

Opening Our Hearts

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Let us make it a part of our everyday striving to open our hearts to the Spirit.



Today I should like to speak on the importance of opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit.

After baptism we are confirmed and given the Holy Ghost. This is a supernal gift. The Holy Ghost comforts, teaches, warns, enlightens, and inspires us. Nephi put it very simply: “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”¹ We need the help of the Holy Ghost if we are to make our way safely through what the Apostle Paul called the “perilous times”² in which we now live.

The Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, which allows Him to dwell in

our hearts and communicate directly with our spirits.³ The voice of the Spirit is described as still and small and one that whispers.⁴ How can a voice be still? Why is it likened to a whisper? Because the Spirit almost always speaks to our minds and to our hearts⁵ rather than to our ears. President Boyd K. Packer has said, “The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *bear*.”⁶

We feel things in our hearts. In the scriptures, the prophets teach that personal revelation is closely linked to the heart. For example:

Mormon taught, “Because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost.”⁷

Alma said, “He that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word.”⁸

Mormon wrote of the Nephites, “[Their souls were filled] with joy and consolation . . . because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”⁹

And then the Psalmist simply wrote, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.”¹⁰

Isn’t that something we all seek, brothers and sisters—to be visited by the Holy Ghost, to have the Lord draw closer to us, to find joy and consolation in our lives? If so, then



carefully assessing the condition of our hearts is one of the most essential things we can do in this life.

The heart is a tender place. It is sensitive to many influences, both positive and negative. It can be hurt by others. It can be deadened by sin. It can be softened by love. Early in our lives, we learn to guard our hearts. It is like we erect a fence around our hearts with a gate in it. No one can enter that gate unless we allow him or her to.

In some cases the fence we erect around our hearts could be likened to a small picket fence with a Welcome sign on the gate. Other hearts have been so hurt or so deadened by sin that they have an eight-foot (2.5-m) chain-link fence topped with razor wire around them. The gate is padlocked and has a large No Trespassing sign on it.

Let us apply the idea of a gateway to the heart to receiving personal revelation. Nephi taught, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost

carrieth it *unto* the hearts of the children of men.”¹¹ Elder David A. Bednar noted the use of the word *unto*: “Please notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart. . . . Ultimately, . . . the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.”¹²

Why just *unto* the heart? Individual agency is so sacred that Heavenly Father will never force the human heart, even with all His infinite power. Man may try to do so, but God does not. To put it another way, God allows us to be the guardians, or the gatekeepers, of our own hearts. We must, of our own free will, open our hearts to the Spirit, for He will not force Himself upon us.

So how do we open our hearts?

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”¹³ If something is pure, it is not polluted or tainted by things which do not belong to it. Purity of heart is certainly

one of the most important qualifications for receiving inspiration from God. While none of our hearts are perfect, the more diligently we strive to eliminate impurity, or push out things which do not belong there, the more we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Note this sweet promise of the prophet Jacob: “O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love.”¹⁴

While in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that describes a condition of some hearts:

“Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

“Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men.”¹⁵

Many in the world now live in prosperous and peaceful circumstances. In the Book of Mormon, prosperity often led the people away from the Lord. Mormon warned, “We may see at the very time when he doth



Sister missionaries in Sydney, Australia, greet those arriving for conference broadcasts.

prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art . . . , then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God.”¹⁶

The Lord noted three natural consequences of having one’s heart set on the things of the world: First, we seek to hide our sins instead of repenting of them. Next, we seek to gratify our pride and vain ambitions rather than seeking the things of God. Finally, we begin to exercise unrighteous dominion over others.¹⁷

Note that pride is a natural consequence of setting our hearts on the things of the world. Pride quickly desensitizes our hearts to spiritual promptings. For example, the Lord said, “I, the Lord, am not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon; he exalted himself in his heart, and received not counsel, but grieved the Spirit.”¹⁸ Compare that to this promise: “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give

thee answer to thy prayers.”¹⁹

In the Liberty Jail revelation, the Lord described the effect of a worldly heart: “Behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and . . . behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself.”²⁰ Brothers and sisters, in these very “perilous times,” we cannot afford to grieve the Spirit and be left to ourselves.

I say again, the condition of our hearts directly affects our sensitivity to spiritual things. Let us make it a part of our everyday striving to open our hearts to the Spirit. Since we are the guardians of our hearts, we can choose to do so. We choose what we let in or hold out. Fortunately the Lord is anxious to help us choose wisely.

I close in testimony with two of the promises He has made to those who seek to come unto Him: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with [His] love, . . . that we may be purified even as he is pure.”²¹

And finally this stirring declaration of Paul the Apostle: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”²²

May we ever ask Christ to strengthen our hearts and fill them with His love is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 32:5.
2. 2 Timothy 3:1.
3. See D&C 8:2.
4. See D&C 85:6.
5. See D&C 8:2.
6. “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” *Liabona*, June 1997, 10; *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 60.
7. Moroni 8:26.
8. Alma 12:10.
9. Helaman 3:35.
10. Psalm 34:18.
11. 2 Nephi 33:1; emphasis added.
12. “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Liabona*, Sept. 2007, 17; *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 61.
13. Matthew 5:8.
14. Jacob 3:2.
15. D&C 121:34–35.
16. Helaman 12:2.
17. See D&C 121:36–37.
18. D&C 63:55.
19. D&C 112:10.
20. D&C 121:37–38.
21. Moroni 7:48.
22. Philippians 4:13.