

How Does the Holy Ghost Help You?

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The Holy Ghost warns, the Holy Ghost comforts, and the Holy Ghost testifies.

On a Monday evening not long ago, my wife, Lesa, and I stopped by the home of a young family in our neighborhood. While we were there, the family invited us to stay for family home evening, telling us their nine-year-old son had prepared the lesson. Of course we stayed!

Following the opening song, prayer, and family business, the nine-year-old began by reading an insightful question included in his handwritten lesson: “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” This question began a meaningful family discussion as everyone shared ideas and insights. I was impressed by our teacher’s lesson preparation and his very good question, which stirred in me over and over again.

Since then, I have continued to ask myself, “How does the Holy Ghost help you?”—a question especially relevant for Primary children turning eight and preparing for baptism and for those children who have recently been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is also relevant for the thousands of recent converts.

I invite each of us, especially Primary children, to consider, “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” As I pondered this question, I immediately reflected upon an experience from my youth. This is a story I related to Elder Robert D. Hales shortly after my call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and which he included in a Church magazine article he wrote about my life.¹ Some of you may have heard this story, but many may not have.

When I was about 11 years old, my father and I went hiking on a hot summer day in the mountains near our home. As Dad hiked up the steep trail, I jumped from one large rock to another along the sides of the trail. Intending to climb one of the large rocks, I began to clamber to the top of it. As I did so, I was surprised when my dad grabbed me by my belt and quickly pulled me down, saying, “Don’t climb on that rock. Let’s just keep on the trail.”

Minutes later, as we looked down from higher up the trail, we were stunned as we saw a big rattlesnake basking in the sun on top of the very rock I had intended to climb.

Later, as we were driving home, I knew Dad was waiting for me to ask, “How did you know the snake was there?” So I asked, and my question led to a discussion about the

Holy Ghost and how the Holy Ghost can help us. I have never forgotten what I learned that day.

Can you see how the Holy Ghost helped me? I am forever grateful that my father listened to the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost, as it may have saved my life.

What We Know about the Holy Ghost

Before we further consider the question “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” let’s review some of what the Lord has revealed about the Holy Ghost. There are many eternal truths we could look at, but today I will highlight just three.

First, the Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. We learn this truth in the first article of faith: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”²

Second, the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, as described in modern scripture: “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.”³ This means that the Holy Ghost has a spirit body, unlike God the Father and Jesus Christ, who have physical bodies. This truth clarifies other names given to the Holy Ghost and familiar to us, including Holy Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, Holy Spirit of Promise, and Comforter.⁴

Third, the gift of the Holy Ghost comes by the laying on of hands. This ordinance, following baptism, qualifies us for the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.⁵ To perform this ordinance, worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holders place their hands upon the head of the individual,⁶ call him or her by name, state their priesthood authority, and in the name of Jesus Christ, confirm him or her a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and utter the important phrase “Receive the Holy Ghost.”

How Does the Holy Ghost Help You?

With that simple review of three key truths about the Holy Ghost, we return to our first question: “How does the Holy Ghost help you?”

The Holy Ghost Warns

As I described in my childhood experience, the Holy Ghost can help you by warning you in advance of physical and spiritual dangers. I learned again of the important warning role of the Holy Ghost while I served in the Area Presidency in Japan.

During this time, I worked closely with President Reid Tateoka of the Japan Sendai Mission. As part of his usual mission routine, President Tateoka planned a meeting for missionary leaders in the southern portion of his mission. A few days prior to the meeting, President Tateoka had an impression, a feeling in his heart, to invite *all* missionaries of that zone to the leadership meeting, instead of the prescribed small number of elder and sister leaders.

When he announced his intention, he was reminded that this meeting was not designed for all missionaries but only for mission leaders. However, setting convention aside in order to follow the prompting he had received, he invited all missionaries serving in several coastal cities, including the city of Fukushima, to the meeting. On the appointed day, March 11, 2011, the missionaries gathered together for the expanded mission meeting in the inland city of Koriyama.

During this meeting a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and tsunami struck the region of Japan where the Japan Sendai Mission is located. Tragically, many coastal cities—including those from which the missionaries had been gathered—were devastated and suffered great loss of life. And the city of Fukushima suffered a subsequent nuclear event.

Although the meetinghouse where the missionaries were meeting that day was damaged by the earthquake, through following the promptings of the Holy Ghost, President and Sister Tateoka and all missionaries were safely assembled. They were out of harm's way and miles from the devastation of the tsunami and the nuclear fallout.

As you heed promptings from the Holy Ghost—impressions most often quiet and still—you may be removed, without ever knowing, from spiritual and temporal danger.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Ghost will help you by warning you, as He did my father and President Tateoka.

The Holy Ghost Comforts

To continue answering the question “How does the Holy Ghost help you?” let's now explore His role as Comforter. Unexpected events in all our lives cause sadness, pain, and disappointment. Yet, amid these trials, the Holy Ghost serves us in one of His important roles—as Comforter, which is actually one of His names. These peaceful, reassuring words from Jesus Christ describe this sacred role: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”⁷

To illustrate this further, I share the true account of a family with five sons who moved from Los Angeles, California, USA, to a small community some years ago. The two oldest sons began playing high school sports and associating with friends, leaders, and

coaches—many of whom were faithful members of the Church. These relationships helped lead to the baptism of Fernando, the oldest, and his next younger brother.

Fernando later moved away from home, where he continued his education and played college football. He married his high school sweetheart, Bayley, in the temple. As Fernando and Bayley finished their schooling, they eagerly anticipated the birth of their first child—a baby girl. But during the process of their families helping to move Fernando and Bayley back home, Bayley and her sister were driving on the freeway and were in a tragic accident involving many vehicles. Bayley and her unborn daughter lost their lives.

Yet as deep as was Fernando's pain, as well as that of Bayley's parents and siblings, so too was the depth of contrasting peace and comfort that distilled upon them almost immediately. The Holy Ghost in His role as Comforter truly sustained Fernando through this incomprehensible affliction. The Spirit communicated an abiding peace that led Fernando to an attitude of forgiveness and love toward everyone involved in the tragic crash.

Bayley's parents called her brother who was serving as a missionary at the time of the accident. He described in a letter his feelings upon hearing the difficult news of his beloved sister: "It was amazing to hear your voices so calm in the midst of a tempest. I did not know what to say. ... All I could think of is my sister may not be there when I come home. ... I was comforted by your infallible testimonies of the Savior and His plan. The same sweet spirit that brings me to the verge of tears as I study and teach filled my heart. I was then comforted and reminded of the things that I know."⁸

The Holy Ghost will help you by comforting you, as He did Fernando and Bayley's family.

The Holy Ghost Testifies

The Holy Ghost also testifies and bears witness of the Father and the Son and of all truth.⁹ The Lord, speaking to His disciples, said, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, ... he shall testify of me."¹⁰

In order to describe the valuable role of the Holy Ghost as witness, I will continue the story of Fernando and Bayley. If you remember, I shared that Fernando and his brother had been baptized, but his parents and three younger brothers had not. And, despite receiving numerous invitations to meet with the missionaries over the years, each time the family declined.

Upon the painful passing of Bayley and her baby daughter, Fernando's family was inconsolable. Unlike Fernando and unlike Bayley's family, they found no comfort or peace. They could not understand how their own son, along with Bayley's family, could bear their heavy burden.

Eventually, they concluded that what their son possessed and they did not was the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and this must be his source of peace and comfort. Following this realization, they invited the missionaries to teach their family the gospel. As a result, they received their own witness and testimony of the great plan of happiness, which brought them the sweet peace and calming comfort they were desperately seeking.

Two months after the loss of Bayley and their unborn granddaughter, Fernando's parents as well as two of his younger brothers were baptized and confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Fernando's youngest brother looks forward to his baptism when he turns eight. They each testify that the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, bore witness of the truthfulness of the gospel, leading them to a desire to be baptized and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Ghost will help you by testifying to you as He did to Fernando's family.

Summary

Let's now summarize. We have identified three revealed truths that bring us to a knowledge of the Holy Ghost. These are that the Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, and the gift of the Holy Ghost comes by the laying on of hands. We also identified three answers to the question "How does the Holy Ghost help you?" The Holy Ghost warns, the Holy Ghost comforts, and the Holy Ghost testifies.

Worthiness to Keep the Gift

For those of you who are preparing to be baptized and confirmed, those who recently have been, or even those who were a long time ago, it is vital to our physical and spiritual safety that we keep the gift of the Holy Ghost. We begin to do so by striving to keep the commandments, having individual and family prayer, reading the scriptures, and seeking loving and forgiving relationships with family and loved ones. We should keep our thoughts, actions, and language virtuous. We should worship our Heavenly Father in our homes, at church, and, whenever possible, in the holy temple. Stay close to the Spirit, and the Spirit will stay close to you.

Testimony

I now close with an invitation and my sure testimony. I invite you to more fully live the words sung so often by our Primary children, words I am sure they recognize: "Listen, listen. The Holy Ghost will whisper. Listen, listen to the still small voice."¹¹

