

GAINING and KEEPING a Testimony

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*A testimony generally comes slowly, over time,
as you work to help it grow.*

Maybe you were baptized when you were eight years old and you've been going to church your whole life. Maybe you were just recently introduced to the Church. Perhaps you have a strong testimony of the Restoration of the gospel, or maybe you're not sure if you even know the Book of Mormon is true. In any case, everyone needs to constantly nourish and help his or her testimony to grow. So what are you supposed to do? Here are some things to consider.



Revelation Usually Comes a Little at a Time

Sometimes we think we don't have a testimony or that it can grow only if we have a great spiritual miracle. More often, though, we receive revelation and spiritual knowledge only a little bit at a time. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles compares revelation to the ways we experience light:

"A light turned on in a dark room is like receiving a message from God quickly, completely, and all at once. Many of us have experienced this pattern of revelation as we have been given answers to sincere prayers or been provided with needed direction or protection, according to God's will and timing. . . . However, this pattern of revelation tends to be more rare than common.

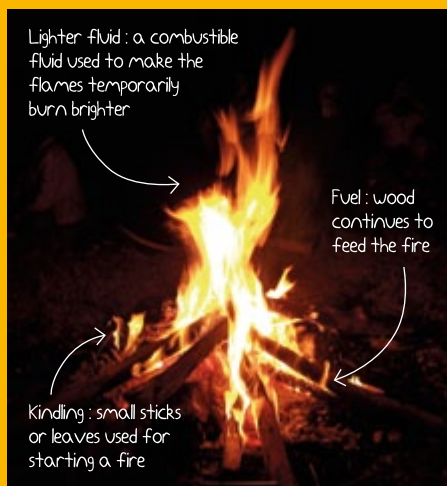
"The gradual increase of light radiating from the rising sun is like receiving a message from God 'line upon line, precept upon precept' (2 Nephi 28:30). Most frequently, revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our desire, worthiness, and preparation. . . . This pattern of revelation tends to be more common than rare" ("The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign*, May 2011, 88).

A LARGE FIRE COMES FROM SMALL KINDLING

You may have heard a testimony compared to a burning fire before, but think about how a fire is built.

If you try to light a big log, it probably won't catch fire. You have to have some sort of kindling, like smaller sticks or leaves, to get the fire going. Likewise, small experiences can kindle the fire of your testimony.

Sometimes people may put lighter fluid on a log, which makes the flames become



bright, but once the lighter fluid is burned, the fire dies back down because it was the lighter fluid and not the log burning. Your testimony may sometimes be flamed by a strong spiritual experience, but that may not be enough to maintain a constantly burning testimony.

Even if you have a nice fire burning, it will eventually die if you don't continue to put wood on it. In like manner, you must continue to feed the fire of your testimony so that it doesn't smolder out.

THE HOLY GHOST IS THE TESTIFIER OF TRUTH

REMEMBER! Because you have been baptized and confirmed, you have the gift of the Holy Ghost. As long as you are living worthily, He will testify to you of the truth.

The Spirit Is the Key

In order to strengthen testimony, it is important to be able to have the Holy Ghost with you and to listen to His promptings. It is hard, however, to hear the Spirit's whisperings when you are distracted by other things. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught:

"The inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit can be overcome or masked by strong emotions, such as anger, hate, passion, fear, or pride. When such influences are present, it is like trying to savor the delicate flavor of a grape while eating a jalapeño pepper. Both flavors are present, but one completely overpowers the other. In like manner, strong emotions overcome the delicate promptings of the Holy Spirit" ("To Acquire Spiritual Guidance," *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 8).



ONE GENERAL AUTHORITY'S EXPERIENCE

Sometimes you may think you are all alone in struggling with your testimony. The truth is that everyone

must go through the same process, even General Authorities. Here is one experience from Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

"As a young elder, I had been in the mission field about one year, and while reading scriptures and words of the latter-day Apostles about revelation and the Holy Ghost, I had a stunning awakening. I did not have a testimony of my own, specifically of the Father and the Son. I went on my mission living on the borrowed light of my wonderful parents. Never doubting their words, I had not thought about seeking my own spiritual witness. On a February night in San Antonio, Texas, in 1962, I knew that I had to know for myself. In our small apartment I found a place where I could quietly pray out loud, pleading, 'Heavenly Father, are You there? I must know for myself!'

"Sometime later that night I came to know for myself for the first time in my life that God and Jesus are real. I did not hear an audible voice nor see a heavenly being. I knew in the same way you too may have come to know—which is 'by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost' (D&C 121:26) and the spirit of revelation (see D&C 8:1–3) speaking peace to my mind (see D&C 6:23) and assurances to my heart (see Alma 58:11).

"From that experience I witnessed the results of Alma's counsel to 'awake and arouse [my] faculties . . . to [conduct] an experiment upon [His] words' (Alma 32:27). These words or seeds have grown into trees, indeed giant trees of testimony. The process continues with more experiments upon the word, resulting in additional trees of testimony, now a veritable forest based on revelation through and by the Holy Ghost" ("The Holy Ghost and Revelation," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 77).

A Testimony Comes through Good Choices

Elder Scott has explained that "a testimony is not emotion. It is the very essence of character woven from threads born of countless correct decisions. These choices are made with trusting faith in things that are believed and, at least initially, are not seen. A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future will be secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths with faith anchored in the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained" ("The Transforming Power of Faith and Character," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 45–46).



Get Out and Do Something

Sometimes in order for your testimony to grow, you have to go and do something. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency has taught: "Often, the answer to our prayer does not come while we're on our knees but while we're on our feet serving the Lord and serving those around us. Selfless acts of service and consecration refine our spirits, remove the scales from our spiritual eyes, and open the windows of heaven. By becoming the answer to someone's prayer, we often find the answer to our own" ("Waiting on the Road to Damascus," *Ensign*, May 2011, 76).



Don't Give Up

Just because you feel like you're in a spiritual slump or that your testimony is weak, or even if you feel your testimony is strong, that doesn't mean you should stop trying to strengthen your testimony. Keep pressing forward. Elder Bednar offers these words of encouragement:

"I have talked with many individuals who question the strength of their personal testimony and underestimate their spiritual capacity because they do not receive frequent, miraculous, or strong impressions. . . . If you have had similar thoughts or doubts, please know that you are quite normal. Just keep pressing forward obediently and with faith in the Savior. As you do so, you 'cannot go amiss' (D&C 80:3)" ("The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign*, May 2011, 89). **NE**

YOU NEED YOUR OWN TESTIMONY



“We can rely on the faith and testimony of others only so long. Eventually we must have our own strong and deeply placed foundation, or we will be unable to withstand the storms of life, which will come.”

President Thomas S. Monson, "How Firm a Foundation," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 62.

YOU MUST FOLLOW ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Moroni teaches that you must "ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ" and that you must do it with "a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ," and only then will God "manifest the truth of it unto you" (Moroni 10:4).