

Seeking Knowledge by the Spirit

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We should learn to discern the truth not only through our rational minds but also through the very still and small voice of the Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord has repeatedly told us to “seek learning even by study and also by faith.”¹ We can receive light and understanding not only through the logical reasoning of our minds but also through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

This additional source of knowledge has not always been part of my life.

My dear wife, Irene, and I joined the Church 31 years ago when we were newly married. We had both grown up in Colombia, but a few months after our marriage, my career took us to live in Germany. We were very young and had great hopes and expectations; it was an especially exciting and happy time for us.

While I was concentrated on my career, Irene was feeling that we would receive some kind of message from heaven, without knowing how or when. So she started letting into our home all kinds of door-to-door salespeople with encyclopedias, vacuum cleaners, cookbooks, kitchen appliances, and so on, always waiting for that unique message.

One evening she told me that two young men in dark suits had knocked on our door and that she had felt a very clear and distinct impression to let them in. They had said that they wanted to talk to her about God but would come back again when I was also at home. Could this be the expected message?

They began to visit us, and with their guidance, we read in the scriptures and came to understand the crucial importance of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Redeemer. We soon regretted that we had been baptized as little babies, which had not been a conscious covenant. However, being baptized again would also mean becoming members of this new Church, so first we really needed to understand everything about it.

But how could we know if what the missionaries were telling us about the Book of Mormon, about Joseph Smith, and about the plan of salvation was actually all true? Well, we had understood from the words of the Lord that we could “know them by their fruits.”² So, in a very systematic manner, we started examining the Church by looking for those fruits with the eyes of our very rational minds. What did we see? Well, we saw:

- Friendly and happy people and wonderful families who understood that we are meant to feel joy in this life and not just suffering and misery.
- A church that does not have a paid clergy but one in which members themselves accept assignments and responsibilities.

- A church where Jesus Christ and families are at the center of everything, where members fast once a month and donate to help the poor and needy, where healthy habits are promoted, teaching us to abstain from harmful substances.

In addition:

- We liked the emphasis on personal growth, on education, on hard work and self-reliance.
- We learned about the remarkable humanitarian program.
- And we were impressed by the general conferences, with the wonderful music and the profound spiritual principles shared there.

Seeing all this, we could find no fault in the Church. On the contrary, we liked everything we saw very much. However, we still could not decide to be baptized because we wanted to know everything before doing so.

But, even in our indecision, the Lord was patiently preparing us, He was molding us, and He was helping us to discover that we should learn to discern the truth not only through our rational minds but also through the very still and small voice of the Spirit, which speaks especially to our hearts.

That voice and the resulting feeling came one evening after 10 months of learning the gospel, when we read in Mosiah 18, "As ye are desirous to ... bear one another's burdens, ... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, ... if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord?"³

That passage from the Book of Mormon entered our hearts and souls, and we suddenly felt and knew that there was really no reason not to be baptized. We realized that the desires mentioned in these verses were also the wishes of our hearts and that those things were what really mattered. They were more important than understanding everything because we already knew enough. We had always relied on the guiding hand of a loving Heavenly Father and were confident that He would continue to guide us.

So, that same day, we set up a date for our baptism, and soon we were baptized, finally!

What did we learn from that experience?

First, we learned that we can fully trust in a loving Heavenly Father, who is constantly trying to help us become the person He knows we can become. We confirmed the profound truth of His words when He said, "I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, ... for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more."⁴

And second, we learned that, in addition to our rational minds, another dimension to gaining knowledge can give us guidance and understanding. It is the still and soft voice of His Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts and also to our minds.

I like to compare this principle with our visual capacity. Our Father in Heaven has given us not only one but two physical eyes. We can see adequately with only one eye, but the second eye provides us with another perspective. When both perspectives are put together in our brains, they produce a three-dimensional image of our surroundings.

Likewise, we have been given two sources of information, through our physical and spiritual capacities. Our mind produces one perception through our physical senses and through our reasoning. But through the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Father has also provided us with a second perspective, which is really the most important and true one because it comes directly from Him. But since the whisperings of the Spirit are often so subtle, many people are not consciously aware of that additional source.

When these two perspectives are then combined in our souls, one complete picture shows the reality of things as they truly are. In fact, through the additional perspective of the Holy Ghost, certain “realities,” as pictured exclusively through our mental understanding, can be exposed as deceiving or plainly wrong. Remember the words of Moroni: “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”⁵

In my 31 years as a member of the Church, I have experienced many times that if we rely only on our rational mind and deny or neglect the spiritual understanding we can receive through the whisperings and impressions of the Holy Ghost, it is as if we were going through life with only one eye. But figurately speaking, we have actually been given two eyes. Only the combination of both views can give us the true and complete picture of all truths and of everything we experience in our lives, as well as of the whole and profound understanding of our identity and purpose as children of a living Heavenly Father.

I am reminded of what President Russell M. Nelson taught us a year ago when he said that “in coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”⁶

I have come to know with absolute certainty that:

- We have a loving Father in Heaven, and we all agreed to come to this earth as part of a divine plan.
- Jesus is the Christ; He lives and is my Savior and Redeemer.
- Joseph, a humble farm boy, was called and became the mighty prophet who initiated this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, with all of its keys, power, and authority of the holy priesthood of God.
- The Book of Mormon is a second witness of Jesus Christ, and families are meant to remain together forever.
- Our Lord, Jesus Christ, leads this, His restored Church, through our living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, today.

These and many other precious truths have become spiritual building blocks of what God is helping me to become. And I look forward to the many new teachings that He still wants me—and you—to receive as we go through this wonderful life and “learn ... even by study and also by faith.”

I know these things to be true and testify of them in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.