

Recovering from Spiritual Numbness

We're in spiritual danger when we stop feeling the Spirit, but with Christ's help we can overcome that spiritual numbness.

By Tadeo Murillo

Leprosy is an infectious disease we read about in the Bible. It's caused by a bacterium that creates severe lesions and wounds on the skin. But a main symptom of this disease is that it can cause severe damage to the nervous system, resulting in a loss of sensitivity to touch, heat, pain, or other sensations. People who are infected become literally numb.

Although leprosy isn't as serious or as common as it was long ago, people today are also losing their ability to feel—but rather than a physical impairment, we are at risk for becoming spiritually numb.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that this state of callousness can come from ignoring the promptings of the Holy Spirit and not keeping God's commandments. He taught:

"Our capacity to feel controls our behavior in many ways, and by inaction

when our feelings prompt us to do good, we deaden that capacity to feel. It was Jesus' striking sensitivity to the needs of those about him that made it possible for him to respond in action.

"At the other end of the spiritual spectrum are individuals such as Nephi's erring brothers; Nephi noted their increasing insensitivity to things spiritual: '[God] hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words' [1 Nephi 17:45]."¹

There is great danger when we stop feeling the Spirit or even when we aren't sure how the Spirit speaks to us. The world can easily distract us or derail us each day, causing us to become numb to that still, small yet powerful voice that is always ready to guide us daily (see 1 Kings 19:11–12).

But even if we feel that we might have a case of "spiritual leprosy" at times, healing is possible.

We should always remember that Jesus Christ was the one who healed people with leprosy during His ministry. And He is the one who can heal our spiritual numbness today and help us feel the Spirit again. Here are some keys that can help.



Recognizing the Spirit

A key to feeling again comes from our ability to hear and recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. As Moroni taught, “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). We can rid ourselves of the numbness, seek personal revelation, and feel for ourselves the truth of all things.

In your journey back to feeling the Spirit, ask yourself these questions to understand your relationship with revelation:

1. When was the last time I *received* personal revelation?
2. When was the last time I *asked* for personal revelation?
3. When was the last time I asked Heavenly Father to help me *recognize* personal revelation in my life?

Overall, are you really seeking revelation from God? It’s hard to feel the joyous fruits of the Spirit when it seems that the heavens are closed (see Galatians 5:22–23). But proactively seeking revelation in your daily life is the key to opening up the heavens and inviting the Spirit back into your life.

Misunderstanding Revelation

But here is where spiritual experiences and personal revelation can get tricky.

When we talk about personal revelation, our minds often jump to visions, angelic visitations, or striking voices. And when we don’t experience these things, we might feel that receiving guidance from the Spirit is hopeless. We might feel like something is wrong with us, which can lead us to giving up on seeking the Spirit altogether.

But we need to realize that feeling the Spirit is not about those big, earth-shattering moments, nor does the Lord only speak to us about our big life decisions. Another pitfall we stumble into is that we often turn to the Lord for help with only big decisions like schooling, careers, marriage, and family, but we neglect to turn to Him in every thought (see Doctrine and Covenants 6:36). But Heavenly Father speaks to us often. He speaks to us in the way we recognize it best individually. He can guide us daily, even in those small details of our lives.

Preparing to Receive Revelation

In order to hear the heavens, we first need to open our ears to heavenly things. Here are some ways that we can open our ears and ready ourselves to hear the Lord:

Believe. In our pursuit of overcoming spiritual leprosy, we might need to change our mindset and truly believe Heavenly Father and have faith that He *will* and *does* give us revelation. In fact, we should expect Him to. We can even ask Him to help us know how He speaks to us. We should expect to have spiritual experiences often when we are striving to follow the Savior and keep His commandments.

Put in daily effort. We can also become more sensitive to the Spirit through praying sincerely, studying the scriptures, partaking of the sacrament, attending the temple,

Heavenly
Father gave
us the gift of
the Holy Ghost
and wants
us to enjoy
that gift in its
fulness.

participating in family history work, listening to spiritual music, ministering, or however else you feel close to God. The closer we get to Him, the more we open our hearts to healing spiritual leprosy and feeling the Holy Ghost again.

Obey. Another important aspect of inviting the Spirit back into your life is your willingness to follow what the Spirit tells you. President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, taught:

“When you demonstrate your willingness to obey, the Spirit will send you more impressions of what God would have you do for Him.

“As you obey, the impressions from the Spirit will come more frequently, becoming closer and closer to constant companionship. Your power to choose the right will increase.”²

Being willing to follow the Lord’s will over our own can

be difficult sometimes, but we are always blessed with increased spiritual capacity when we do so. Even obeying in small ways, from choosing to pay our tithing, keeping the Sabbath day holy, or even following a prompting to serve someone else, can help us make room for the Spirit in our lives.

Feeling the Spirit Is a Gift

We should also remember the promise contained in our baptismal covenants with the Lord. Those of us who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost have been promised we can have the Spirit with us every day as we strive to keep our covenants (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79).

Heavenly Father gave us the gift of the Holy Ghost and wants us to enjoy that gift in its fullness. The constant companionship of the Holy Ghost allows us to make decisions confidently, feel comfort during challenges, grow spiritually, feel peace and joy, and know how to serve others. It truly is a gift.

Healing from spiritual numbness depends on our own faith and willingness to keep reaching out, even when we feel nothing. As we strive to invite the Spirit in our lives, we will receive impressions little by little as we listen and obey. Living our lives in harmony with God’s will helps us develop a sensitivity to the Spirit and will gradually heal us from any numbness that we feel. If we reach out to the Savior even when we feel nothing, He will help us feel that He is there (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:63). ■

NOTES

1. Neal A. Maxwell, *A Time to Choose* (1972), 59.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “The Holy Ghost as Your Companion,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 105.



Tadeo Murillo is from Heredia, Costa Rica. He served a full-time mission in Ecuador from 2013 to 2015 and married his wife, Daniela, in 2018. He is currently serving in the bishopric of his ward and loves to remember Mosiah 2:17, his favorite scripture, when serving others.