

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ  
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2Ne 31-33 & Jacob 1-4

***“Receive the Holy Ghost” (“Press Forward,” & “Feast”)***

**Receive the Holy Ghost**

What does it mean to “receive the Holy Ghost?” Imagine you were given a beautiful gift, thoughtfully selected just for you, wrapped carefully, and given with joy and great love by a dear friend. Would you put it up on a shelf in the closet and ignore it? Would you discard it? Would you set it on a shelf and admire it but never actually open it, like you might with fine china that never actually gets used?

The Holy Ghost is that gift—in fact, it’s the greatest gift of all. We were given this gift after baptism, as we were confirmed members of this church, but we were also commanded to “receive” it. *Have we received it? If so, do we continue to receive the Holy Ghost? Do we open and use it each and every day? Each and every moment?*

Elder Marion G. Romney said:

“Every one of us who are members of the Church has had hands laid upon our heads, and we have been given, as far as ordinance can give it, the gift of the Holy Ghost. But, as I remember, when I was confirmed, the Holy Ghost was not directed to come to me; I was directed to ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’ If I receive the Holy Ghost and follow his guidance, I will be among those who are protected and carried through these troubled times. And so will you, and so will every other soul who lives under his direction. Now, my brothers and sisters, we need to seek that Spirit. We need to realize that it is a real guide...I tell you that you can make every decision in your life correctly if you can learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” (*“Seek the Spirit,” Improvement Era, Dec. 1961, p. 947.*)

As Nephi’s teaching comes to a close and Jacob’s comes to full bloom, both share the same focus: the Savior, Jesus Christ. Both seek to point mankind to Him (1 Ne 6:3-5; Jacob 1:2-3), and both tell us how we can continually come unto Christ and become *like* Him (2 Ne 31:12; Jacob 4:7-8). Both describe how we can achieve life with God for eternity (2 Ne 31:17-18,20; Jacob 3:1-2; 4)—and it all begins with the divine gift of the Holy Ghost (2 Ne 32:5; Jacob 4:13).

Parley P. Pratt tells us more about the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost: “An intelligent being, in the image of God, possesses every organ, attribute, sense, sympathy, affection that is possessed by God Himself. But these are possessed by man, in his rudimental state, in a subordinate sense of the word. Or, in other words, these attributes are in embryo; and are to be gradually developed. They resemble a bud, a germ, which gradually develops

into bloom, and then, by progress, produces the mature fruit, after its own kind. The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation & social feelings. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being." (*Key to the science of Theology*, pp. 100-1).

Wow! Now, *this* is what inspires me to desire the Holy Ghost—not only can I have the third member of the Godhead as my constant companion, guide, & nurturer, but He literally develops, cultivates, & *grows* me. *Will we receive and use this divine gift?*

### **The Simple, Beautiful “Doctrine of Christ”**

It wasn't long ago that I finally, truly understood the “Doctrine of Christ,” that I finally grasped just how simple, how beautifully simple yet whole, Christ's doctrine—the doctrine of the gospel—truly is! It's so easy, in today's world, to get caught up in details, stories, events and complex concepts; we make the gospel much more complicated than it truly is. We create “lists” of what we “need to do” to return to Him, and in these lists we find stress and overwhelm and hopelessness, fearing we will never be able to do it all. Why do we complicate things so? It's part of our human nature.

President Uchtdorf admonished us to “simplify our discipleship.” *How does this compare with the doctrine of Christ found in the Book of Mormon?* As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught:

“This beautiful gospel is so simple a child can grasp it, yet so profound and complex that it will take a lifetime—even an eternity—of study and discovery to fully understand it. But sometimes we take the beautiful lily of God's truth and gild it with layer upon layer of man-made good ideas, programs, and expectations. Each one, by itself, might be helpful and appropriate for a certain time and circumstance, but when they are laid on top of each other, they can create a mountain of sediment that becomes so thick and heavy that we risk losing sight of that precious flower we once loved so dearly.” (*“It Works Wonderfully!” General Conference Address, Oct 2015*)

In essence, the gospel of Jesus Christ can be summed up with five concepts. Nephi teaches this doctrine in 2 Ne 31: 13-16. “The Doctrine of Christ,” we learn, follows

our 4<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith.

- 1) *Faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ (following Him “with full purpose of Heart”) (v.13)
- 2) *Repentance* (v.13)
- 3) *Baptism* (“witnessing” we are “willing to take upon [us] the name of Christ”) (v.13)
- 4) “*Receive the Holy Ghost*” (“then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost”) (v. 13)
- 5) *Endure to the End* (“in following the example of the Son of the living God”) (v.15-16)

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains the simplicity and directness of the “doctrine of Christ:”

“The ‘doctrine of Christ’ as taught by Nephi in his grand, summational discourse focuses on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. . . . As used in the Book of Mormon, ‘the doctrine of Christ’ is simple and direct. It focuses on the first principles of the gospel exclusively, including an expression of encouragement to endure, to persist, to press on. Indeed, it is in the clarity and simplicity of ‘the doctrine of Christ’ that its impact is found. . . . The doctrine of Christ is not complicated. It is profoundly, beautifully, single-mindedly clear and complete” (*Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997],49–50, 56).

This doctrine is a cycle we repeat over and over until our earthly experience is complete. We exercise faith, repent, renew our baptismal covenants each week, and hopefully live by the power of the Holy Ghost. In doing these things, we will have what we need to “endure to the end.” *Do we understand, remember, and follow the doctrine of Christ in our daily lives?*

### **“Feast upon the Words of Christ”**

Continuing his message, Nephi encouraged us to “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 [Nephi 32:3](#)), “receive the Holy Ghost” (2 [Nephi 32:5](#)), and “pray always” (2 [Nephi 32:9](#)). He further reminds us that the Holy Ghost will “show unto [us] all things what [we] should do” (2 [Nephi 32:5](#)).

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “We need to ‘come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.’ ([Moroni 10:32](#).) We need to come ‘with a broken heart and a contrite spirit’ (3 [Nephi 12:19](#)), hungering and thirsting after righteousness (see 3 [Nephi 12:6](#)). We need to come ‘feasting upon the word of Christ’ (2 [Nephi 31:20](#)), as we receive it through His scriptures, His anointed, and His Holy Spirit” (*A Witness and a Warning* [1988], 51).

*Do we regularly “feast” upon Christ’s words—in the scriptures, from the prophets, and through daily personal revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost? Do we treat Christ’s words like a salad with no dressing we eat only because we know it’s healthy? Or, do we approach the scriptures, prophets, and revelation like a Thanksgiving feast, with excitement, hunger, and deep gratitude?*

*What can you do to improve your study and learning of the scriptures? What can you do to turn our “reading” into a feast each day?*

**“Press Forward with Steadfastness in Christ” (2 Nephi 31:19–20; 32:2–3)** What does it mean to “press forward?” When I think of this, I think of pushing on, through the muck and the mud of life, giving it all you’ve got, and never giving up. Pressing forward is key in “enduring to the end.” If we’re not pressing forward, then we will be blown backward. There is no in-between.

What does the phrase “with steadfastness in Christ” mean to you? To me, it means continually turning to Him, seeking Him, listening to His Holy Spirit, and obeying. It also means following His doctrine—repenting when we mess up (which we will, over and over), turning to Him in faith, remembering Him always (as we promise to do each week in the sacrament), and again, enduring.

As Elder Bruce R. McConkie writes:

“Sometimes someone will say: ‘Well, I have been baptized into the Church; I am a member of the Church; I’ll just go along and live an ordinary sort of life; I won’t commit any great crimes; I’ll live a reasonable good Christian life; and eventually I will gain the kingdom of God. I don’t understand it that way. I think that baptism is a gate. It is a gate which puts us on a path; and the name of the path is the straight and narrow path. The straight and narrow path leads upward from the gate of baptism to the celestial kingdom of heaven. After a person has entered the gate of baptism, he has to press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, as Nephi expresses it, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men; and if he endures to the end, then he gains the promised reward.’ (in *CR*, Oct. 1950, p. 16).

*How can you ‘press forward’ with ‘steadfastness in Christ?’*

### **Feast upon Christ’s Love (Jacob 3:2)**

One of the most beautiful verses in these chapters, and perhaps in the Book of Mormon, is Jacob 3:2. Jacob invites us to “receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever.”

*Is your mind firm? Do you receive Christ’s words and “feast upon His love?” For you*

may; it's all up to you.

### **Jacob & Nephi: Bringing us to Christ**

As Jacob begins his ministry and writing, we see that he, like his brother Nephi, writes to bring others unto Christ. He writes “the things which [he] considered to be most precious... And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying,” he would write those things (Jacob 1: 2-4). Jacob, like Nephi, was a righteous man, a man who feared not man, but feared and *loved* God.

Have you ever pondered the difference in writing and speaking style between Nephi and Jacob? In my mind, Nephi is a much more emotional writer than Jacob, and his preaching often takes the form of personal, emotional discourse on the topics at hand. Jacob, on the other hand, speaks and writes straight to the point, with little personal reflection and emotion, and with a boldness that may contradict Nephi's gentle plainness.

*How would you describe the differences in Nephi's and Jacob's writings? Do these things impact your testimony of the Book of Mormon?* They certainly strengthen mine—knowing these truly were two different men, two prophets of God, who shared a similar mission and calling: to bring souls (our souls, in particular), unto Christ.

### **Jacob sought to magnify his calling (Jacob 1:9-19)—Do we?**

Of this subject, Hugh B. Brown has written:

“President John Taylor said on one occasion, speaking to the brethren of the priesthood: ‘If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty.’ This is a challenging statement. If I by reason of sins of commission or omission lose what I might have had in the hereafter, I myself must suffer and, doubtless, my loved ones with me. But if I fail in my assignment as a bishop, a stake president (etc.)... if any of us fail to teach, lead, direct, and help to save those under our direction and within our jurisdiction, then the Lord will hold us responsible if they are lost as a result of our failure.” (in CR, Oct. 1962, p. 84).

*How does this make you feel? What will you do to “magnify” your life callings (church callings, parenthood, career, etc)?*

### **Seek the Kingdom of God (Jacob 2:12-21)**

Jacob speaks firmly to his people, and admonishes them to seek the kingdom of God before riches. Are riches “bad?” No. As Stephen L. Richards said: “The Lord did not intend us to be a poverty-stricken people. One of the last sermons that I heard President Joseph F. Smith preach was over in the temple to a select company, and I

remember distinctly his saying on that occasion, the Lord never intended the Latter-day saints to be a poverty-stricken and destitute people. He intended that their goodness should entitle them to inherit the good things of earth if they were used properly... He did not say that it would be accomplished without hard work... Do not get the idea, my brothers and sisters, that we have a quarrel with wealth if it is legitimately acquired. It is the utilization of wealth which is often subject to criticism." (Where is Wisdom? Pp. 57-8).

*Are we first seeking God's kingdom? Do we seek to put in order things of eternal "wealth," rather than focusing all our energy and time to gain that which moth and rust will eventually corrupt? Where does your heart lie?*

As David O. McKay aptly asked, "What seek ye first? What do you cherish as the dominant, the uppermost thought in your mind? What this is will largely determine your destiny." (David O. McKay, Treasures of Life, pp. 174-5). What a beautiful reminder! I echo President' McKay's questions, and urge you to spend some time in self-reflection upon them.

### **Do we "look beyond the mark?"**

Jacob taught that his people fell into spiritual blindness by "looking beyond the mark." *What does it mean to "look beyond the mark?" And are we ever guilty of it?* Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote of this:

"Those who look beyond plainness, beyond the prophets, beyond Christ, and beyond his simple teachings waited in vain then, as they will wait in vain now. For only the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us of things as they really are and as they really will be. There is more realism in the revelations than in the reams of secular research, for secularism is congenitally shortsighted. Without revelation and its absolute anchors, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would also follow the fads of the day, as some churches have done... This is but one of the marks of the 'true and living' Church: it is spared the fruits of faddism." (On being a Light, 2 Jan. 1974, p. 1).

### **In conclusion...It all comes back to the Holy Ghost.**

When all is said and done, the gospel all comes down to whether or not we will receive and obey the promptings of the Holy Ghost. We must be willing to let the spirit come fully into our hearts, fully into our minds, to lead and direct and even to correct us. This is truly the only way to return to Him. We must learn to let the Holy Ghost, or rather, the voice of Jesus Christ—for truly the Holy Ghost is His voice, like a telephone carries the voice of the caller—be our constant guide. This is true personal, spiritual growth and development.

Elder F. Enzo Busche writes: “We have to learn to stand this piercing voice. It is only our lack of desire to hear our weaknesses that stops our communication with heavenly Father. We have to be able to hear His voice and say, ‘Father, I admit my shortcomings, and I feel so bad about them. I’m so grateful that thou hast so much patience with me, and I ask Thee to help me overcome my weaknesses.” (*in M. Catherine Thomas, The God Seed, p. 161*)

*Will we receive the Holy Ghost? Will we allow Him to be our constant companion, to show us our weaknesses, and to make of us what HE will?*

To conclude, President Uchtdorf urges:

“Brothers and sisters, living the gospel doesn’t need to be complicated. It is really straightforward. It could be described like this: Hearing the word of God with earnest intent leads us to believe in God and to trust His promises.<sup>3</sup> The more we trust God, the more our hearts are filled with love for Him and for each other. Because of our love for God, we desire to follow Him and bring our actions in alignment with His word. Because we love God, we want to serve Him; we want to bless the lives of others and help the poor and the needy. The more we walk in this path of discipleship, the more we desire to learn the word of God. And so it goes, each step leading to the next and filling us with ever-increasing faith, hope, and charity. It is beautifully simple, and it works beautifully.” (*Conf. Address, Oct 2015*)

Truly, it is, and it does. May we walk this path of discipleship by heeding the Holy Ghost, is my humble prayer.

### **Ponder This**

- 1) Revisit all the italicized questions & ponder each. Write in your journal.
- 2) Ask yourself, “How can I more fully ‘receive the holy ghost?’ How can I use, rely upon, and follow Him daily, to improve, to learn, to grow?”
- 3) Read and ponder the following quote from President Joseph Fielding Smith.  
*How does it make you feel? What will you do about it?*

“When we are disobedient, when our minds are set upon the things of this world rather than on the things of the kingdom of God, we cannot have the manifestations of the Holy Ghost. Did you ever stop to think what a great privilege it is for us to have the companionship of one of the members of the Godhead? Have you thought of it that way? That is our privilege, if we keep the commandments of the Lord has given us.” (*We are Here to Be Tried, Tested, Proved, Brigham Young University Speeches of the year, 25 Oct. 1961, pp. 4-5*).

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