

I Can Know for Myself

Lesson 20

Purpose	To help class members strengthen their testimonies of Jesus Christ and his gospel.
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Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prayerfully study Matthew 16:13–17; Alma 32:27–43; Moroni 10:5.2. If <i>Family Home Evening Video Supplement 2</i> (53277) is available, prepare to show “What Think Ye of Christ?” a five-minute segment.3. Materials needed:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A picture of Jesus Christ (picture 2 in the picture section of the manual; 62572; Gospel Art Picture Kit 240).b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.
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<i>Note to the teacher</i>	<p><i>A testimony is a personal conviction of gospel truths, based on knowledge revealed by the Holy Ghost. Most Church members have a testimony of some principle of the gospel, and on this foundation a more complete testimony can be built. A testimony motivates us to live righteously, and righteous living causes a testimony to grow. A testimony of the Savior and his gospel is essential to our exaltation.</i></p> <p><i>As you prepare the lesson, think of experiences that have strengthened your testimony. Share these as appropriate throughout the lesson presentation.</i></p>
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Suggested Lesson

Development The Essentials of a Testimony of the Gospel

Quotation and discussion	Display the picture of Jesus Christ throughout the lesson.
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- When you hear the word *testimony*, what do you think of?

After class members have had time to respond to this question, explain that a testimony is really quite simple. Then have a class member read the following statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask class members to listen for the three main elements of a testimony.

“A testimony in our day consists of three things: It consists of the knowledge that Jesus is the Lord, that he is the Son of the living God who was crucified for the sins of the world; it consists of the fact that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God called to restore the gospel truths and be the revealer of the knowledge of Christ for our day; and it consists of knowing that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth, the one place where salvation is found, the organization which administers the gospel and therefore administers salvation to the sons of men” (“Gaining a Testimony of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1980, 15).

- What three things does a testimony consist of? Why do you think a testimony must consist of these three things? How does a testimony of these three things serve as a foundation for a testimony of other gospel truths?

Explain that this lesson will show how to obtain and strengthen a testimony.

Obtaining a Testimony

Scripture
discussion

- Why is it important that we know *for ourselves* that Jesus is our Savior, that Joseph Smith was called to be a prophet, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church on the earth?

Point out that we cannot depend on the testimonies of other people. We can be taught and inspired by them, but ultimately we can only gain a strong testimony when we feel the witness of the Holy Ghost ourselves.

Have class members read and mark Matthew 16:13–17.

- Of what truth did Peter testify? How did Peter gain a personal knowledge of this truth? (See Matthew 16:17. Heavenly Father revealed it to him.) How does Heavenly Father reveal truth? (See Moroni 10:5.)
- Peter had walked with Jesus and witnessed the miracles Jesus performed. Why did he need revelation through the Holy Ghost in addition to these experiences?

Quotations

Read or have a class member read the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks:

“The original Apostles were eyewitnesses to the ministry and resurrection of the Savior (see Acts 10:39–41). . . .

“[But] an eyewitness was not enough. Even the witness and testimony of the original Apostles had to be rooted in the testimony of the Holy Ghost. [President Joseph Fielding Smith] has told us that the witness of the Holy Ghost makes an impression on our soul that is more significant than ‘a visitation of an angel’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 36; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 30).

Point out that each of us can obtain a testimony of Jesus Christ and his gospel. Then read the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley:

“Every Latter-day Saint has the responsibility to know for himself or herself with a certainty beyond doubt that Jesus is the resurrected, living Son of the living God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 110; or *Ensign*, May 1983, 80).

Video presentation

Show the video segment “What Think Ye of Christ?” Ask class members to think about their personal testimonies of the Savior as they watch the presentation. Invite them to ask themselves the following question:

- Is my testimony of Jesus Christ strong enough that I will follow him, no matter what other people do and say?

Scripture
discussion

Explain that the prophet Alma described how we can gain a testimony. In his example, he showed how we can gain a testimony that the word of God is good.

Have class members read and mark Alma 32:27–28.

- In Alma's example, what does the seed represent? (The word of God.) How can we plant this seed in our hearts?
- What do you think it means to experiment on the word of God?

Have class members read and mark Alma 32:30, 33.

- What do you think it means to have the word of God swell and grow in our hearts? How does this help us know that the word is good?

Explain that this refers to the confirmation we receive when we learn the truth. When we receive such a confirmation, we may feel comforted or uplifted. We may feel a desire to serve the Lord and others.

Chalkboard
discussion

Point out that we can use the counsel in Alma 32 to obtain a testimony of specific aspects of the gospel, such as the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon or the blessings of paying tithing.

Write on the chalkboard *I know that . . .* Complete the sentence by bearing your testimony about one or two specific gospel principles. Do it with sincerity and conviction. Give a brief explanation of how you obtained that knowledge. Then invite class members to do the same.

Strengthening Our Testimonies

Scripture
discussion

Have class members read and mark Alma 32:37, 41.

- When the word of God has grown in our hearts, how can we nourish it?

Explain that as we work diligently and exercise faith and patience, we can develop testimonies of individual doctrines and principles of the gospel. Our testimonies can grow to include more gospel truths as we progress spiritually. Continued righteous living helps nourish the portion of our testimonies that we have already obtained. Point out that many of the ways the Lord has provided for us to experiment on his word and strengthen our testimonies have been discussed in previous lessons. Faith, repentance, the gift of the Holy Ghost, prayer, fasting, personal revelation, patriarchal blessings, scripture study, following the prophet, and Church service will help us strengthen our testimony.

Our Testimonies Strengthen Us

Story

Point out that as we strengthen our testimonies, our testimonies give us strength. Share the following story told by Elder John B. Dickson of the Seventy:

"I am reminded of a little village called Panacaxtlan, situated where the coastal plains meet the mountains of central Mexico. The village is situated in a lush, green, humid area known as the Huesteca, and the inhabitants are sons and daughters of Lehi. In 1979, . . . missionaries began proselyting in the Huesteca. Fifty-two people joined the Church in Panacaxtlan. . . .

"A short time later, a meeting was called in Panacaxtlan at which Church members were given the following options: denounce the Church, leave the village, or be killed (not an idle threat).

“The members, particularly the women, said they knew the Church to be true and would not denounce it. They also indicated they had worked just as hard as the rest of the community to secure their homesteads, and they would not leave. Boldly stepping forward, they told their taunters if they were going to kill them, to get on with it. The moment grew tense as machetes were raised, then finally lowered while the Latter-day Saints stood up for that which the Spirit had testified to them to be true.

“These Saints eventually learned, as most of us do, that it is harder to live the gospel day by day than to die for it in an instant, but their early commitment came because the Spirit had touched their hearts and changed their lives. Their conversion process had taken place as the Book of Mormon helped build their faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (“The Incomparable Gifts,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 7).

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What gave the Saints in Panacaxtlan the courage to stand up for the Church? • Of what gospel truths do you think they had a testimony? • In this situation, why was it important for them to know for themselves that the gospel was true? • How can we follow the example of the Saints in Panacaxtlan? (We can stand up for the gospel and the Church in whatever situation we may encounter.)
Quotation	<p>Read the following statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley:</p> <p>“None of us ever need hesitate to speak up for this Church, for its doctrine, for its people, for its divine organization and divinely given responsibility. It is true. It is the work of God” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 72; or <i>Ensign</i>, Nov. 1996, 51).</p>
Discussion	<p>Point out that most members of the Church will not be asked to die in defense of their beliefs. However, we are all asked to “live the gospel day by day” (“The Incomparable Gifts,” 7). Then ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we strive to “live the gospel day by day,” what are some of the difficulties we face? Why do we need to have a testimony to be able to live the gospel despite these difficulties?
Testimony	<p>Bear your testimony simply and sincerely. Tell class members how your testimony of the gospel has influenced your life.</p> <p>Encourage class members to strive to strengthen their testimonies of the gospel.</p>

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Bring to class the following items: a glass jar with a lid, 1/2 cup warm water, one tablespoon granulated sugar, and two tablespoons dry yeast.

At the beginning of the lesson, explain that the things you will put in the glass jar represent a person’s efforts to gain a testimony. The water represents hearing the testimonies of others. Ask a class member to pour the water into the jar and observe the reaction. Explain that although there is no reaction,

the jar is more full than it was before. Point out that the testimonies of others can help us begin to gain a testimony, but we still need a testimony of our own.

Tell class members that the sugar represents the person's desire to gain a testimony. Invite another class member to add the sugar to the water and observe the reaction. Explain that although there is very little reaction, the mixture of the water and the sugar are important for the third ingredient to cause a reaction.

Explain that the yeast represents the influence of the Holy Ghost. Ask a third class member to add the yeast to the water and sugar and stir or shake the mixture. At first there will be no noticeable reaction. Invite class members to observe what happens to the mixture as the lesson proceeds.

After about fifteen minutes, when the yeast, water, and sugar have worked together to nearly fill the jar, ask the following questions:

- How do the testimonies of others, our own desire to gain a testimony, and the influence of the Spirit combine to help us gain a strong testimony?
- Why do you think I chose the yeast—and not the water or the sugar—to represent the influence of the Holy Ghost? (The yeast prompted the growth. While the water and sugar were both necessary, they did nothing together until the yeast was added.)

You may want to point out that although the combination of water, sugar, and yeast causes a reaction, it must be combined with other ingredients—such as flour, salt, and milk—in order to make bread. Likewise, a testimony must be combined with such things as service, scripture study, and prayer to truly enrich our lives.

2. As you discuss Alma 32:27–41, display a small pot of soil, and place a seed into the soil. Next to this pot display a potted plant that has sprouted. Have class members read Alma 32:27–28.

Emphasize that a testimony grows a little at a time, like a seed in the earth. If we keep praying, showing love to friends and family members, and doing our duty in the Church, we can grow stronger in our knowledge that the gospel is true.

3. Read the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles about one way to strengthen our testimony:

“Share your testimony. . . . Let others know that you know. Bear your testimony in fast meeting. Tell your family; tell your friends. You will find when you share your testimony it becomes stronger, and there are many others around you who also want to embrace the truth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 22).

Encourage class members to bear their testimonies in an upcoming fast and testimony meeting, in family home evening, or, as directed by the Spirit, as part of this lesson. Avoid offering rewards to class members who bear their testimonies. Also avoid making people feel unnecessary guilt for not bearing their testimonies.