

The Truth of All Things

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Each of us has a personal responsibility to do what is necessary to obtain and keep a strong testimony.

We come tonight with the hope and faith that in some way, we will leave strengthened and blessed by the Holy Ghost, who teaches truth.¹ It is about our individual search for truth that I wish to speak.

As a young man, I had many questions about the Church. Some of my questions were sincere. Others were not and reflected the doubts of others.

I often discussed my questions with my mother. I am sure that she could sense that many of my questions were sincere and from my heart. I think she was a little disappointed in those questions that were less sincere and more argumentative. However, she never put me down for having questions. She would listen and try to answer them. When she sensed that she had said all that she could and that I still had questions, she would say something like this: "David, that is a good question. While *you* are searching and reading and praying for the answer, why don't *you* do the things you know you should and not do the things you know you should not?" This became the pattern for my search for truth. Through study, prayer, and keeping the commandments, I found that there are answers to all of my important questions. I also found that for some questions, continuing faith, patience, and revelation are needed.²

Mom put the responsibility of developing faith and finding answers on me. She knew that the important answers would come from my seeking truth the way that Heavenly Father has prescribed. She knew that I needed to find the truth. She knew that I needed to be sincere in my questions and be willing to act on what I already knew to be true. She knew that I needed to study and pray and that I needed to develop greater patience as I sought answers from the Lord. Willingness to be patient is part of our search for truth and part of the Lord's pattern of revealing truth.³

Over time I came to know that my mother was teaching me Heavenly Father's pattern for seeking truth. Faith grew, answers began to come, and I accepted a mission call.

There came a time, early in my mission, when I knew that I had to know whether the Church was true and Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I felt what President Thomas S. Monson expressed so clearly in our last general conference: "If you do not

have a firm testimony of these things, do that which is necessary to obtain one. It is essential for you to have your own testimony in these difficult times, for the testimonies of others will carry you only so far."⁴ I knew what was necessary. I needed to read the Book of Mormon with a sincere heart, with real intent, and ask God whether it is true.

Listen to our Heavenly Father's remarkable promise given through the prophet Moroni: "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."⁵

In order to receive what was in the Book of Mormon, I needed to read it. I started at the beginning of the book and read every day. Some receive a witness very quickly. For others, it will take more time and more prayer and may include reading the book several times. I needed to read the entire book before I received the promised witness. However, God did manifest the truth of it unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost.

In my missionary journal, I described my joy in knowing the truth as well as my personal expression of commitment and real intent to act on the truth I had received. I wrote: "I have pledged with my Father in Heaven and with myself to do my very best, to give it 100 percent for the rest of my life, whatever I am asked, I'll do, but for now I have the rest of my mission and I am going to make it a great mission, one that I won't feel bad about, but not for me, for the Lord. I love the Lord, and I love the work, and I just pray that that feeling will never leave me."

I came to know that constant nourishment and continuing effort to repent and keep the commandments are needed to never have that feeling leave. President Monson said, "A testimony needs to be kept vital and alive through continued obedience to the commandments of God and through daily prayer and scripture study."⁶

Over the years I have asked missionaries and young people around the world how they started in their personal effort to seek truth and gain a testimony. Almost without exception, they respond that their own effort to gain a personal testimony started with the personal decision to read the Book of Mormon from the beginning and ask God if it is true. In doing this, they chose to "act" rather than to be "acted upon"⁷ by the doubts of others.

To know the truth, we need to live the gospel⁸ and "experiment"⁹ on the word. We are cautioned to not resist the Spirit of the Lord.¹⁰ Repentance, coupled with a determination to keep the commandments, is an important part of each individual's search for truth.¹¹ In fact, we may need to be willing to "give away all" our sins in order to know the truth.¹²

We are commanded to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” and to “seek ... out of the best books words of wisdom.”¹³ Our search for truth should focus on “the best books” and the best sources. Among the very best are the scriptures and the words of living prophets.

President Monson has asked each of us to “do [what] is necessary” to obtain and keep a strong testimony.¹⁴ What is necessary to deepen and strengthen your testimony? Each of us has a personal responsibility to do what is necessary to obtain and keep a strong testimony.

Patiently keeping our covenants while we “do [what] is necessary” to receive answers from the Lord is part of God’s pattern for learning truth. Especially when things are hard, we may be required to “submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.”¹⁵ Patient covenant keeping increases our humility, deepens our desire to know truth, and allows the Holy Ghost to “guide [us] in wisdom’s paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and preserved.”¹⁶

My wife, Mary, and I have someone we love dearly who has struggled for much of her life with certain aspects of the Church. She loves the gospel, and she loves the Church but still has questions. She is sealed in the temple, is active in the Church, fulfills her callings, and is a wonderful mother and wife. Through the years she has tried to do those things that she knew to be right and refrain from doing those things that she knew to be wrong. She has kept her covenants and continued to search. At times she has been grateful to hold on to the faith of others.

Not long ago her bishop asked to see her and her husband. He asked them to accept a temple assignment to act as proxies for those who needed temple ordinances. This calling surprised them, but they accepted and began their service in the house of the Lord. Their teenage son had recently participated in family history research and found a family name for whom temple ordinances had not been completed. In time they acted as proxies and did the temple ordinances for this person and his family. As they knelt at the altar and the sealing ordinance was performed, this wonderful, patient woman who has searched for so long had a private spiritual experience by which she came to know that the temple and the ordinances performed therein are true and real. She called her mother and told her of her experience and said that while she still has some questions, she knows that the temple is true, that temple ordinances are true, and that the Church is true. Her mother wept with gratitude for a loving, patient Heavenly Father and for a daughter who patiently continues to search.

Patient covenant keeping brings the blessings of heaven into our lives.¹⁷

I have found great comfort in the Lord’s promise that “by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”¹⁸ Without knowing everything, we can know the truth. We can know that the Book of Mormon is true. In fact, as President Russell M. Nelson taught this afternoon, we can “feel, deep in ‘the inmost part’ of our hearts [see

Alma 13:27], that the Book of Mormon *is* unequivocally the word of God." And we can "feel it so deeply that we would never want to live even one day without it."¹⁹

We can know that God is our Father, who loves us, and that His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer. We can know that membership in His Church is to be cherished and that weekly partaking of the sacrament will help us and our family be safe. We can know that through temple ordinances, families really can be together forever. We can know that the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the blessings of repentance and forgiveness are true and real. We can know that our dear prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, is the Lord's prophet and that his counselors and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve are apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators.

All of this I know to be true and bear my witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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