

Becoming



How can you make the gospel the core of what you are?

CONVERTED

Years ago when I served as a stake president, a man came to confess a transgression. His confession surprised me. He had been an active member of the Church for years, and I wondered how he could have committed the sin that he did. After some pondering, it came to me that this brother had never become truly converted. Despite his Church activity, the gospel had not penetrated his heart. It was only an external influence in his life.

How can you become converted? How can you make the gospel of Jesus Christ not just an influence in your life but the very core of what you are?

The ancient prophet Jeremiah spoke of the gospel being written in our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33). Do you want this for yourself? I can tell you how that can happen, but it must be something you want. The gospel cannot be written in your heart unless your heart is open. Without a heartfelt desire, you can participate in sacrament meetings, classes, and Church activities and do the things I will tell you, but it won't make much difference. But if your heart is open and willing, like the heart of a child, let me tell you what you can do to be converted.

Lay Aside Pride

As a first step, you must lay aside any feeling of pride. By this I mean the attitude

that rejects the authority of God to rule in our lives. You hear this attitude expressed in phrases such as “Do your own thing” or “Right and wrong depend on what I feel is right for me.” That attitude is a rebellion against God. Our beloved Creator does not force us to accept His authority, but willingly submitting to that authority is the first step in conversion.

Don't Just Read—Study

For the gospel to be written in your heart, you need to understand it more. That means you will study it. When I say “study,” I mean something more than reading. You should care more about the amount of time you spend in the scriptures than about the amount you read in that time. I see you sometimes reading a few verses, stopping to ponder them, carefully reading the verses again, and praying for understanding, asking questions in your mind, waiting for spiritual impressions, and writing down the impressions and insights that come so you can remember and learn more. Studying in this way, you may not read a lot of chapters or verses in a half hour, but you will be giving place in your heart for the word of God, and He will be speaking to you. Remember Alma's description of what it feels like: “It beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding,



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yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28).

Pray for Pure Love

I mentioned praying to understand the scriptures, but your prayers must not be limited to that. In the Book of Mormon, Amulek tells us we should pray about everything. He says, “Pour out your souls [to God] in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness” (Alma 34:26). Your Heavenly Father wants you to pray about your hopes and fears, your friends and family, your school and work, and the needs of those around you. Most of all, you should pray to be filled with the love of Christ. This love is given to those who ask for it with all of their heart (see Moroni 7:47–48). Tasting this love is a major part of your conversion because once you have felt your Savior’s love for you, a love for Him and for your Heavenly Father will grow. You will want to do what They ask. Go often to your closet, your secret place, your wilderness. Ask God to bestow upon you the pure love of Christ. Sometimes fasting will help.

Practice the Gospel

After Amulek talked about prayer, he spoke about another important element of

your conversion—serving others. Otherwise, he said, “your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing” (Alma 34:28). In other words, to be converted, you must not only open your heart to a knowledge of the gospel and the love of God, you must practice the gospel law. You must look outward and care about others. You can be compassionate; you can be friendly; you can share; you can help others in a hundred small ways. As you do, the gospel of Jesus Christ will become a part of you.

A Gift of Yourself

Let me mention one other thing. As you seek the blessing of conversion, you can offer the Lord the gift of your broken, or repentant, heart and your contrite, or obedient, spirit. In reality, it is the gift of yourself—what you are and what you are becoming. Is there something in your life that is unworthy? When you get rid of it, that is a gift to the Savior. Is there a good habit or quality that is lacking in your life? When you make it part of your character, you are giving a gift to the Lord. Sometimes this is hard to do, but would your gifts of repentance and obedience be worthy gifts if they cost you nothing? Remember, you don’t have to do it alone. Jesus Christ will help you make of yourself a worthy gift.

We have talked of desire, submissiveness to God, study, prayer, service, repentance, and obedience. From these, coupled with your worship and activity in Church, will come testimony and conversion. The gospel won’t be just an influence in your life—it will be what you are. Plead with God in the name of Christ to write the gospel in your mind that you may have understanding and in your heart that you may love to do His will. Pursue this blessing diligently and patiently, and you will receive it. **NE**

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