



In June 2005 Sister Johnson and I were preparing to move to a new assignment after having served in the Australia/New Zealand Area for six years. As we were preparing to ship our personal belongings, we noticed several photographs of people, events, and scenes from years gone by.

It was thrilling to see these images of family members and friends in former-day settings when we were all so happily united in the faith. I then realized that some of those pictured were no longer active in the Church. What had happened during the intervening years? Why was I still filled with the fire of faith while they were not?

Beginning the Journey

Before I was introduced to the restored gospel at age 18, my interests centered on family, education, sports, and social activities. After my baptism I added church attendance to my schedule. I no longer played soccer on Sundays and I adjusted my social calendar, but I really did no more than *fit* church into my schedule. There was no “mighty change” (Alma 5:14) in my heart or in my life. I had experienced impressions of the Spirit, but my faith was not yet founded on the Savior. My bonding to the Church came primarily from the sociality of its members.

I once heard Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observe,



We come to know the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ not simply by the exercise of intellect or the process of logic but by acting on what we learn.

COMING TO KNOW FOR OURSELVES

BY ELDER KENNETH JOHNSON
Of the Seventy



“Testimony is to know and to feel, conversion is to do and to become.”¹ I had some knowledge of the gospel, and my feelings supported my growing testimony, but my conversion did not fully come until I wove gospel principles into the fabric of my life.

The Path of Conversion

How does such a transition take place? The inspired pronouncement of President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) resonates with what I experienced. He declared that every new member of the Church needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and constant nourishment “by the good word of God” (Moroni 6:4).²

Through my association and friendship with Church members after my baptism, I enjoyed each of these means of support and encouragement. As a result, my

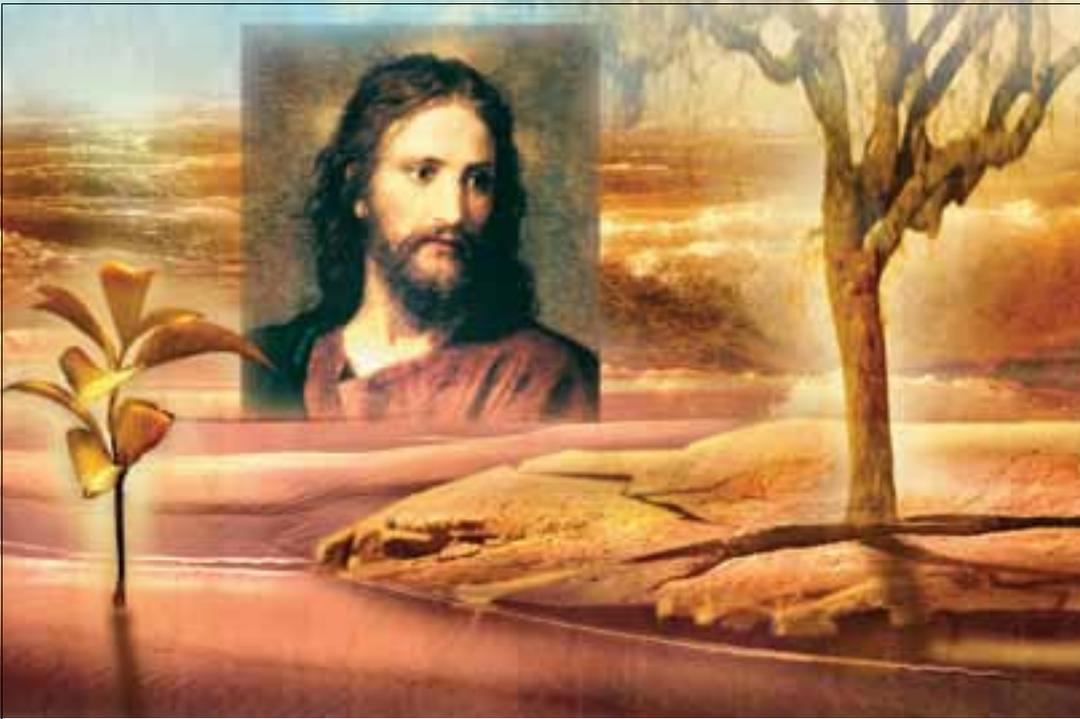
faith blossomed, my gospel knowledge expanded, and my testimony grew. Pamela, a member missionary in the branch I attended, and her family were there to answer my questions and to model the gospel in their lives. My future father-in-law, Thomas George Wilson, requested that I be assigned as his home teaching companion. As we cycled from home to home to make our visits, he taught me principles of priesthood and Church government.

In His day the Savior taught the Jews how to test the truth of His teachings when He challenged them with these words: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:16–17).

This assurance of truth does not come by casual acceptance or tentative observance; our testimonies are nourished and fortified as we apply correct principles in every

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aspect of our lives. We cannot expect to survive indefinitely on borrowed light from others. It is important that we “be believing” and that we “come unto the Lord with all [our] heart, and work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling before him” (Mormon 9:27).

We come to know the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ not simply by the exercise of intellect or the process of logic but by acting on what we learn. Through faith and obedience, the validity of gospel doctrine can be etched upon our hearts.

If our faith is rooted in the sandy soil of reason and logic, it will be swept away by a rising tide driven by the escalating winds of opposition. A faith founded in Jesus Christ and on the rock of revelation will endure through the fiercest storms of life (see Helaman 5:12).

The Companionship of the Holy Spirit

One of the greatest blessings of membership in the Church is the opportunity to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Through virtuous living we can qualify for this divine source of guidance, which enables us to see “things as they really are, and . . . as they really will be” (Jacob 4:13).

We then see things clearly; we have a fresh view that is not limited to the span of our mortal sphere. To know that there is a plan and a purpose to our lives creates a vision of possibilities and opportunities of which we were not previously aware.

In his inspirational classic, *As a Man Thinketh*, James Allen observed, “Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your vision, your ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration.”³

With our aspirations tempered by an eternal perspective, our minds can be illuminated by the light of the everlasting gospel, enabling us to chart a course to reach our divine potential. The choice is ours. We can fall back into the lifestyle of the natural man or yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit to become partakers of the divine nature (see Mosiah 3:19; 2 Peter 1:4).

Trials and Faith

As a member of the Church, particularly following my conversion, I encountered people who felt compelled to challenge my newfound faith. Some of these challengers professed to have no faith; others felt that I was being deceived by unsound teachings. Many of these encounters followed a pattern.

First the person would challenge my beliefs with a doctrinal question. I often answered, “I don’t know, but I will find out what the Church teaches on the subject.” I would then consult with the aforementioned member missionary, who would research an answer. My role as a go-between—carrying responses to those who challenged my beliefs or the truthfulness of the Church—helped me learn

the gospel, learn how to research answers for myself, and prepare for future leadership and teaching assignments.

This process of learning the gospel is accelerated and magnified when we apply gospel principles to our lives. With the enlightenment of the Spirit we can then develop the capacity to find answers for ourselves.

To mature spiritually, we must successfully face situations and encounter experiences that challenge our allegiance to our covenants. When looking back on these experiences, we recognize the impact such moments have on our developing faith.

One such incident occurred after I started a job as an insurance broker, working out of our home. One Sunday morning as we were about to leave for church, a knock came at the door.

“I understand that you sell insurance,” a man asked as I opened the door.

“Yes,” I responded.

“I have purchased a motor vehicle, and I need insurance so that I can drive it home.”

My income came from selling insurance policies. If I didn’t sell policies, we would have to live off our food storage. Nevertheless, I explained to the man that because of my religious beliefs, I did not work on Sundays. He looked puzzled and pressed me, saying how important it was for him to obtain insurance.

He pulled a handful of money from his pocket in notes of large denominations and offered them to me. I politely declined, indicating that I would gladly visit his home early the next morning. He then turned away in anger and departed, and I took my family to church.

Early the next morning came another knock at our door. Imagine my surprise when I opened the door to find that the man had returned. He commenced by apologizing for his behavior, saying, “I thought about what you said yesterday, and I realized that I wanted to do business with someone of integrity. Not only would I like you to insure



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

1. Read the section “The Path of Conversion.”

What three things did President Gordon B. Hinckley say every member of the Church needs? Ask family members to share how one of these things has strengthened their testimony. Conclude by reading Elder Johnson’s testimony at the end of the article.

2. Read the section “The Companionship of the Holy Spirit.” Discuss the quotation by James Allen. How might an eternal gospel perspective affect our daily decisions? Read 2 Peter 1:4. Discuss ways to escape the world’s corruptive influences. As a family, choose one of the ways discussed to strengthen each other in the coming week.

my motor vehicle but also to take care of all my insurance needs.”

One might understandably conclude that the resulting temporal benefits of our business association strengthened my faith. In fact, the feelings I had and the confirmation I received about my decision were what had the most profound effect.

Faith and Testimony

It has become evident through personal experience and scriptural accounts that our faith in the Savior is reflected in our desire to serve Him. Once Enos had discovered his faith in Jesus Christ, he began to feel a desire for the welfare of his brethren (see

Enos 1:7–9). In recounting the story of his repentance, Alma the Younger recalled the impact that his father’s prophecies about Jesus Christ had had on him (see Alma 36:17–20). He told his son Helaman: “From that time even until now, I have laboured without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:24).

As we looked through our photographs of family and friends, we were happy to see that most of our fellow Saints had remained true to the faith. Such knowledge fills my soul with joy, and with Alma I declare, “Then do I remember what the Lord has done for me” (Alma 29:10).

I testify that by learning and applying gospel principles we can find the abundant life promised by the Savior to all who seek to become His disciples (see John 10:10). I encourage those seeking heavenly assurance to trust in the Lord and to remember His promise: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31–32). ■

NOTES

1. Quoted in Kenneth Johnson, *Contemplations of a Convert* (2000), 106.
2. See “A Perfect Brightness of Hope: To New Members of the Church,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2006, 4.
3. In *Inspirational Classics for Latter-day Saints*, comp. Jack M. Lyon (2000), 20; capitalization modernized.