

Becoming a
Witness of Christ



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Apostles, by virtue of their priesthood office, are commissioned as special witnesses of Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23). Their testimony is vital in the Lord's work of salvation. Yet the Apostles must not and do not stand alone. All of us who are baptized and confirmed have taken upon us the name of Jesus Christ with a commitment "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9). It is within the capacity of each of us to become His witness. Indeed, the Lord relies on "the weak and the simple" to declare His gospel (see D&C 1:19, 23), and it is His desire "that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20).

Consider some ways a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can be a witness of Christ.

We are witnesses of Christ when we receive a sure, personal testimony that He lives.

Being a witness of Jesus Christ in the most fundamental sense is to possess a sure, personal testimony that He is the divine Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. The ancient Apostles knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah and spoke from personal experience of His literal Resurrection. Nevertheless, a witness of Christ does not need to have seen Him or entered into His presence. When Peter testified to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord responded that this knowledge came not as a consequence of Peter's physical proximity or experiences with Jesus but because His

Father in Heaven had revealed it to him (see Matthew 16:15–17). Jesus made it plain to Thomas that one could have the same belief or witness Thomas had received without touching and seeing Him: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Our witness of Christ typically begins with the testimony of others—people we know or know about and trust. We have the recorded testimony of the Apostles that "this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:32). We have the Old and New Testaments of His foreordination, ministry, and Atonement. We have another testament, the Book of Mormon, the central purpose of which is "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations."¹ We have the Prophet Joseph Smith's testimony that he saw and heard the Father point to Jesus and declare, "*This is My Beloved Son*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17), and the Prophet's later attestation that "after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22–23). We have the special witnesses of our own time who live among us and from whom, with our own eyes and ears, we receive a confirming testimony. Many are further blessed to hear the testimonies of parents, grandparents, and faithful friends.

Those who enter into the covenant of



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A PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF THE SAVIOR

I suppose my baptism when I was a child of 11 years marked the beginning of my testimony of Him whose Church I was joining. Since then I have had a desire to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and live the principles of the gospel.

Gaining my testimony of Jesus Christ has been a gradual process and has been increased by active participation in the Church. I have often sensed of His great love for us through the beauties of nature, and this brings me a greater appreciation of Him. I have felt the Spirit witnessing to me as I have fasted and prayed and received answers to those prayers, knowing that Jesus Christ is the mediator between Heavenly Father and us. I have enjoyed a closeness to Him in my frequent temple worship.

Throughout my life my testimony has grown and been strengthened until today there is no doubt in my mind that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—my Savior and Redeemer. This knowledge brings me a quiet assurance and peace.

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baptism receive a special endowment of faith in Jesus Christ, and with the gift of the Holy Ghost comes the witness that the testimonies we have received concerning Christ are true. Nephi affirmed that this would happen: “And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, *which witnesses of the Father and the Son*, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive” (2 Nephi 31:18; emphasis added).

It is a spiritual gift to believe the words of others and a further gift “given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world” (D&C 46:13).

This witness often comes in feelings—a burning, a peace, a feeling of assurance, a sense of enlightenment. The Lord gave Oliver Cowdery a witness of the Book of Mormon by spiritual feelings that confirmed “that the words or the work which thou hast been writing are true” (D&C 6:17). The Lord then added, “If you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?” (D&C 6:22–23). The Spirit speaking peace

to one’s mind is not the only form in which a witness comes, but inasmuch as it is from God, there is none greater. Just as by feasting on the words of Christ in the scriptures we “can testify that [we] have heard [His] voice, and know [His] words” (D&C 18:36), we can testify from confirming spiritual feelings from God that we know His Son and that He lives.

We are witnesses of Christ when we live so as to reflect His teachings.

During His ministry in the Western Hemisphere, the Savior gave this commandment: “Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24). People should be able to see in us something of Jesus Christ. The way we act, speak, look, and even think will reflect Him and His ways. Alma expressed it as having experienced a mighty change in our hearts and having received His image in our countenances (see Alma 5:14). In this same vein, the Lord commanded that we be even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27). Although we were not present with Him in His ministry, as we search the scriptures, we *see* Jesus and what He said and did. And as we emulate that pattern, we bear witness of Him.

I recall the example of a Catholic priest I came to know as we worked together in community service activities in Nashville, Tennessee. Father Charles Strobel developed a



project to bring homeless men off the street a few at a time into a training program that provided life skills and vocational opportunities for them. He devoted untold hours to helping these men make permanent changes for the better and become self-reliant. I was surprised to learn that his mother had been killed by a homeless man not many years earlier. Father Strobel's Christlike love extended even to men among whom was found one who had violently taken his precious mother's life.

The central message of the apostles and prophets in all ages is the need to repent to receive a remission of sins through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Our own repentance bears testimony of Him and the power of His grace to pardon and cleanse us. We need not have achieved perfection for our witness to be valid so long as we are striving to conform our lives to the Savior's standard. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) wisely counseled patience as well as diligence in this process:

“Becoming Christlike is a lifetime pursuit and very often involves growth and change that is slow, almost imperceptible. . . .

“ . . . For every Paul, for every Enos, and for every King Lamoni, there are hundreds and thousands of people who find the process of repentance much more subtle, much more imperceptible. Day by day they move closer to the Lord, little realizing they are building a godlike life. They live quiet lives of goodness, service, and commitment. They are like the Lamanites, who the Lord said ‘were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, *and they knew it not*’ (3 Ne. 9:20; italics added).”²

We are witnesses of Christ when we help others come unto Him.

Nephi recounted in a joyous expression, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they

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LIVING TO REFLECT HIS TEACHINGS

I was in my fifth year of studying humanities when I received a lesson about the worth of an example. Every time our teacher entered the classroom, he found a picture of himself—drawn by some of my classmates—on the blackboard. And every time, the professor would ask us to wipe away the drawing. However, he never said anything else about it.

I was very impressed with our professor's wise and humble way of being, and I became curious about which church he belonged to. I found out that he was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I decided to receive the missionary discussions, and I was baptized on September 10, 2000. The man who had shown me an example through his way of living turned out to be my branch president.

I testify that Jesus is our ultimate example. Emulating Him is the reason for us, as Latter-day Saints, to lead good lives. Then we too can teach through example.

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may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26). We can likewise be active in helping others, particularly our children, come unto Christ.

Nephi’s phrase “we talk of Christ” suggests that we are not reluctant to talk about our feelings regarding the Savior in conversations and informal settings. Often these are one-on-one situations where in open and friendly ways we can discuss who He is and what He did and taught, encouraging others also to love and follow Him.

“We rejoice in Christ” implies that we live with a generally happy outlook that reflects our faith in Christ. We know that “his grace is sufficient” for us to be redeemed from death and sin and to be perfected in Him (see Moroni 10:32–33). While we face

disappointments and even tragedies, we know that because of Him, our eternal happiness is assured. As our faith in Jesus Christ shines through, we show others who “labour and are heavy laden” how to find rest in Him (see Matthew 11:28–30).

“We preach of Christ” certainly has reference to full-time and member missionary work but also includes what we do in worship services, Sunday School classes, and similar settings where He is the subject of study and instruction. Our participation as both teachers and students is part of our bearing witness of Him, and the personal study underlying that participation further witnesses of our belief.

“We prophesy of Christ” means that we express our testimony of Him by the power of the Spirit (see



anticipation of the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5–6; see also D&C 2; 128:17–18), we testify that Christ will come again and that our hearts must be turned to our fathers to prepare for His coming (see Malachi 4:6; D&C 2:2).

“And we write according to our prophecies” suggests the wisdom of making a permanent record of our testimony of Christ. We understand that the testimonies we bear are “recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over [us]” (D&C 62:3).

Our own descendants and others may look upon and rejoice over our witness of Christ written or recorded for their benefit even before some of them were born.

As you feel the Holy Spirit’s testimony of Him, confirmed and reconfirmed to your spirit in many different experiences and settings, as you strive to hold up the light of His example in your own life day by day, and as you bear testimony to others and help them learn of and follow Him, you are a witness of Jesus Christ. God grant you the desire of your heart to be among those “who received the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:51) and were faithful to that testimony throughout mortal life (see D&C 138:12). ■

NOTES

1. Book of Mormon title page.
2. “A Mighty Change of Heart,” *Tambuli*, Mar. 1990, 7; *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 5.

HELPING OTHERS COME UNTO HIM

“Sister Hopkins, these are the 10 Sunbeams you will be teaching this year,” the counselor in the Primary presidency announced. I was a new convert, and I admit that this calling terrified me. How could I teach what I did not yet have a firm understanding of? How would I handle so many energetic children? But the bishop and Primary president assured me I would be blessed for tackling this daunting calling.

I knew I’d have to pour myself into learning the gospel in order to teach it, so each week I read the manual—a source of abundant gospel light—and prayed and pondered how the principles applied to my life and to the children’s. As I studied and taught, I gained a testimony of our divine birthright as children of God. I discovered the worth and uniqueness of each soul. Simple Primary lessons not only illuminated the faces of His precious children, but they also blossomed the seed of testimony I had had when I entered the waters of baptism.

That precious year with the Sunbeams has made me forever grateful for a calling that changed my life. I was changed, as were the children, by the teachings of Jesus Christ.

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1 Corinthians 12:3). “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). As those who anciently prophesied of His first advent, we also confirm in word and deed the prophecies of His Second Coming. By performing baptisms and other sacred ordinances for our ancestors through the priesthood authority restored by Elijah in