



By Elder
Kevin R. Duncan
Of the Seventy

THE SACRED ROLES OF THE Holy Ghost

May we receive and remain worthy to enjoy the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and His protection, revelation, comfort, teachings, and sanctification.

As members of the Church, we are blessed with one of the greatest gifts God has given to man—the gift of the Holy Ghost. Do we appreciate this remarkable gift? Do we live worthy of its influence in our lives? Have we truly received, and do we treasure, the glorious gift of the Holy Ghost?

The importance of the Holy Ghost is manifest in the following quote from the Prophet Joseph Smith: “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”¹

The Holy Ghost is central to our purification and salvation. The Holy Ghost has many names, fills many roles, and can bless our lives as protector, revelator, comforter, teacher, and sanctifier.

The Holy Ghost Is Our Protector

When I was a young man serving as a missionary in Santiago, Chile, I had an experience one night that made me aware of the protection of the Holy Ghost. It had become necessary to close a small branch located several hours away from the headquarters of the mission in Santiago.

My mission president and I had driven a large van to the branch building to retrieve Church materials, including a large number of metal folding chairs. In those days a mandatory curfew was imposed nightly in Santiago. If you were outside the city limits when the curfew began, you were not allowed back into the city until the following morning.

After we had finished packing the van, the president asked me to drive home as he sat in the front passenger seat. I was anxious because I knew approximately



how much time it would take for our journey back to the city, and I realized that making it there before the curfew would be difficult. In addition to this pressure, as our journey progressed, a thick fog began to settle all around us, making it difficult to see. As we were speeding down the road, suddenly I felt an immediate and intense impression to stop the van. Instinctively I decelerated and applied the brakes, unable to see clearly ahead.

Seconds later I saw a huge cow in the middle of our lane. Immediately I realized that had I hit the cow, the unrestrained mass of folding metal chairs behind us would most likely have killed or seriously injured my mission president and me. We were both shaken but tremendously grateful that the Spirit had warned me to stop the van when I did, even though I could not see why.

I was reminded that night, as I have been reminded many times since, that the Holy Ghost is our protector.

The Holy Ghost Is Our Revelator

The Lord reveals His will through the power of the Spirit. That was made clearer to me when premature twins were born into our family. My wife had endured a complicated, risky, and trying pregnancy with Lacey and Lindsey. The babies were born when they were just six months along. One weighed only 1 pound, 11 ounces (765 g), and the other 1 pound, 7 ounces (652 g). Both girls had serious health concerns, and doctors feared for their survival.

We were concerned about what the future might hold, and shortly after their birth my father-in-law and I gave each daughter a name and a blessing. As I took each one into my hands, a most powerful and undeniable



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feeling overcame me with the very strong and unmistakable message that I could bless these babies with complete faith that the blessings would be fulfilled. And so I did. I blessed each one that she would begin to completely heal and would have a desire to live. I blessed them that they would return to our home and that they would someday marry in the temple.

When the blessings were complete, my father-in-law and I looked at each other in astonishment. We had come expecting that these babies would not live through the night, but it had been powerfully manifest through the Spirit what the Lord had in store for these two precious daughters. I felt humbled to be the instrument through which these revelations were manifest. These two beautiful and healthy daughters recently celebrated their 17th birthday. The Holy Ghost is our revelator.

The Holy Ghost Is Our Comforter and Teacher

In 1982, I married Wendy Wallentine. We were later blessed with a beautiful baby girl, Aubrey. About this time a good friend who was moving from Utah to California asked if I could help him drive his belongings to his family’s new home. His wife was in the hospital with a complicated pregnancy, and he needed to return quickly to be with her.

I was able and willing, so on a Friday we left and began the journey. During the course of our travels, perhaps because of my friend’s concern for his wife, our conversation evolved into speculation about what we would do if our wives were to pass away. We discussed this unusual topic for hours. Finally we arrived, unloaded the truck, and quickly made the return trip to Utah.

Just two days later I was driving with Wendy and baby Aubrey to my grandmother's funeral. A young man ran a stop sign and hit our car. The accident took the life of my young wife. I was left as a single father to care for our seven-month-old baby.

Though life was very difficult and lonely for a long time, in retrospect I saw the hand of the Lord manifest through the direction the Spirit had taken my friend and me during our conversation the very weekend before Wendy's death. This awareness brought a comfort from the Spirit that the Lord was aware of me and what I was about to experience. The Spirit had taught and prepared me in an unusual way. The experience was certainly no coincidence.

I learned many lessons from the Spirit during my time as a single father. I am grateful that in time I was led to Nancy, who later became my wife, but the lessons I learned from the Spirit in preparation for and during that critical stage as a single father were invaluable as comfort and guidance. The Holy Ghost is our comforter and teacher.

The Holy Ghost Is a Sanctifier

I have always found great strength and understanding in the following quote by Elder Orson Pratt (1811–81) as it relates to the role of the Holy Ghost as our sanctifier:

“Water Baptism is only a preparatory cleansing of the believing penitent; it is only a condition of a cleansing from sin; whereas, the Baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost cleanses more thoroughly, by renewing the inner man, and by purifying the affections, desires, and thoughts which have long been habituated in the impure ways of sin. Without the aid of the Holy Ghost, a person . . . would have but

very little power to change his mind . . . and to walk in newness of life. Though his sins may have been cleansed away, yet so great is the force of habit, that he would, without being renewed by the Holy Ghost, be easily overcome, and contaminated again by sin. Hence, it is infinitely important that the affections and desires should be, in a measure, changed and renewed, so as to cause him to hate that which he before loved, and to love that which he before hated: to thus renew the mind of man is the work of the Holy Ghost.”²

The Holy Ghost plays a key role in helping us overcome sin and replace it with a love of righteousness and an ability to keep God's commandments.

I have witnessed the sanctifying power of the Spirit in the lives of many people. I have watched bad men become good, and good men become great, as they have yielded their hearts to the refining influence of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier.

I feel the influence of the Holy Ghost most powerfully and on a regular basis through daily scripture study and prayer. This practice has significantly shaped my life, and I recognize that it is one way we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost constantly and rejoice in the great Giver of this gift, our Father in Heaven.

May we be grateful for this gift. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?” (D&C 88:33). And may we receive and remain worthy to enjoy the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and His protection, revelation, comfort, teachings, and sanctification. ■

NOTES

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 95.
2. *Orson Pratt: Writings of an Apostle*, Mormon Collector Series (1976), 2:57.



TESTIMONY AND THE HOLY GHOST

“A testimony is a witness or confirmation of eternal truth impressed upon individual hearts and souls through the Holy Ghost, whose primary ministry is to testify of truth, particularly as it relates to the Father and the Son. When one receives a testimony of truth through this divinely appointed process, it immediately begins to have impact on that person's life.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Pure Testimony,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 40.