the Father in Jesus name, appreciate it is not just a formality, but an active invitation for your partner and advocate to intercede with the Father in your behalf. After all what better advocate could you have. He who calls us His friends, knows you as well as if He was you - because ... He experienced you.; which is at first a scary, but then comforting thought - all wrapped up in one.

Ref also: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2001/06/justification-and-sanctification?lang=eng>

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## **96.Addiction and Sex - What's the Connection and Why Would God Care?**

Beginning with the latter question 1<sup>st</sup>, From all that has been revealed (admittedly a short list) even our spirit and the root intelligence, the spark of consciousness that is the driving force behind all life, is unchanging and in the case of who God called His children we come in two flavors: male and female. It's who we are at the most fundamental level. So, not a social construct, but of eternal importance and as such comes under special attack by our adversary. If he can get us to reveal a fundamental inability to be in control or to abandon what is of paramount importance for the transient, this miserable influence has his way. Yet our spirit may, despite faltering in this hampered environment, yet rally to God for sustaining power and rise above, develop and perfect mastery of this physical existence. You can still succeed by "looking to God and live."

Addiction is a key tool of the adversary. Uncontrolled, unlimited self-gratification is the root of all addictive behavior. The closer one approaches the uncontrolled, unlimited aspect of just about anything, the more psychologically addictive it is.

Of course, some chemical addicting substances may actually alter the satiety parts of one's brain itself. But behaviors themselves also alter the brain; being both connective and chemically sensitive. It may take time to heal but fortunately the brain can be retrained & restored.

You may find that much of the church's advice focuses on self-control/mastery. This is in part why self-gratification in regard to sex also makes the grade for prohibition.

This is also the connection between self-pleasuring (sex) and homosexuality and all variants; it starts with an addition to sex and morphs to the easiest place to get the fix; and what more productive to that end than to engage with individuals of like focus. If one can remove the barriers like attractiveness and just focus on the access to the 'pleasure button' then again that plays double – a push/pull towards addictive focused relationships which are especially common in same sex relationships.

With fairly rare exception, when women get past the oxytocin (I'm in love) phase of a relationship, the interest in sex drops dramatically – this can happen remarkably quickly after marriage and that new dynamic has to be a managed arrangement unique to each couple; but it is well known. What the man in the relationship quickly learns is that its not all about sex. Accessing that part of the relationship is gated by his spouse. That controlled aspect – a sort of throttle is primarily responsible to avoiding the runaway addictive cycle more commonly seen outside of marriage (as God ordained). Sex becomes a part of the relationship; Just enough access to keep the interest but not with abandon and on-demand characteristic of addictive arrangements pushed by our adversary – all well expressed in popular media of late..

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## 97. Appeasement Theology

Let's face it, you might not have heard common Christian dogma called "Appeasement Theology" but the whole idea that Jesus was cruelly killed (add in suffering in the garden if you like) and that action somehow absolves you and 11 billion other sinners of all wrongdoing AND somehow makes you suitable for coexisting as your miserable, but 'paid off' self is simply ludicrous. There's no logic to it. No plausible explanation for how this keeps Heaven from becoming hell. In its essence, it is no different than pagans sacrificing virgins to appease the ever-angry volcano god.

However, by simply understanding the same classic words from a different view and *all* those concerns are resolved.

- Sin for example has natural consequence of anguish when a clear recollection is experienced.
- The law of Justice is that heaven is and remains just that - and
- if you are not compatible with Gods presence, Justice is you must remain elsewhere - the natural consequence. That's the punishment.

So, No. I don't believe that the phrases "law must be satisfied" and similar must be interpreted in the common sectarian view of God roasting victims or of some undisclosed means to actively abuse Jesus to balance out the Christian equivalent of Ying and Yang! i.e. someone's got to pay!

And anyway, why oh why would Jesus be abused for my sorrows? Sin might have nothing to do with my sorrow! Yet the holy writ bundles up His atonement event as addressing both. The classic 'punishment to pay off the sin debt' concept can't explain that. So, to reiterate, the old 'sacrifice the virgin to the angry god (appeasement) theology to make things right' simply does not fit with our enlightened understanding of a loving Heavenly Father.

Oh, our faithful elder brother Jesus sacrificed plenty to know us! He did that in that atoning garden experience and then the cross where collectively He experienced vicariously all my blunders and yours. That was, for certain, plenty punishing but all that was for love and for our healing and rectifying or justifying us (like a carpenter's square) with heaven, so we are changed and made heavenly. It's not explaining away or excusing our follies nor paying of an angry God or keeper of scores or karma but an act whose result ends is in actually changing us. So, when we say, "Justice = might be satisfied." It is because we compatible ie we become heavenly and appropriately...are in Heaven. And those that aren't ...aren't.

Try explaining classic Appeasement Theology to an atheist or say a Hindu....tough sell! But explain Jesus as vicariously experiencing ALL of us out of love to be our Counselor and thus Savior ...is still a big sell... but sure easier than the whole volcano god story.

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## 98.Learning Heaven

Jesus was really quite the radical!

- Do good to those who spitefully use you and abuse you.
- Set your fancy gifts aside and 1st go recover your estranged relative.
- Do not give railing for railing...
- Blessed are the peacemakers. Why for they will be the children of God.

The final straw may be this chestnut: "Justice is mine saith the Lord so Judge not that ye be not judged!"

"Well, Why not???" Came the quick defense. "He/she did this and that! The @&^@\$)! He/She should roast in hell!" Ahh and that's just the root of the matter right there. A person saw or personally experienced a horrible situation and are just so certain there is nothing redeemable or mitigatable and their sense of "justice" is based on pain for pain, railing for railing!

Recall this tough nut: "Forgive those who have trespassed against you. Why? So that your Father in Heaven will forgive you." Hmmm so that sounds weird Why should forgiving my little splinters be held up for me not forgiving that big beam that Nogoodnik whacked me with??? Why would there be any connection whatsoever?

I suppose I could sum up the whole collection of seeming inequalities being demanded of us in comparison to the offenses real or perceived in this simple phrase; We are learning heaven.

You see, the root of Justice is Not punishment but compatibility. Let that sink in a bit.

We use pain and withdrawal and other negative tools as teachers. Did we punish our children because we hate them? I hope not! The good book says, "Whom the Lord Loveth, He is whom the Lord chasteneth" In fine, the point is not supposed to be revenge but recovery. Now, some are just slow learners, and only the college of hard knocks – direct experience with some hell brings us to some humility and recognition that there must be a better way.

That's what we learned from Alma the Younger. "For three days, I suffered the pains and anguish of a damned soul with a clear recollection and understanding of all my sins and the full understanding of all the murders. The thoughts of how I had harmed others so harrowed up my soul in profound chains of sorrow as to be like an unquenchable fire. So, I ask you – is that punishment? Sure sounds like it to me. But is God roasting him on a spit out of spite and revenge and retribution? NO! His pain was the natural result, the law affixed – the punishment is living with the truth. Justice is an = sign. You reap what you sow.

What then is God's interest in this affair? Read on in Alma's account and you see the utility of the pains of hell are just like we used with our own kids in "time-outs" IE reconciliations, recovery, correction! "and then I recalled my father telling me about one Jesus and I called out to him in my pain and said. Jesus, thou son of God, have mercy on me who is in the gall of bitterness.

The rest of the story has Jesus healing him and making something great of out him. It's very much a Saul/Paul story and in fact, IS ALL of our stories. The Good News is that Jesus is not about overlooking our sins and shortcomings and hate and evil, it's about healing us, changing us, and making even the most evil of us ready for heaven.

In essence, we are practicing heaven here and Jesus is the coach and counselor, and physician. All we need to do is follow His direction, accept his counsel, and take the medicine to be healed and ready for heaven.

Essentially, we are learning heaven lest when we are granted entry we make an instant hell out of it! You simply can't be in heaven with hate in your heart. So, to be in heaven you have to get the hate and hell out of you! Jesus is in the business of accomplishing that - in part by teaching us the same infinite level of mercy as he has so when we get there we will be like him already!

Sounds too hard? Is there anything too hard for the Lord?

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## 99.Lessons from Judas

Be not deceived! Be careful that we are not forcing our counsel on the Lord!

It would appear, given that Judas committed suicide (by one account), after Jesus was crucified, that he did not anticipate Jesus would allow himself to be killed but rather he would rise up and assume the role of Messiah and King as was commonly anticipated by the whole nation.

He may have been impatient with Mr. Meek and Mild having seen His majesty and power over life and death and wind and waves! The master just needed a nudge; force the matter by creating imperative circumstance to get him to step up and claim his divine role .... beginning by purging the land of the hated Romans! That is how zealots of the day thought.

When Jesus tacitly and calmly - almost matter of fact, pointed out that Judas would betray him and then said, "see to it," it's quite plausible, even reasonable, to imagine that Judas may have concluded that the all-knowing Master was actually accepting of Judas' unstated plan to "out the lord." In effect, that Jesus was "in on it" or at least resigned or acquiescing to the scheme. After all he had just orchestrated a rather grand Royal entry on a donkey; a day we still celebrate as Palm Sunday. (See Math 21) and had told his inner circle to obtain weapons!

That Judas did not anticipate that his action would lead to Jesus' horrific death is further confirmed by Judas subsequently throwing the 30 pieces of silver back at the Sanhedrin ...

[Mark 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.](#)

[5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.](#)

So yes, Satan inspired and deceived him ("entered Satan into him") but perhaps in some way, much like he deceived Eve; mixing truth with lies; he appealing to Judas' sense of justice or more likely - revenge against the occupiers.

There are lessons to learn from Judas' sad end. It is key that we "Counsel not the Lord" but rather 'to take counsel *from* God'. Our goal ought to be to understand and align our will with His and not the other way around.

Perhaps, to use a recent example - picketing the Church Office building to try and force our social viewpoints on the Lord is unlikely to be the way to find let alone change God's will. Our goal should always be to obtain Gods will.

Aside from that valuable lesson we just drew from that story, the question arises considering the final state of Judas, whose very name has come to mean the ultimate traitor. Is there forgiveness? Some say, "No!" Jesus seemed to call him a 'Son-of-Perdition'. That label is translated also as lost, or destruction.

Two questions come to the foreground. If ever so labeled, is that person forever destined for outer darkness along with the devil himself? Second, to be cast to outer darkness



implies irredeemable but surely this endless fate is not because of God's inability to extend that grace but that the person actively with full knowledge in perpetuity rejects such grace without desire to ever receive it.

- Sons of perdition deny the Holy Spirit after receiving it, D&C 76:35.
- Sons of perdition deny the Son after the Father has revealed him, D&C 76:43.

The record, however, shows that Judas was instantly repentant when he saw that his *outing* of Jesus resulted not in His becoming King but in His death! He was sorrowful to the point of committing suicide. He tried to give the blood money back and acknowledged that Jesus was innocent of any sin. Some writers try to vilify Judas calling him a thief and others envious and scour the record for possible offences he could have built up into a murderous rage, but the simplest answer consistent with the documented actions is he was a zealot with a zealot's viewpoint as to the role of the messiah. This was his mistake and sin; taking for himself the role of master. He did this to his sad end but ironically fulfilling Jesus' destiny and ultimate triumph over death and sin.

Did that triumph over sin include Judas' sin? Some try to imply that Judas had a perfect knowledge of Jesus and worked against him and on the face of it the Holy Spirit too. They cite John 17:12 where John records Jesus' prayer:

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."

<https://biblehub.com/john/17-12.htm> See Perdition, Loss, Ruin

LDS proponents of Perdition for Judas point to that utterance and then assert that he must have had perfect knowledge from the Holy Spirit. Because he had perfect knowledge and rejected Jesus, he is Perdition.... That circular reasoning struggles against the facts of the story that show a penitent Judas in search of grace and redemption for his error in judgment; not rejecting of Jesus.

One has to ask, Is Jesus not the Shepard that goes after to recover even the lost sheep; the physician that reaches even to hell to bring back the life in ruin? It was not long after that public betrayal that Jesus forcefully slammed another of the twelve, Peter with "Get thee behind me Satan." I'm not sure what's harsher to be referred to as Satan or the Son of, but I'm inclined to believe that Jesus' atoning efforts extend to *all* who repent and none but those who with perfect enlightenment reject that light are left permanently in darkness.

The plain record says Judas was flummoxed by what happened from his poignant public betrayal scheme and was not in the least his expectation. He showed a penitent state attempting to right the terrible outcome and even gave his own life in futile atonement for his error...or was it futile?

When we make a sin or an error of judgement, especially due to insufficient understanding of the whole picture, we often use a lesser term called 'a transgression'. Perhaps in God's mercy, Jesus' atoning sacrifice may cover even his betrayer's act along with the others whom Jesus petitioned His father saying near the end, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

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## 100. When is a Gift not a Gift but a Command?

There is common culture that teaches exclusivity to what is called THE Gift of the Holy Ghost. A problem emerges instantly as to how that is defined. The Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is as often spoken of as an entity as an influence. That influence is more often described in terms of gifts (plural) than A gift. There is one passage in the New Testament when a group was asked if they had received the Holy Ghost and they remarked they had not even heard of the concept. Then the brethren laid their hands on them and gave them 'the gift'. So, what did they *give* exactly?

Acts 8:15-17 rehearses how the apostles pray that the Holy Spirit might come to, fall upon, or be received by the saints in a certain city. Then they laid hands on them and it says, "They received the Holy Ghost." In verse 20 Paul calls it "a *Gift* of God."

There are cases where the Gift or influence simply came and other cases when it came from praying and then then others when the elders laid hands on the people. There is much confusion. In the case of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who has a structured priesthood, it is often presented that the gift or 'fulness of the gift' is only available to individuals that have had the laying on of hands by elders of the restored church. It is treated as a necessary sacrament and taught often as a gateway to the Holy Ghost. This leads to an assumption of exclusive access to God's Spirit.

Examining though the wording of the LDS confirmation sacrament, it reveals not a bestowal per se but a command. "I say unto you, Receive the Holy Ghost!"

So, is it valid that one could NOT have experienced the Holy influence to the same degree or manner before the laying on of hands by emissaries of Christ? Would that view not force the conclusion that other religion's pastors and priest and parishioners could not experience the same divine guidance, visions, influence or frequency or intensity as a baptized LDS believers? This view is common in LDS culture and some literature.

There is also plenty of anecdotal evidence that post baptism spiritual experiences do multiply for many implying it acted as a gateway of sorts; or is there another explanation? It is equally true that believing individuals of other faiths would be adamant that their life is frequently, even daily, influenced by that Holy Spirit and would scoff at the notion of exclusivity.

Conversely there are plenty of other Christian sects that so tie their expectation for the gifts of the spirit to theological purity of their own persuasion that it is beyond them to believe that an unorthodox believer like a Latter Day Saint could ever experience the Gift(s) of the Holy Ghost as they do.

This pattern of Holy Spirit exclusivity is backed by narrow interpretations and carefully stacking scriptures to that cultural end by both LDS(see essay [57 Baptism Misconceptions](#)) and non-LDS sects.(For the author's personal experience with this pattern of exclusivity see [Adams2010 journal.](#)) The negative result is distancing individuals and groups one from another when the ties that could align are so much greater!

The great irony is the same circles that might promote the exclusive Holy Spirit concept touting the “Constant companionship of the Spirit” also acknowledge periods they might call “Divine Silence!” The facts seem to suggest its not even constant with prophets!

Rather than exclusive access by an event like baptism or even the laying on of hands, the scriptures do speak to preparation, worthiness, readiness to receive influence. But we must not extend “worthiness” to earning and owed; as if God’s will was slaved to our performances; however divine in practice.

The explanation to these seemingly contradictory references in the writ and our personal experiences might simply be in the concept that when we align ourselves with God’s will, when we seek His will and influence, when we are doing good and following His commandments, THEN we are positioning ourselves to resonate with God. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit will accompany us more often because we are ready to receive when God chooses to send that gift of influence!

Naturally, when a person steps into the waters of baptism and is in prayer and receiving the laying on of hands by emissaries of our Savior there may well be outpourings of a spiritual nature. This will continue as one serves God, but it may be no more or less than before joining our faith if that life before baptism was a life also spent in God’s service.

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## 101. Jesus really is our Personal Savior, Personal Advocate, Personal Physician and Counselor

It's been a while since my good friends have heard from me but after our lesson on Sunday I felt impressed to provide a brief epilogue to an unfinished conversation.

A while back I tried to advance to some of my LDS friends an understanding - an answer really, to the prophet Enos's query, "Lord, how was it done"

I wasn't able to get too far with that conversation at that time. Perhaps my presentation may have been a bit too impertinent and seemingly unorthodox.

So it was with some gratitude and relief to hear in our church's general conf the talk "Jesus Christ is relief" that further quoted our prophet Nelson saying, "Because the Savior, through His infinite Atonement, redeemed each of us from weakness, mistakes, and sin, and because He experienced every pain, worry, and burden you have ever had, then as you truly repent and seek His help, you can rise above this present precarious world." That is the relief Jesus Christ offers us!" This was the crux behind all I had desired to share!

He did not experience stuff 'like' our troubles, the miracle was he experienced MY unique troubles. Out of time he vicariously experienced me. That's the takeaway. It explains the how it might be reasonable to call Jesus, "your personal savior!"

The collateral knowledge is the assertion that THAT garden and subsequent cross experience was 'the punishment' we all talk about. The prophet Alma 7:11,12 spoke that such experiences were part of the "how" he knew how to succor us.

- THAT personal experience with each of us is how he can be the perfect advocate to the Father for us.
- THAT is how he knows how to talk our unique language when He sends the Holy Spirit to touch us.
- That punishing event of experiencing each of our lives was not a payoff to some angry god in need of appeasement but a preparation - as he said, [DC19:19 "I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."](#)

The end result is we can be healed by the balm he uniquely provides and thus event by event be prepared and perfected with the end game of being made compatible with heaven.

**Thus** when we are ushered in through those pearly gates we are ready and heavenly, else it simply would not be just.

**Thus** by his gracious mercy, Justice, right and truth are all satisfied as we become new creatures.

**Thus**, Heaven is Heaven and so are you!

Blessings to all my friends

Till we meet again

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## 102. The Tweak

An open letter to my dear aunties,

In a day when many wonder if the last shoe will soon drop presaging Armageddon, the people who believe in Jesus as the Christ need more than ever to come together to fight together the onslaught of evil. There is so much that should unite us as believers and what divides is sometimes so obscure and difficult to articulate that it may be surprising how sharp the divide has been! Let's face it, if the ancient writings were crystal clear, there would not be arguments! More often than not, it's just a little tweak in understanding an ambiguous concept that can divide, but let that wedge be set aside -> unity is possible! You get what you focus on.

**As an example of a small tweak in understanding a concept**, take the topic of describing God. God has been called 'the invisible god' because few (some say none) have ever seen God and there are places that read, "no one can see god and live" suggesting you can see him but doing so may be fatal!. Yet there are various encounters, like when Stephen who sees God the Father AND notably Jesus by His side, and of course none other than Moses claims to have seen and talked with god face to face! Well, that's what was said!

[Ex 33:11](#) The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend

Then, if we are to assert that Jesus IS God, for sure, folks saw his face! So clearly under some circumstances God has a face to be seen and can show it when he wants to!

Even when seen, it might be further questioned if by one's physical eyes or in a vision? So, what does it mean to "see" god anyway? Paul said (likely about himself) "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows." This suggests 'a loophole' in the whole 'cannot see god' stricture! That stricture is clearly a qualified one at best.

Take Saul on the way to Damascus when he hears a voice and light yet the guys next to him hear a voice but saw no man speaking (and it's a bit ambiguous if they ever saw the light.) In our LDS faith when Joseph claimed to have, like Stephen of old, seen a vision of the Father and Son, he recounts how he found himself on his back after the encounter...If his spirit left his body like Paul's, consider how that would account for his essentially dead body left behind during the encounter. Anyway, the point is, it can be ambiguous as to these details. And for those who can't quite appreciate that God even has a body at all, all this chatter about dying if you see His face (vs say his back view) must seem quite confusing - hence apologists do linguistic gymnastics allegorizing the plain to the metaphoric!

[\(Exodus 33:19–23\)](#). To protect Moses, God put him "in a cleft in the rock" and covered him with His hand as He passed by (22). "Then," God promised, "I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (23).

We can take it as-is, the plain reading, or explain it another way. Moses isn't here to defend his meaning, so, if both concepts can be argued and rationalized from the same script, can we not cut each other some slack on leaning to one view or another? It is just a tweak in perspective that leads to one corner of the mental arena or another! For a more thorough treatment on seeing God try this link.

**Speaking of tweaks in understanding, consider another example starting with what the Athenian creed had to say about the nature of God as the theologians struggled to avoid being accused of polytheism with 3 Gods.**

Bishop Athanasia's creed dating from about 300+ AD has this to say about God from a trinitarian viewpoint: (quoting in part)

“...God the Father incomprehensible, God the Son incomprehensible, and God the Spirit incomprehensible, but not three incomprehensibles, but one incomprehensible...” [Link](#)

I'd like to think he had a whimsical side to him as to how he penned that but I do think he was quite serious, basically arguing, “yeh we can't figure out why this make sense but we believe it because it is said, ‘God is One’. Since we have what appears to be three Gods, we reconcile it by just asserting “we cant explain how God seems to be split up into distinct even estranged entities at times!” Which would not be too tragic if it weren't accompanied with, “you'd better believe it or else!” “Or else we will disown you and separate you and assert God will discard you to the pit,” if you don't sign up for this catechism.

But, was there no other explanation for that “God is One” reference? Turns out there is – a simple little tweak in the definition of what was thought to be incomprehensible and invisible! If three Gods are in perfect harmony, they in effect make up one God– “the Godhead” as Paul referred to it. Jesus said it like this:

John 17:21-23 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Personally, that make so much more sense than having one part of God talking to himself and complaining he's being abandoned by himself or himself asking his other self what he should be doing...It's the sort of stuff one gets sent to a shrink for! Someone else may make a better argument for it but in the end seeing it one way or the other comes down to a simple tweak in the definition of one word, ‘God’.

How folks get so worked up over how someone might personally visualize the invisible and incomprehensible is a bit beyond me. Both schools of thought believe there is ‘one God’ and its most unreasonable, based on the loving god concept, to presume that this loving God would reject and punish or otherwise ignore the prayers of millions who might define or mentally picture the incomprehensible God one Tweak different than another earnest seeker.

I am not arguing the ultimate difference in understanding might not be profound, only pointing out that the writ was ambiguous enough that just a nudge, a tweak in one simple concept ultimately brought about that divergence. Each would argue they worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and each would assert they worship “just one God!” If you want to find trinitarian language, it's on the cover page of the Book of Mormon. Even there, it's ambiguous at times even when the writer is trying to be clear!. It's the nature of language.

Perhaps Jesus said it best, as he prayed...to God [Jn 17:21](#) “that they may be one, even as we are one” For a more thorough treatment on “One God,” see this short essay: [Link](#)

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### 103. Avatars, and Who is whispering in your ear?

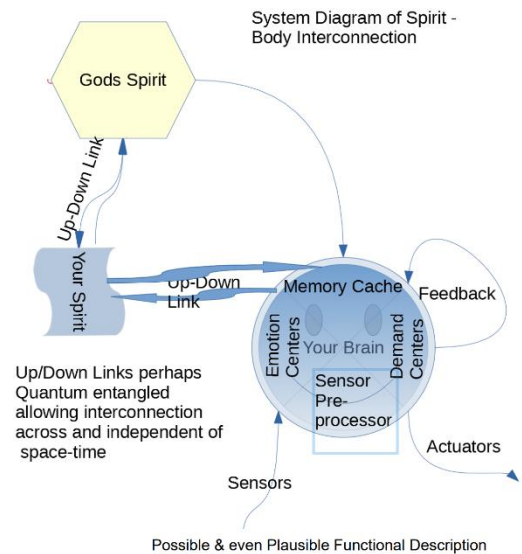
We are taught that we are spiritual beings having an earthly experience. We are admonished to “invite God’s Spirit” into our lives and activities. In fine might think of our Mind, Body, Spirit connections very much like Avatars. This body, like a drone, has core and cache memory, sensors and preprocessing functions, stabilizers and safety reaction capability to autonomously safe the system with little need for oversight once trained. There is no consciousness needed in any of that. As adults we’ve all driven away only to realize we were lost in our thoughts and have no recollection of the details of the drive!

The reaction centers can also even provide what to say and pull up from memory reactive thought. IF we allow the Avatar to just react, we become as the scripture says, the natural man which is an enemy of God. It can be an enemy because just like leaving weapons on a battlefield we can leave this avatar unattended and the enemy can pick it up, influence it and use it for his own nefarious purposes. There are various ways we can “leave” it unattended and vulnerable. Drugs, can separate our spirit from control. Allowing the “natural man” to be in control, essentially giving over complete control to the reaction centers like anger, sex and appetites all provide an opening for another spirit to jump into the driver’s seat as it were.

Cartoons often picture us dealing with conflict as two spirits, one good and the other evil whispering in our ear, with the story playing out as to which one’s advice you ultimately give in to. This implies a contemplative slow-motion experience. Sometimes that’s just the way it is.



If we are wise, like the cartoon, we give heed to the input from God and good friends. Choosing *good* friends is one of the most important decisions a young or even an old person will ever make. Choosing to be surrounded by a majority of bad friends is like inviting that little imp to park on your shoulder! You, as salt, can compensate for the bitter, but too much bitter and your salt will have lost it’s savor. Choose your school, your activities and work environments with the same care as your choice of friends. The adage that you will be known by the company you keep has some validity as the influence of good or bad friends is again quite like that cartoon!



Another old Indian parable tells a story about a wolf:

*An old grandfather was teaching his grandson about life:*

*"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.*

*"It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil—he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.*



*The same fight is going on inside you—and inside every other person, too."*

*The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf will win?"*

*The grandfather simply replied, "The one you feed."*

Even when we try and think we are managing and guarding our spirit-body defense, we must appreciate that our limited Avatar body has limitations. It has limits in those sensors! In actuality we all tend to see life and experiences as through a soda straw. Even the little light we do perceive is but a tiny fraction of the spectrum that could be seen . We don't have God's perspective; just a soda straw view. Try closing your other eye and look through a straw and imagine that is all you were born to be able to see. After a while that would become your new normal. Lo we are careful, we may convince ourselves that our viewpoint, what we see and understand, is all there is to see. In the Bible, we are advised that, "we see as through a glass darkly!"

If we are wise, we realize that we don't see all or even much! We actually don't know nor understand much either! (Walk through the stacks of a large library sometime and you'll realize your ignorance.) Likewise, our emotional skills and knowledge are limited and we must appreciate that it's pretty hard to feel another's pain. Bottom line? We can school the reactive centers of our body, slow them down and give our spirit and God's spirit a bit of time to command the body what to do, how to feel and have to respond...slower is often better!

In fine, we must school our emotional centers and bridle the reactions. Understanding that the sensors are limited allows us to have grace for each other and for ourselves. By not allowing the natural man to be ruled by emotions and avoiding open doors caused by drugs and addictions, maintains walls of defenses from influence from evil spirits that do not serve our cause and who's aim is to take control. Learning to school this body, to control this avatar, is after all one of our primary missions.

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## 104. A View to Atonement Group Discussion

### Hand Out for Discussion –

#### **There are at least 7 Atonement concepts; two are most common:**

Penal Substitution or appeasement Theology is perhaps the most common idea across most of Christianity, but there is another voice or understanding that sees Jesus' atoning efforts in context of healing from suffering human anguish and trials; freeing us from the guilt of sin by removing the desire to sin and its legacy. While sinning can be conceptualized as somehow addressed by retribution IE punishment, Jesus' atonement accomplishes both purging the results of sin AND all those healing aspects resulting in sanctification ie as being readied for heaven.

#### **Its about your direction, not so much about your past**

LDS teachings inform that God has demonstrated His concern for your future actions, the past being an indicator but not a determinant for the future. Hence, he offers a way to sponge out the past and set the person aright; IE compatible with perfection and the kingdom he is destined to.

#### **The key concept then is sanctification. Appeasement is not to be found!**

On examination, appeasement theology is inconsistent with our basic understanding of Father God; full of grace and Love. The eternal law related to justice that McConkey wrote about is nicely illuminated in last April's conference "Jesus Christ is relief", "[Pres Nelson reminded us what Jesus said to the Nephites, "Will you not now return to me and repent of your sins and be converted that may heal you."](#) Notice there is no payment here; only converting(change) and healing! Again from Nelson, "[He can heal you from sadness and fear](#)" and "[from the wounds of the world.](#)"

#### **Words have multiple meanings!**

What if Mercy didn't simply imply a condition of undeserved generosity but meant additionally - applied love; a forward-thinking outcome-based emphasis?

What if "Justice must be satisfied" didn't refer to retribution or revenge or placating an angry god in need of appeasement by sacrifices nor balancing the scales of cosmic Ying and yang? What if Justice simply meant that 'things are' and remain what God has defined them to be! Heaven is heaven and remains a place of superlatives like peace and goodness (also defined by God). If you go to heaven its because you are heavenly.

What if Atonement did not mean punishment as some sort of appeasement but instead meant precisely what the concatenated parts of this interesting word communicate; to "be-One-Destined" or "Destined to be one." To be 'covered' or changed. A rebirth.

What if terms like Price and Payment are describing not some arbitrary unrelated physical torment like scourging (by his stripes (allegory) we are healed) but the process of God connecting with us intimately, Jesus' incurred ardor and difficulty in the task of so experiencing us. In so doing He becomes the perfect counselor, the physician with the right medicine that when applied is sanctifying and correcting!

Certainly, that would be a virtually infinite task for correcting billions of souls such that they are, or become, through that effort, compatible with the assigned heaven – thus satisfying the concept of justice. IE Heaven stays heaven!

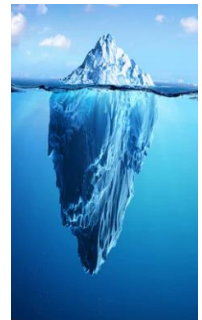
Forgive the crude vernacular but What if the Good News of Jesus is not that he's the ultimate sacrifice to an angry god that must be paid off and appeased so that favors of heaven are showered on the adherence, but instead that Jesus and the Holy Spirit and our Heavenly Father have arranged a sort of clinic – a process – a means for the children they love to be cured of sinful tendencies to the point that we never desire to do or knowingly pursue wrong?

Even if our execution in this world may be flawed, our desires really can be perfected. What if when the shackles of this earthy veil are lifted our execution will likewise be perfected?

Would that not be Good News indeed?

### **We are of stupendous potential and we cant see or hardly fathom it yet!**

There is a concern that it will take eons for us to actually be readied for heaven implying some sort of holding place for schooling which is not your final heaven but somewhere else. This is probably not right and underestimates the fact that we are handicapped in this veiled mortal experience having scant access to our full spiritual self. Like an iceberg – there is much more to us than meets the eye. More like amnesia patient with massive strokes! When those handicaps are removed, unshackled if your hearts are purified that goal and expectation of doing the right thing might not be as unattainable as our current perspective seems. Remember Jesus to once was a little child and yet he made the universe! If we really believe what he said about us being his children of great promise then let us dwell on that picture of an iceberg with just a tiny bit of its immensity visible at present.



[How can someone like me ever be anything like Him?](#)

[http://peoplespassions.org/peoplesfaith/essays/Whats\\_all\\_this\\_Stuff\\_about\\_Religion\\_Anyway.htm#\\_Toc157121754](http://peoplespassions.org/peoplesfaith/essays/Whats_all_this_Stuff_about_Religion_Anyway.htm#_Toc157121754)

### **Additional short studies on Jesus' Atonement:**

[http://peoplespassions.org/peoplesfaith/essays/Whats\\_all\\_this\\_Stuff\\_about\\_Religion\\_Anyway.htm#\\_top](http://peoplespassions.org/peoplesfaith/essays/Whats_all_this_Stuff_about_Religion_Anyway.htm#_top)

- [30. Forgiveness and the Power of the Atonement](#)
- [86. Vengeance vs Revenge](#)
- [93. On Enos' unanswered query. "Lord, how was it done?"](#)
- [94. Examining Key Gospel Words leads to understanding!](#)
- [95. What is Hell and How Can Jesus Get the Hell Out of You?](#)
- [97. Appeasement Theology](#)
- [98. Learning Heaven](#)
- [101. Jesus really is our Personal Savior, Advocate, Physician and Counselor](#)

## Key Takeaways

- Penal Substitution Theology (PST) is an untenable approach rejected by Amulek ([Alma 34:8–12](#)) and common sense and was historically derived from pagan sacrificial schemes to appease the pantheon of gods.
- LDS teachings emphasis that the Garden experience provides the time, place, and scriptural supports for a personal one-on-one atonement wherein our sanctification (ie being readied for heaven) is accomplished. (Jesus called it a 'preparation' [DC 19](#))
- Jesus' atonement, as a personal experience for each of us, individually, must have occurred outside of classic earth-time given the sheer immense numbers of unique souls to save!

The agony and anguish of personally interrogating and vicariously experiencing each of our lives was the exquisitely difficult, punishing experience, that allowed Him to uniquely, intimately, know you and so was able to be that perfect advocate, the perfect physician, the kindred spirit and counselor able reach us and heal us. That experience WAS the payment, or the punishment as Isaiah said; "by His stripes, we are healed." Note -not paid off but healed!

- The ignominious death was part of the claim of descending below all things though perhaps ingenious wicked people may have found something worse – hard to say - but can we agree, "close enough?"
- Jesus' public ignominious execution was also needful in this wise: to establish His power over both life and death; fulfilling His self-prophecy of "destroy this temple and I shall raise it up again in 3 days", His death needed, for those reasons at least, to be so public as to be indisputable in fact. ("these things were not done in a corner" [Acts 26:26](#))
- What's in a word or turn of a phrase?  
How then to understand the phrases and words that litter the way of misunderstandings like PST? Words are symbols; Phrases are collections of thoughts that have multiple possible meanings. With one meaning things make gospel sense. With another it doesn't even make common sense let alone fodder for a convincing argument a gentile might be able to accept.
- Understanding and speaking the language of your audience, So what's the problem?  
To share the greatest event in mankind's history, one has to understanding their perspective. Your presentation must make sense; common sense in their language. It must make common sense in your language too!

## Sharing the “Good News”

As an evangelical, missionary minded church and people we want to share our understanding and introduce Jesus to all. You need to understand your audience.

**Atheists:** For the most part believe we are simply machines and don't find any meaning in anything and live for the moment, and for sanity ignore the nihilistic epilog to their-philosophy

**Muslims:** Don't believe in perfection and see god weighing good vs bad; like a scales. Just need to tip it in the right direction to get into heaven or Die in Jihad and then its a sure ticket in.

**Hindus:** Believe in perfection but provides infinite iteration to achieve the goal

**Buddhist:** Like Hinduism provides infinite iteration to achieve the goal of perfection but Focuses on identifying causes of suffering and methods to address suffering which are often the results of sinful behavior; in fine it is like a detailed instruction manual to achieve perfection and thus an exit from reincarnation cycle

**Christians:** Comes is a few flavors but many/most have Jesus being punished as the price or ransom that is thought to satisfy or appease an otherwise angry God or in some variants a concept that God has to enforce a law that even supersedes God. God is thus compelled to execute some sort of punishment that is proposed to be equivalent to the misdeeds. The notable takeaway is that this concept is actually proposing to fix a God problem, not your problem. It is God that must be appeased or some law that God feels compelled to enforce.

However, if Jesus is punished instead of the sinner, that still qualifies to satisfy the angry god; thus a sort of loophole in that so called law. This is the same as a scape goat or whipping boy concept; somebody has to pay and it doesn't matter who!

In theological circles this is called [Penal Substitution](#).

<https://youtu.be/s8DZYeCvaM0?si=5TTrREa7IQ6vC2as>

I called it [Appeasement Theology](#).

[https://peoplespassions.org/peoplesfaith/essays/Whats\\_all\\_this\\_Stuff\\_about\\_Religion\\_Anyway.htm#\\_Toc157121808](https://peoplespassions.org/peoplesfaith/essays/Whats_all_this_Stuff_about_Religion_Anyway.htm#_Toc157121808)

**A better approach is addressing how sanctification can be a reality – how you are readied for heaven This talk by the renowned Robert Millet is worth the listen:**

<https://speeches.byuh.edu/devotionals/the-atonement-of-christ-infinite-in-scope-intimate-in-nature>

Likewise this conference talk speaks to the concept of Jesus Anointing effort is for change and healing. Jesus Christ is Relief by By President Camille N. Johnson, Relief Society General President

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/04/42johnson?lang=eng#p5>

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## What's in a word?

Words are symbols for concepts and things

Term	Common Meaning	Gospel Consistent Meaning
Payment (Jesus)	Dread, Beatings Blood letting or tortuous anguish intended to assuage some likewise unspecified individual; possibly Father God or in some minds an unknown force/law that even God must obey.	Becoming acquainted with your grief and your sins, was intrinsically painful to the point of failure of his body while His spirit endured the trauma. He paid a personal price to know you.
Payment (You)	You are subjected to some unpleasant unspecified thing, like fire or tortuous anguish intended to assuage the angry God or perhaps some unspecified individual who suffers instead on your account; Apparently there is a table of "stripes" for various sins. Stripes are not well defined but for sure is unpleasant.	If you are suffering from your sin it is the natural result of a clear understanding (guilt) of that sin's effect – If that unrelenting hell causes you to finally look to Jesus then Hell had a useful purpose not to pay off the sin accountant for your sins but to school you to the better way.. the only way; Jesus who saves.
Sacrifice or Sacrifice for sin	You sinned, Jesus agreed to sacrifice by doing something hard and sore to balance out or appease the "demands of Justice", This understanding of "justice" is like tribal retribution between the Hatfield's and the McCoys. It does not care who pays!	You sinned, Jesus agreed to sacrifice by doing something hard and sore in the process of becoming so acquainted with your grief and sin as to know how to reach you and change you and thus sanctify you; ready for heaven
Punishment	Harsh Law is enforced by either an angry god or a reluctant but powerless God who is compelled to punish	You: The natural result. A perfect recollection and understanding of your sins (guilt) and its complete ramifications.  Jesus Experiencing your life x billions was a traumatic (punishing) experience
Mercy,	For His good pleasure He chooses who he will save	From infinite love, He prepares a way to recover, heal and sanctify His children readied for heaven
Justice, Justified, Justice must be satisfied	This is either a concept of retribution or an actual entity like an angry god who's nature demands a balance of pain with imperfection/error.  To justify is to hide the sins from Father God's view. Could be thought of as a willful self deception on God's part	Justice is like a concept of fairness; like an = sign. Things are what God says they are!. If heaven is heaven then only the heavenly can be there... else it would cease to be heaven.  Like using a carpenter's square is used to justify a wall with a reference, to be justified it to be made right.
Atonement/ Covered	The be overlooked or ignored or forgotten	To be transformed. Also like a "mare is covered" we are made to be fruitful of righteousness. To be made one or compatible

**Lord How was it done?**

<b><u>The “How” from Jesus’ Perspective</u></b>	<b><u>The “How” from Our Perspective</u></b>
What if in the Garden, Jesus experienced each of our lives individually? Outside of time, Jesus experienced ALL of our sinful behaviors and all the anguish and unseemly ramifications therein. All the traumas and the good too; more intimately than if he had read page by page your whole life’s book.	You Accept that Jesus, God, <i>is</i> THE healer, Counselor, your Savior; you might say, “your personal savior” and it would not be a trite saying!
He advocates to the Father for you when you pray - like the good lawyer that knows “his client” like himself.	You Accept Jesus as your perfect advocate to the Father as He experienced you. He knows you “like a book.”
Based on His love, foreknowledge, and perfect empathy he acquired specifically and uniquely for you, He reaches your reaching and sends the Holy Spirit with the right sized customized balm to strengthen and amplify your resolve and efforts while yet in the flesh.	You Reach out to the Godhead, repent of past misdeeds and with God’s help (Jesus) strive to put sin behind you Like having power steering, Jesus is the difference in your success and perfection.

## A View to Atonement Group Discussion

### Steves Notes to Guide Discussion:

A popular song in our hymn book reads , “A law was broken Jesus died, that justice might be satisfied”. That’s one seriously packed phrase that leaves a lot of unanswered questions. Enos, likewise, experienced redemption, relief from guilt, change and healing all at once in His encounter with Jesus.. and then asked “Lord, how was it done?”

Jews were taught to sacrifice animals “for their sins” and that was supposed to be a reminder; pointing to some final great sacrifice that would happen yet in the future to take away the result or impact of all sin. Over time, that connection was sadly lost on most folks who came to think of that the sacrifice event as *the* mechanism in its entirety as means to purge the ledger of your misdeeds.

The missionaries, Alma the younger and Amulek, provided some insight in Alam 7:11-12 and Alma 34:8-17

Amulek says things like “Take upon Him the transgressions” “Atone for”

He says we are “Hardened” “Lost” “Fallen” “a sacrifice must me made” but must be an infinite and eternal”

By Mercy (as in undeserved) this event or process “overpowers justice” But in verse16 he ties mercy to a repentance, IE change; so not just once and done. It’s a process. He also uses legal argument to point out that simply paying of a sin ledger as a concept is flawed and not the right understanding,

Yet this sectarian notion of a ledger in the cosmos that must be balanced and paid, like the yin and Yang persists in many, even most, parts of Christianity.

Steven Richardson in his work, “Believing Christ” used a now famous Bike purchase allegory to try and explain how ‘Jesus makes up the difference’ as your sins and deeds and misdeeds are weighed and found wanting (Islam) ...In that allegory, Jesus apparently places his finger on the scales of Justice and makes up the difference.

Then Brad Wilcocks comes along and being a master of wordplay says, ”no no no Jesus doesn’t make up the difference, He IS the difference!” IE he helps you along the way to become different.”

SO thats pretty good about the What Jesus did, but still leaves Enos’ question “Lord HOW was it done” yet unanswered.

In Camill Johnsons recent Conference talk, "Christ is Relief," she quotes our Prophet President Nelson who offered,

"Because the Savior, through His infinite Atonement, redeemed each of us from weakness, mistakes, and sin, and because He experienced every pain, worry, and burden you have ever had, then as you truly repent and seek His help, you can rise above this present precarious world."<sup>7</sup> That is the relief Jesus Christ offers us!"

This is helpful enlightenment from our pulpits:

Robert Millet Robert L. Millet is a professor of ancient scripture and emeritus Dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah then brought out these enlightening words:

The atonement of Christ, brothers and sisters, is intimate in that God's (can I say it this way?); God's infinity does not preclude either His immediacy or his intimacy. In ways that we cannot comprehend, even though our Savior is the Savior of an innumerable host of people, He is first and foremost my Savior and your Savior.

Recently, at our General Conference, Elder Merrill J. Bateman of the Seventy made this observation.

"For many years," he said, "I have thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin of was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi ,Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has been changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people. As Jesus felt our infirmities, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows and was bruised for our iniquities."

Elder Bateman continues,

"The atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us. The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were numberless as the sand upon the seashore. If Moses beheld every soul," Elder Bateman says, "then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptation. He knows our weaknesses, but more than that. More than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith." That's the end of the quote from Elder Bateman

Time stood still for Jesus the Almighty God who finished his preparations for each and every one of us. That preparation was so punishing, so full of anguish, that caused Jesus – even God, to suffer to the point of death.



## A View to Atonement Group Discussion

### Follow up to discussion:

I tried in this short note to gather what points I think was generally agreed by all in our discussion and maybe tie it together better than my stumbling attempt. It was clearly a lot to try and put together in our minds so quickly. We are all appropriately passionate about this key topic. I get that. Here, then, is a synopsis.

- 1) The “Law” is a law of natural eternally valid consequences. If you do wrong, it is wrong, it feels wrong and stays wrong. In the next life, our spirits have the blessing (and curse) of perfect clarity, hence perfect peace or perfect anguish.

From Alma the younger, “racked with eternal torment, harrowed up racked with all my sins, tormented, pains of hell; rebelled, murdered, led to destruction; racked my soul with inexpressible horror, be banished, become extinct, pains a damned soul, torment”

- 2) Jesus experienced you and all your wrongs (amongst other experiences shared) So doing, Jesus would indeed be “bearing your sins/transgressions” and be experiencing your “natural punishment,” the “just” results of the laws broken and actually to a greater extent than you do presently because He would be experiencing the full wake of your sin, the full ramifications and extent like Alma (above) described. Punishment indeed or better worded, “a punishing experience!” Justice. ie the result of natural law, is not ignored but “satisfied” or realized; not ignored or whitewashed but experienced. Because Jesus experienced it, as God, He was uniquely positioned to use that awful experience to “prepare” to correct the flaws and as “a man intimately acquainted with grief (our grief),” he became the great physician, counselor, to heal the wounds he was now so intimately acquainted with. **It was not magic. It was method.** This is likely why Jesus called that experience, Not payment, but “preparation unto the children of men.”
- 3) His experiences with us virtually in that Garden, and also being among us as a living soul Himself, gave him perfect empathy to succor us. Hence, as Isaiah said, “By his stripes we are healed.” In this light, it all makes perfect, logical, rational, loving sense.
- 4) So, it is not a matter of appeasing an angry father god who demands pounds of flesh for misdeeds, nor a pagan tit for tat sacrifice, or even some form of tribal retribution, but a punishing experience of ‘learning us’ that Jesus went though to be that physician, even our friend who gave up his life for us.
- 5) The natural “just” consequences were there and experienced and was the mechanism for teaching/healing of our souls and readying us for heaven; else it would simply not be just.

I hope this approach to those very same words and phrases lifts and makes it easier to share the joy of our redemption with your friends and family. [Back to Top of the Document](#)

Brother Steve

## **105. Clothing the naked? Part 1 of 2**

In the beginning God made clothing of animal skins for Adam and Eve. Why? His reason was because “they have discovered their nakedness” Also as even Satan said, “you have a new world here! Quick make coverings of fig leaves. God will see your nakedness, Hide!”

Yes, a new world indeed, from innocence to new understanding, new appreciation, new interests that also made them sexually capable. When our children are young it is common to bath together without regard to sex. They are innocent.

But as they age into preadolescence they begin to, like Adam and Eve, to discover their nakedness” and we separate such activity, sleeping and bathing and “we cover their nakedness.”

When a bride is married, she symbolically removes the veil for her husband and in private without shame removes that covering of her nakedness. Likewise with the man, as husband and wife, there is no shame. They are as one.

In much of our society, this pattern has been all but lost. Gone is the veil and most of what used to cover that nakedness. In some cases, even the sacred garment symbolizing God’s covenant with us is also lost in the effort to not reserve for the marriage bed, but to advertise and show one’s “assets” to any and all. Teaching a group of teenagers, I once pointed out – “Why don’t men show of chest cleavage?” The obvious answer was. ‘There are no functioning breast to show off.” Why do girls wear hot pants and scant skirts and dresses that more resemble negligees? (even in chilly weather; mind you!)? The obvious answer again is to draw the eye to her most private(prized) parts...or what used to be private. To the person who might claim, “Not so! I just like the way I look.” The real question is “who’s looking and what’s being shown off?” The reality is we dress in public for others. Whether by design or just to fit in with the crowd by wearing the latest fashion, if that fashion is an advertisement for your sexuality then it should not be a surprise if the advertising works! Furthermore, if that desire is for admiration, that form of pride is right next door in the sin list with unsanctioned sexuality. One often leads to the other. Its often enough a surprise for young women to discover just what effect their visual attire has on a young man. It may even engender a feeling of empowerment. A young woman, who honors God and desires God-minded young men as companions would not deliberately dress to so entice. God set that time and a place and circumstance for that intimacy; we call it marriage.

The reason then we clothe and separate young children by sex, and why we wear clothing, in part, is obviously to avoid turning on untimely, unsanctioned sexual behaviors, and as Jesus added; even improper thoughts. It is curiously then, that we note a small but emerging trend wherein some are tossing those God given cautions along with the garments that the Almighty intended to cover their nakedness. It is not surprising when they reap the expected harvest; starting with a loss of the covenant with God in exchange for garnering the pride of the world. Too enough, by enticing sexual thoughts outside of the marriage covenant, this also leads to the breaking of God’s commands on sexual purity with all its attendant destructive fallout.

Just as often this worldly pride focused behavior also leads to loss of faith in God. It was once said that “You cannot long live with disparity between your actions and beliefs. You

will either change your actions to match your believes or you will change your beliefs to match your actions.”

Society clearly shows the results of setting both God and modesty aside. It is readily measured by the rampant number of children born out of wedlock. Too many of these same children, who are raised without their father, are not incidentally filling the prisons and terrorizing the cities.

Too often today, that sacred bond of intimacy, which God intended to bind the marriage couple, is well used and spent before the knot is ever tied. Even when marriage is subsequently entered, the ‘try before buy’ commitment is often a bit sketchy. Subsequent broken marriages can just as often find the cause of their failure in behaviors that well preceded those unions.

God had it right when he gave Adam and Eve an Holy garment to cover their nakedness and modern society with its ever changing ‘show it all’ fashion has it demonstrably wrong. Fancy that!

Brother Steve

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## **106. Clothing the naked? Part 2 of2**

In the beginning, God made clothing of animal skins for Adam and Eve; but not simply to cover them from the elements and other’s eyes. At that same time, we learn that God made a covenant with Adam and Eve and their posterity and marked or shall we say ‘wove’ the four key provisions and performances of that agreement into that garment. The four marks or glyphs, though simple, each contain a whole thought.

- Contain your passions into the bounds the Lord sets. God will provide wisdom and instruction as a map to define and conduct your direction and path in life.
- Live your life striving for perfection and right; seek after the Holy Spirit who will give you power toward that end.
- Appreciate that you see only a little and as through a dark lens. Hence like a blind man, seek assistance daily from He who sees and knows all and give liberally to those who humbly seek His guiding hand.
- Subordinate your wisdom for His wisdom and worship daily in humility and awe and He who is above all will exalt the weak and humble.

Notice both parties have performances and responsibilities gated by those provisions. I think it safe to say He will hold up His end of that covenant!

In the LDS temples, ceremonies and reenactments of that first covenant teach how Jesus’ Atoning sacrifice was in fact “preparation” for each of us, and a most difficult experience that enables Him as part of the Godhead to perform God’s end of the bargain. How He became the perfect Counselor, Comforter, Advocate, Your friend in actual deed is explored in several essays (See Atonement in TOC), but the point to focus on here is that it is through Jesus we are made perfect and in the end compatible with the kingdom of glory we are suitable for. He really is at the pearly gate. You take His hand and He lets you in if “He knows you”.

In the Temple ceremony at the veil to the Celestial room, we, like the apostles of old, take his hand and feel the prints of the nails and like Thomas figuratively thrust our hand into His side and witness that Jesus is the Christ. If we are prepared to enter, the Lord says Let him/her enter. It is not about a payoff or bribe to sneak past the guard. It's about one friend receiving another to a place you belong because we are like Him. We enter heaven because though His efforts we have been made ready. In fine, we go to heaven because we are heavenly. Jesus makes that change possible. Remember - Counselor, Comforter, Advocate! Here a little, there a little, we change and slough off the rough edges until a shining diamond emerges with no desire to sin, but to do good continually. We go where we belong!

All that for so so little from us; just a willing heart, a humble repentant attitude. Paul admonished us to put on the whole armor of God. The Temple garment is a symbol of the four covenants. God hardly needs reminding of His end of the bargain, but it does help us, if we allow it, to be reminded of our end. The wise count themselves fortunate, even blessed to hold that bargain close to our person each day and night.

It is convenient, trendy, fashionable? Those questions, in the light of the covenant, bargain, agreement, handshake we made are sort of irrelevant to men and women of our word. Selfishly, there's too much at stake not to fulfil my end to the best of my ability! Casually setting the garment aside is similar to shredding a business contract. It may have psychological effect on someone but God still has His copy and will fulfil His end as we return to that covenant path.

I had this fun exchange high on a mountain climb with a Baptist minister asking about that contract etched in cloth, [Link to essay excerpt](#)