

“Go Ye Out to Meet Him”

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It is an honor to be sharing this podium with my wife. You can see why I felt like I had won the lottery when Heidi said yes to my asking her to marry me. It is about the word *yes* that I wish to speak today.

Last month my scripture reading led me to Doctrine and Covenants 133. In the introductory note to that section, I read that "prefacing this revelation the Prophet wrote: 'At this time there were many things which the Elders desired to know relative to preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants of the earth, and concerning the gathering; and in order to walk by the true light, and be instructed from on high.'"

That caught my attention, particularly the words "in order to walk by the true light, and be instructed from on high." I am always anxious to know more about how to walk in the light and receive instructions from the Lord, so I read on.

Verse 10 opened a window in my mind. It speaks of Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom and says, "Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom; behold and lo, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

For some reason the proactive phrasing—"awake and arise and go forth" and "go ye out to meet him"—energized me. I reflected whether in my own life I am really going out to meet him, or if I am waiting for him to come to me.

Our willingness to go out to meet him is, in large part, predicated on our testimony of who he really is and why his life is so important in ours. That, then, has caused me to focus my remarks today on my testimony of Jesus Christ. That is an ever-evolving story.

It did not come all at once. I don't recall waking up one morning and knowing every aspect of our Church was true. For some, that may be the experience, for me, however, my testimony has grown more "line upon line, [and] precept upon precept" (D&C 98:12).

It began in high school while I was singing with our seminary choir. I still remember the feeling—not because of a good memory but because the experience has been replicated hundreds if not thousands of times since. It was a feeling that I have come to recognize as a spiritual confirmation. The Lord counseled Oliver Cowdery that in his case the Lord would "cause that your bosom shall burn within you" (D&C 9:8). I believe we each have our own way of describing it. For me, it is a feeling that I have occasionally called "the shivers"—not that it is cold but that it is spine tingling, like

something cutting diagonally down and across my back.

Sometimes I had that feeling while singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints" ¹ at the conclusion of a seminary choir performance, but most memorable was at that end of the year in a testimony meeting among choir members. I recall the feeling was dramatic and unmistakable, even though I could not then articulate what it really meant.

As the years have progressed, I have come to realize that the feeling of "the shivers" is the Lord's way of telling me yes: yes, that story is true; yes, that is the right solution; yes, that is the right person.

In that same revelation, Oliver was told "you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right" (D&C 9:8). From that I learned not to expect an answer to come in full sentences without any effort on my part. I read that passage as the Lord saying, "Don't expect me to answer the question without giving me your choices."

There have been times when it seemed an answer was presented with clear explanation—when an entire concept was laid out in my head. More typical, however, are the occasions when I have asked yes or no questions of the Lord. The Lord is not restricted to answering in a single word, of course, but I have found it easier for me to recognize a simple answer. All I have to do is know when the Lord is saying yes. Each time that has happened my testimony has been strengthened.

I picture my testimony as a wall made of bricks. Early, the wall looked a bit like a checkerboard—with a brick here and brick there and a space in between; it covered a broad area, but it had many holes. Many yesses were among those bricks:

Yes, when I asked if I should go on a mission.

Yes, when I sought to know if I should marry Heidi.

Yes, when I pleaded to know if our firstborn son, who had died, actually lives on the other side of the veil.

For many of these bricks I can recall the circumstances and the place. The answer about the mission? On a freeway off-ramp while driving my future wife, Heidi, home from a date. Imagine how excited she was. That wasn't in the script.

The confirmation that I should marry Heidi? On first sight after she returned home from graduate school—four and a half years after we had begun dating.

And of our firstborn son? While standing with Heidi at his graveside surrounded by weeping friends and family. Yet Heidi and I stood among them cloaked with a spirit that spoke peace to our hearts and to our minds. In each case the same feeling paused to touch me as if it were a familiar friend always showing up just at the right moment.

Over time it became undeniable that the Spirit works within the Church as I was taught. But what about all those stories. An angel? Gold plates? The truthfulness of the Book of Mormon? One at a time, over the years, those questions have been answered, and with each answer, another brick has been inserted in the wall of my testimony.

Of the angel and the gold plates? At the unveiling of a historic painting of Moroni delivering the gold plates to Joseph Smith on the Hill Cumorah. I sat in the room, about twenty years ago, near the rear of the congregation. I was one of the two bishops serving in the building where the painting, once

painted on a brick wall, had now been restored and was being unveiled at the front of the chapel. I had seen it dozens of times as we arranged for its placement, but that night, as its history was told and the mood set, the painting was unveiled. Then it happened without forethought or even anticipation: "The shivers" saying, "yes, what is depicted in this painting actually occurred just as Joseph Smith said it did." Another brick with a firm foundation, a specific spiritual confirmation that I knew meant yes.

My confirmation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon has its own story. I had read it a number of times and borne testimony of it, but never was I able to affirm that I had a specific confirmation of its truthfulness as described in Moroni 10. Then one morning, with the Book of Mormon on the reading stand of my exercycle, I got to the tenth chapter of Moroni. I had prepared this time. I had received it, pondered it in my heart, asked God the Eternal Father in the name of Christ if it were true, with a sincere heart and with real intent and with faith in Christ. And then, as promised, it happened—just as clear and distinct as confirmations in the past. "The shivers" came as I sat on my exercycle reading the words "he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."

I have learned that a yes can come in many places: On the freeway or in the congregation, on an exercycle or at the side of a grave. As I think about it, I find myself humming the tune to "Count Your Blessings" and substituting the words, "Count the yesses, name them one by one."[2](#)

The wall of my testimony was filling in beautifully.

I knew that the Book of Mormon was the word of God and that Joseph Smith was the prophet of God who received the gold plates from an angel. I knew there is life after death. But I was lacking the most significant brick of all.

My seminary teacher bore his testimony to our class by referencing Doctrine and Covenants 46. He read verse 13:

"To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world."

After reading that verse, he said he was one who could so witness. He had been given to know by the Holy Ghost. He had felt a yes.

He then read to us verse 14:

"To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful."

He invited us to believe on his words if we did not yet have a testimony of our own. I remember accepting that invitation and thinking of myself as a verse 14 guy, one to whom it is given to believe on the words of another who knows that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God by the Holy Ghost. I wondered then, and often thereafter, what it would feel like to be a verse 13 guy and to know for myself through a confirmation of the Holy Ghost.

Years passed and the wall of my testimony continued to strengthen. Then twelve years ago, Heidi received the assignment from Deseret Book to research and compile the testimonies of each of the latter-day prophets concerning his testimony of and reverence for Jesus Christ. She was both excited and overwhelmed. She was to read everything that every man who became the president of the Church in this dispensation ever wrote or said at any time in his life concerning his testimony of Jesus Christ and then compile those testimonies into one book. (This was before the general

availability of computer-assisted research.) Heidi was left to reading original records, published books and articles, and microfilm in the Church Archives.

She was under a short deadline and asked me to help. With great enthusiasm I accepted the assignment. It became a team effort—like so many other things in our marriage.

That was not the first time we had worked together for a common spiritual purpose. Most major decisions in our life have been based upon joint spiritual confirmations, and somehow gospel-related topics or analysis weave their way into most of our conversations. Oh, don't get me wrong, we don't walk around on spiritual clouds, oblivious to the secular realities of life. Most of everyone's time is spent coping with mortal problems. But we do often wonder what couples find to talk about when they don't have the gospel as a meaningful part of their relationship.

One does not have to look far for opportunities to jointly study the gospel and discuss gospel topics. Think of Gospel Doctrine classes and Priesthood and Relief Society lessons, which not only keep men and women on the same page but invite shared focus and discussion in the home. Throughout our marriage, Heidi and I have taken turns strengthening one another's testimony. And this book that I mentioned was another singular opportunity. It was a bit of a quest: Heidi and Jeff in search of testimonies of the Savior—not just for a book but also and perhaps most importantly for themselves. I was anxious to participate, honestly believing that this might open the door for me to step into the realm of verse 13.

Heidi began with President Harold B. Lee. President Lee had been a neighbor of mine in my youth, and he had sealed our marriage in the temple. We each felt close to him. When she had completed a chapter containing many quotations from his talks and writings, she set it aside, believing that his testimony had been well covered. One day while she was sitting at home in a closet we had outfitted as a tiny office, she felt a prompting to go to the Church Archives and do further research on Harold B. Lee. Three times she discounted the prompting, rationalizing that it was too late in the day, it would take too long, she had sufficient material for the chapter, and she would not know where to start when she got there.

After the third prompting she gave up and complied. Frustrated, she drove to the archives an hour and a half before it closed, parked her car, and walked right past the desk. "Heidi, you must be in a hurry," said one of the members of the staff. Heidi had forgotten to check in her purse. "What can I help you with?" Heidi asked for the Harold B. Lee microfilm, and when the cart came, the staff member said, "Which roll do you want?" I recall Heidi telling me how she mustered a dramatic posture and said, "I don't know."

Not knowing why she had been sent and certain it was a waste of time, she looked aimlessly through microfilm rolls of President Lee's talks and writings with which she had become very familiar. Tape after tape went on the machine, and then she was prompted to stop when she read in the index of a roll the name of a talk given by President Lee to seminary and institute instructors in 1971. It was entitled "Objectives of Church Education."

That would certainly stop one who was looking for a talk that spoke of his testimony of Jesus Christ, don't you think?

Nevertheless, she began reading because of the prompting, and she found a dramatic paragraph she had never seen before. After asking to know if that was why she had been sent on that errand, she received the peaceful answer yes. She copied the paragraph down and inserted it into the Harold B. Lee chapter. She told me of the experience that evening but didn't share with me what she had found.

Some time later Heidi asked that I review the completed chapters to see how they flowed and

whether the material was appropriate and not duplicative. I can still remember sitting in my office downtown and reading the Harold B. Lee chapter. As I read one paragraph I was caught off guard and carried away in the Spirit. The shivers. It was clear. It was dramatic. It said yes.

I wrote in the margin that I had experienced a spiritual confirmation as I read that paragraph and returned the chapter to Heidi without sharing the experience. Several days later she called me at my office. She said: "I was just reading your comments in the Harold B. Lee chapter." Well, you know the rest of the story. The paragraph that touched me so profoundly was the very paragraph she had found that day in the archives.

It may be that no one else on the earth has ever been touched spiritually by that paragraph. But what was important for me was that I had been. In a joint effort between husband and wife to fulfill an assignment, Heidi had been directed by the Spirit to find and then include the very words that would resonate with my spirit. I am so grateful to her for responding the third time to the prompting.

We both learned a great deal in that compilation process. We expected to come across stories of face-to-face communications between latter-day prophets and Jesus Christ. I guess that was a bit naive. If those encounters occurred, the prophets didn't speak publicly about them. But what they did say was even more significant. To a man, in one way or another, each of them said that his testimony of Jesus Christ was built upon a confirmation from the Holy Ghost. We learned that we don't have to see Him to know Him.

Let me read to you the paragraph that touched my soul and prompted my own spiritual confirmation. I am quoting from that talk, "Objectives of Church Education."

"When I came to this position [this is President Lee speaking] as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, I was told that my chief responsibility now was to bear testimony of the divine mission of the Lord and Savior of the world. That was almost a crushing realization of what it meant to be a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I was assigned to give the Easter talk the Sunday night following the general conference. As I locked myself in one of the rooms of the Church office building, I took out my Bible and read from the four Gospels the life of the Master, particularly leading down to his crucifixion and resurrection. And as I read, I became aware that something different was happening. It no longer was just a story of the doings of the Master, but I realized that I was having an awareness of something I had not had before. It seemed that I was reliving. I was feeling intently the actual experiences about which I was reading. And when I stood that Sunday night, after expressing myself as to the divine mission of the Lord, I said, 'And now, as one of the least among you, I declare with all my soul that I know . . . ' I knew with a certainty that I had never known before. Whether that was the more sure word of prophecy I had received, I don't know. But it was with such conviction!"

And then these words—which gave me the shivers:

"More powerful than sight is the witness of the Holy Spirit which bears testimony to your spirit that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is indeed the work of God. I knew it because I had felt it, and there had been a testimony borne to my soul that I could not deny."[3](#)

At the moment when I read that paragraph, much of the experience about which he was talking was happening to me. I couldn't doubt it, and I will never forget it.

That was a big brick and a big yes. The most critical of all. And it is still there—carefully mortared into place as the centerpiece of the wall of my testimony. And like so many times in our marriage, Heidi was the catalyst. No longer did I have to believe on the testimonies of others about Jesus

Christ. A testimony had come to me by the power of the Holy Ghost as had been promised.

I don't believe I am unique.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, at the most recent First Presidency Christmas devotional, spoke of the Prophet, Joseph Smith, as Christ's "great testator." He cited, as an example, the unequivocal testimony from the Johnson Farm in Hiram, Ohio, found in Doctrine and Covenants 76:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

Of that testimony, President Hinckley affirmed that each of us can also know. He said:

"The testimony of the great Prophet of this dispensation has been repeated and confirmed by generations of Latter-day Saints who have received a certain knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost."[4](#)

Are you one of them? I read President Hinckley's statement as an invitation to each of us to join the generations of Latter-day Saints who have received that certain knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost.

President Ezra Taft Benson said:

"A most priceless blessing available to every member of the Church is a testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ and His church."[5](#)

In the process and as a means of gaining that testimony, and thereafter, we would all do well to abide by the counsel of Alma to his son Helaman, which is found in Alma 37:36 and 37. Listen to this counsel from father to son:

"Yea, and cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and withersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever.

"Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God."

And then the promise: "And if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."

How important is it to gain a testimony of Jesus Christ? Ask yourself this question: How important is it that you be lifted up at the last day?

My advice? "Go ye out to meet him." If you are married, make it a joint effort. Be proactive in the things you do in your life that will refine and cleanse your receptors so when the Holy Ghost testifies to you, you will be worthy to receive it. And in that day when you do meet Jesus Christ, you will recognize him because you will know who he is by the power of the Holy Ghost.

My life is different now that verse 13 is mine. The answer was yes. That testimony is now a part of me.

I conclude with part of verse 13 in my own testimony. I testify that I now "know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

[1](#) "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 30.

[2](#) "Count Your Blessings," *Hymns*, no. 241.

[3](#) Harold B. Lee, "Objectives of Church Education," address to seminary and institute personnel, 17 June 1970, Brigham Young University, 7-8, LDS Church Archives. See also *I Know That My Redeemer Lives: Latter-day Prophets Testify of the Savior* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 170.

[4](#) Gordon B. Hinckley, "My Redeemer Lives," *Ensign*, February 2001, 70.

[5](#) Ezra Taft Benson, *Come unto Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 11.

