



What If I
Don't Feel a
BURNING in the
BOSOM?

When you know what to look for, you can more easily recognize the Holy Ghost.

By Rachel Nielsen

“Invite Mr. Wood* to seminary.” The thought popped into my mind as soon as I heard the announcement, and I immediately thought it was crazy. Why would I invite my music teacher to come to seminary at 5:30 in the morning?

The seminary president had just told our class that we would be having a teacher appreciation day. We were challenged to invite some of our schoolteachers to join us for a morning of seminary where we would thank them for their service.

** Name has been changed.*

The entire week after hearing this announcement, I thought about inviting Mr. Wood. Every time I went to seminary or saw him in music class, the thought came back: “Invite Mr. Wood to seminary.” After several days of this, I couldn’t ignore the thought any longer.

One morning as all the students in music class were getting out their instruments, I put my trombone aside and approached Mr. Wood. My heart was pounding and my hands were shaking, but when I opened

my mouth to extend the invitation, I felt comfort.

To my surprise, Mr. Wood said that he would come! He was curious about why I went to seminary every morning before school and wanted to learn more. After giving him all the details, I walked away full of joy.

During this experience, I didn’t feel a burning in the bosom (see D&C 9:8). But I did feel the Holy Ghost. The recurring thought to invite Mr. Wood (see D&C 128:1), the comfort I felt when I invited him (see John

14:26), and the joy I felt after I invited him (see Galatians 5:22) all came from the Spirit. But if I had been looking only for a burning in the bosom, I might have not recognized when the Holy Ghost was prompting me.

The Holy Ghost speaks in many ways, and when you study how He communicates, you will know what to look for as you strive to recognize when He is with you and when He is teaching or directing you.

Look for the Small and Simple Things

Before looking at the many ways the Holy Ghost speaks to us, we need to remember that most often, revelation is quiet and small. If we are looking for an Alma-the-Younger experience with an angel and an earthquake, we may miss the more frequent and quieter promptings from the Holy Ghost. Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warns that if we “emphasize marvelous and dramatic spiritual manifestations,” we may overlook the “small and incremental spiritual impressions” that are more common.¹ As you try to recognize the Holy Ghost, look for the small and simple promptings.

Look for Ways the Holy Ghost Communicates

If you’ve never felt a burning in the bosom, don’t worry. There are many

people who recognize the influence of the Holy Ghost in this way, but He also speaks in many other ways too, and you don’t have to feel a burning in the bosom to feel His presence. In fact, as you learn the ways the Holy Ghost inspires you and look for them in your life, you may find that He is communicating with you more than you realized.

This list includes only a small number of ways that the Holy Ghost communicates. Study the scriptures and the words of modern-day prophets as well as pages 96–97 in *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004) to discover more ways that He can speak to you.

“The spirit of revelation typically functions as thoughts and feelings that come into our minds and hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See

D&C 8:1–2; 100:5–8.)”² The Holy Ghost can speak to you through:

- Feelings of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faith, meekness (see Galatians 5:22–23).
- Thoughts that occupy the mind or press on your feelings (see D&C 128:1).
- A desire to do good and obey the commandments (see Mosiah 5:2).
- A feeling that something is right (see D&C 9:8).
- Feelings of comfort (see John 14:26).
- Feelings that “enlarge [your] soul” (Alma 32:28).
- Thoughts that “enlighten [your] understanding” (Alma 32:28).
- A hunger for more truth (see Alma 32:28).
- Feeling constrained



WHAT IS A BURNING IN THE BOSOM?

“What does a ‘burning in the bosom’ mean? Does it need to be a feeling of caloric heat, like the burning produced by combustion? If that is the meaning, I have never had a burning in the bosom. Surely, the word ‘burning’ in this scripture signifies a feeling of comfort and serenity. That is the witness many receive. That is the way revelation works.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 13; *Liahona*, May 1999, 22.



HOW DO I KNOW IF A THOUGHT COMES FROM ME OR THE HOLY GHOST?

"We have to act. Then we find out if it's coming from me or if it's the power of God. . . . Everything that invites and entices us to do good and to be good comes from God."

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Patterns of Light: Discerning Light" (video), [LDS.org](https://www.lds.org). Watch the whole video at [lds.org/patternL6](https://www.lds.org/patternL6).

(encouraged) to take an action or restrained (held back) from doing something (see 1 Nephi 7:15; 2 Nephi 32:7).

How These Thoughts and Feelings Can Come

Thoughts and feelings from the Holy Ghost can come:

- "Immediately and intensely."
- "Subtly and gradually."
- "So delicately that you may not even consciously recognize it."³

Learn more about this by watching a video at [lds.org/go/revelationL6](https://www.lds.org/go/revelationL6).

Thoughts and feelings from the Holy Ghost may come to:

- Bring things to our remembrance (see John 14:26).

- Protect us from deception (see D&C 45:57).
- Testify of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:18).
- Help us teach (see D&C 84:85).
- Grant gifts of the Spirit (see D&C 46:11).
- Bring a remission of sins (see 2 Nephi 31:17).

Look for the Good

When you're trying to recognize the Spirit, think of the impression's intended outcome: does the thought or feeling lead you to do good? Moroni 7:16 says, "Wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent

forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said, "How do we recognize the promptings of the Spirit? I don't think that's too difficult, really. . . . Does it persuade one to do good, to rise, to stand tall, to do the right thing, to be kind, to be generous? Then it is of the Spirit of God. If it is dark, sinister, ugly, not good, then you may know that it is of the adversary."⁴

If you're wondering whether or not you're feeling the Spirit, ask yourself if the thought or the feeling is inviting you to do good. If it is, you can be assured that it is from God.

Look for a Chance to Use Your Agency

If you're worthy and you're still having a hard time recognizing the Holy Ghost, take action. Heavenly Father has blessed you with agency, and sometimes He will require you to act without His guidance. He will ask you to exercise your faith by taking a step into the dark. President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, "Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that 'leap of faith.' . . . It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to

discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two."⁵ If you faithfully act on the knowledge you already have, even without recognizing promptings from the Holy Ghost, Heavenly Father will make sure you don't go astray. ■

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NOTES

1. David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 88.
2. David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," 88.
3. David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," 90.
4. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 260–61.
5. Boyd K. Packer, "The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge," *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 6; *Liahona*, Jan. 2007, 18.



WHY IS IT HARD TO RECOGNIZE THE HOLY GHOST?

"Our Father expects you to learn how to obtain that divine help by exercising faith in Him and His Holy Son, Jesus Christ. Were you to receive inspired guidance just for the asking, you would become weak and ever more dependent on Them. They know that essential personal growth will come as you struggle to learn how to be led by the Spirit."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "To Acquire Spiritual Guidance," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 7.

WHAT DOES THE SPIRIT FEEL LIKE?

"We do not have the words . . . which perfectly describe the Spirit" (Boyd K. Packer, "The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 52; *Tambuli*, Dec. 1988, 34). Because it's hard to describe how the Spirit feels, everyone will describe it in a slightly different way. But regardless of these differences, we can learn a lot when others explain how the Holy Ghost speaks to them. Watch several people describe how they feel the Holy Ghost at [lds.org/go/powerL6](https://www.lds.org/go/powerL6).