

### The effort to believe

Some people seem to be more inclined to disbelieve the scriptures and the teachings of our present-day prophets than they are to believe them. I have said in my heart that if they would put forth the same effort to believe that they do to disbelieve, and would humble themselves, exercise faith, and study diligently, the Holy Ghost would help them, and they would find that they believe many of the things they now think they disbelieve.

The Holy Ghost can give us a sure conviction that man is a child of God. Altogether too frequently, when men, unaided, try to understand the relationship of man to God, they look at things through mortal eyes only and consider only mortal conditions. But this life is not the beginning, neither is it the end. To understand man's relationship with God, we must broaden our perspective with the help of the Holy Ghost and consider the preexistent state and also the life after death.

### Help through humility and faith

The Holy Ghost can help us see more clearly in the shaded areas. But in order for it to be the power

that it can be and should be in our lives, things must be right within us. We must be truly humble, exercise strong faith associated with good works, pray regularly and sincerely, couple prayer with fasting, study the gospel diligently, live the gospel, keep active in the Church, and give of ourselves in unselfish service to others and to building the kingdom of God here upon the earth.

I have felt the power of the Holy Ghost in my life—in the classroom—in military combat—in my church assignments—and in my daily living. The influence has been most pronounced when I have humbled myself before the Lord and have prepared myself by exercising faith, studying hard, living the gospel, and through fasting and prayer.

I testify to you that God lives, that the gospel is true, that this is the true church of Jesus Christ, and that we have a true prophet of God leading us today. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

### President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom we have just listened is Elder William H. Bennett, Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us.

## Elder Henry D. Taylor

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve*

As visits are made to the stakes throughout the Church and one observes the faithful, devoted service of you brothers and sisters, he is impressed by your earnest willingness to serve the Lord and to help your fellowmen.

This desire to serve is based upon a strong conviction that this is truly the Lord's work in which you are engaged. That conviction is called a testimony, an impelling, driving force

that results in righteous deeds and positive actions. As one observes this dedicated service, he concludes that the underlying strength of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in the testimonies of its individual members.

### Entitled to witness

Every member of the Church is entitled to know that God our Heavenly Father lives; that he is not dead. He

is also entitled to know that our elder brother, Jesus Christ, is the Savior and Redeemer of the world, and that he has opened the door for us, that we, through our individual acts, may receive salvation and exaltation and dwell once again in the presence of our Heavenly Father. This assurance and witness must be earnestly sought. Heber C. Kimball, a counselor to President Brigham Young, warned the Saints in 1856 that many trials would come to test their faith; that the time would come that no man or woman would be able to endure on borrowed light. Each must gain a personal knowledge of the truth and be guided by the light within himself.

### Sincere seekers after truth

President McKay assured a group of young people that a knowledge of the truth and a testimony of the gospel could come to them if even in their youth they would learn one great lesson: "That purity of heart, and a sincere heart seeking after the Savior's guidance daily, will lead to a testimony of the truth of Christ's gospel. . . ." This counsel indicates that testimonies may be gained through clean living and prayer.

Joseph Smith, although only a youth, had faith and prayed to our Heavenly Father for an answer to a problem which was of sincere concern to him. He was blessed with a personal visitation from our Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Saul of Tarsus, who was a persecutor of the followers of Jesus, became Paul the apostle, defender of the Christ, following a dramatic experience while on the road to Damascus. A light was seen in the heavens, and he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And he answered and said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the Lord replied: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9:3-5.)

### Impressions made by Holy Ghost

These two incidents were rare manifestations, but the impressions made by the Holy Ghost can be equally deep and lasting. President Joseph Fielding Smith has said, "Therefore, the seeing, even the Savior, does not leave as deep an impression in the mind as does the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the spirit. . . . the impressions on the soul that come from the Holy Ghost are far more significant than a vision. It is where spirit speaks to spirit, and the imprint upon the soul is far more difficult to erase." (*Seek Ye Earnestly* [Deseret Book Co., 1970], pp. 213-14.)

This truth is further illustrated by the experiences of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Each of the three—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—saw the angel, saw and handled the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and heard the voice of the Lord declare that the record was true. Yet later, all three, becoming disaffected and out of harmony with the leaders, dwindled in unbelief and apostasy. But the imprint of the Spirit had been so indelible that not a single one of them ever denied his testimony, which is still printed in each copy of the Book of Mormon. The testimony of the still small voice whispering to our innermost beings is of more worth than outward signs or manifestations.

### Experience of Lorenzo Snow

As a young man living in Kirtland, Ohio, Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of the Church, was converted and baptized in 1836. He had studiously and conscientiously compared the teachings of the missionaries with the teachings of the Savior. Becoming convinced of the truths of the gospel, he had sought baptism by immersion.

Following confirmation, he constantly anticipated an assurance that he had received the Holy Ghost. Two or three weeks following his baptism, he

reflected that he had not yet received a testimony of the truth. Being uneasy, and laying aside his books, he left the house and wandered through the fields. A gloomy spirit and indescribable cloud of darkness seemed to envelop him. It was his custom, near the close of day, to retire to a nearby secluded grove and engage in secret prayer. This night he had no inclination to do so. The spirit of prayer had departed, and the heavens seemed like brass over his head. But, determined not to forgo his evening practice, he sought his accustomed place and knelt in solemn prayer.

"I had no sooner opened my lips in an effort to pray," recalled President Snow, "than I heard a sound, just above my head, like the rustling of silken robes, and immediately the Spirit of God descended upon me, completely enveloping my whole person, filling me, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and O, the joy and happiness I felt! No language can describe the almost instantaneous transition from a dense cloud of mental and spiritual darkness into a refulgence of light and knowledge. . . . I then received a perfect knowledge that God lives, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and of the restoration of the holy Priesthood, and the fulness of the Gospel. It was a complete baptism—a tangible immersion in the heavenly principle or element, the Holy Ghost; and even more real and physical in its effects upon every part of my system than the immersion by water." (Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, p. 8.)

In this manner Brother Snow received comforting assurance as the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and the Holy Ghost blessed him with a testimony that remained with him to the close of his earthly existence.

### Testimonies to be nourished

A testimony is a priceless gift from God. But even though a person

may receive a witness through the Holy Ghost, there is no guarantee that this testimony will remain steadfast unless the person exerts constant effort to keep that testimony alive. Testimonies gained may be lost through carelessness, indifference, and/or neglect.

Testimonies need to be nourished and fed. President Lee wisely counseled: "If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner, our spirituality isn't increasing in depth." (Seminar for Regional Representatives of the Twelve, December 12, 1970.)

### The way to know

The Savior, while teaching at the temple, was questioned by the Jewish teachers as to the source of his doctrine, which was astounding to them. Whence came his wisdom? they asked Jesus answered their troubled inquiries, saying: ". . . my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:16-17.)

The Lord's answer was direct and applies to us today, just as it did to the people to whom he was speaking. If we will do our Father's will and keep his commandments, the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth unto us—it's as simple as that. May this be our lot, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ■

### President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us.

We should like to express our deep appreciation to the following who have furnished the singing for this conference:

The Tabernacle Choir, for their excellent singing on the Saturday morning broadcast session and at both the morning and afternoon sessions on Sunday.