That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us

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We should endeavor to discern when we “withdraw ourselves from the Spirit of the Lord” … [and] attend to and learn from the choices and influences that separate us from the Holy Spirit.

Today, I speak by way of reminder and admonition to those of us who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I pray for and invite the Holy Ghost to now assist me and you as we learn together.

Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins “is the introductory ordinance of the gospel” of Jesus Christ and must be preceded by faith in the Savior and by sincere and complete repentance. “Baptism in water … must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete” (see Bible Dictionary, “Baptism,” 618). As the Savior taught Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). My message this afternoon focuses on the baptism of the Spirit and the blessings that flow from the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

The Ordinance of and Covenant Associated with Baptism

As each of us was baptized, we entered into a solemn covenant with our Heavenly Father. A covenant is an agreement between God and His children upon the earth, and it is important to understand that God determines the conditions of all gospel covenants. You and I do not decide the nature or elements of a covenant. Rather, exercising our moral agency, we accept the terms and requirements of a covenant as our Eternal Father has established them (see Bible Dictionary, “Covenant,” 651).

The saving ordinance of baptism must be administered by one who has proper authority from God. The fundamental conditions of the covenant into which we entered in the waters of baptism are these: we witnessed that we were willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, that we would always remember Him, and that we would keep His commandments. The promised blessing for honoring this covenant is that we may always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77). In other words, baptism by water leads to the authorized opportunity for the constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead.

Confirmation and the Baptism of the Spirit

Following our baptism, each of us had hands placed upon our head by those with priesthood authority and was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us (see D&C 49:14). The statement “receive the Holy Ghost” in our confirmation was a directive to strive for the baptism of the Spirit.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost” (History of the Church, 5:499). We were baptized by immersion in water for the remission of sins. We must also be baptized by and immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, “and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne. 31:17).

As we gain experience with the Holy Ghost, we learn that the intensity with which we feel the Spirit’s influence is not always the same. Strong, dramatic spiritual impressions do not come to us frequently. Even as we strive to be faithful and obedient, there simply are times when the direction, assurance, and peace of the Spirit are not readily recognizable in our lives. In fact, the Book of Mormon describes faithful Lamanites who “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Ne. 9:20).

The influence of the Holy Ghost is described in the scriptures as “a still small voice” (1 Kgs. 19:12; see also 3 Ne. 11:3) and a “voice of perfect mildness” (Hel. 5:30). Thus, the Spirit of the Lord usually communicates with us in ways that are quiet, delicate, and subtle.

Withdrawal Ourselves from the Spirit of the Lord

In our individual study and classroom instruction, we repeatedly emphasize the importance of recognizing the inspiration and promptings we receive from the Spirit of the Lord. And such an approach is correct and useful. We should seek diligently to recognize and respond to promptings as they come to us. However, an important aspect of baptism by the Spirit may frequently be
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the director or compass used by Lehi and his family in
The description in the Book of Mormon of the Liahona,
to invite the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.
source to which we should turn for help in learning how
Day
The Liahona as a Type and Shadow for Our
“receive the Holy Ghost.”
who has been baptized, confirmed, and instructed to
always have His Spirit to be with us. As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit
of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions
without us. As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit
us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.
I recognize we are fallen men and women living in
overlooked in our spiritual development.
We should also endeavor to discern when we
“withdraw [ourselves] from the Spirit of the Lord, that it
may have no place in [us] to guide [us] in wisdom’s
paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and
preserved” (Mosiah 2:36). Precisely because the
promised blessing is that we may always have His Spirit
to be with us, we should attend to and learn from the
choices and influences that separate us from the Holy
Spirit.
The standard is clear. If something we think, see,
hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we
should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing.
If that which is intended to entertain, for example,
aliens us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type
of entertainment is not for us. Because the Spirit cannot
abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then
clearly such things are not for us. Because we estrange
the Spirit of the Lord when we engage in activities we
know we should shun, then such things definitely are not
for us.
I recognize we are fallen men and women living in
a mortal world and that we might not have the presence
of the Holy Ghost with us every second of every minute
every hour of every day. However, the Holy Ghost can
tarry with us much, if not most, of the time—and
certainly the Spirit can be with us more than it is not
with us. As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit
of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions
when they come and the influences or events that cause
us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.
Taking “the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” (D&C
45:57) is possible and is essential for our spiritual
growth and survival in an increasingly wicked world.
Sometimes as Latter-day Saints we talk and act as though
recognizing the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives
is the rare or exceptional event. We should remember,
however, that the covenant promise is that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. This supernal
blessing applies to every single member of the Church
who has been baptized, confirmed, and instructed to
“receive the Holy Ghost.”

The Liahona as a Type and Shadow for Our
Day
In our day the Book of Mormon is the primary
source to which we should turn for help in learning how
to invite the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.
The description in the Book of Mormon of the Liahona,
the director or compass used by Lehi and his family in
their journey in the wilderness, specifically was included
in the record as a type and a shadow for our day and as
an essential lesson about what we should do to enjoy the
blessings of the Holy Ghost.
As we strive to align our attitudes and actions with
righteousness, then the Holy Ghost becomes for us today
what the Liahona was for Lehi and his family in their
day. The very factors that caused the Liahona to work for
Lehi will likewise invite the Holy Ghost into our lives.
And the very factors that caused the Liahona not to work
anciently will likewise cause us to withdraw ourselves
from the Holy Ghost today.

The Liahona: Purposes and Principles
As we study and ponder the purposes of the Liahona
and the principles by which it operated, I testify that we
will receive inspiration suited to our individual and
family circumstances and needs. We can and will be
blessed with ongoing direction from the Holy Ghost.
The Liahona was prepared by the Lord and given to
Lehi and his family after they left Jerusalem and were
traveling in the wilderness (see Alma 37:38; D&C 17:1).
This compass or director pointed the way that Lehi and
his caravan should go (see 1 Ne. 16:10), even “a straight
course to the promised land” (Alma 37:44). The pointers
in the Liahona operated “according to the faith and
diligence and heed” (1 Ne. 16:28) of the travelers and
failed to work when family members were contentious,
rude, slothful, or forgetful (see 1 Ne. 18:12, 21; Alma
37:41, 43).
The compass also provided a means whereby Lehi
and his family could obtain greater “understanding
concerning the ways of the Lord” (1 Ne. 16:29). Thus,
the primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide
both direction and instruction during a long and
demanding journey. The director was a physical
instrument that served as an outward indicator of their
inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according
to the principles of faith and diligence.
Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us
in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can
direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The
Holy Ghost was conferred upon you and me as we came
out of the world and into the Savior’s Church through
baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy
priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church
and admonished to seek for the constant companionship
of “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive,
because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye
know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”
(John 14:17).
As we each press forward along the pathway of life,
we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Ne. 32:5).

The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed.

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. …

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:45–46).

And the Holy Ghost provides for us today the means whereby we can receive, “by small and simple things” (Alma 37:6), increased understanding about the ways of the Lord: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

The Spirit of the Lord can be our guide and will bless us with direction, instruction, and spiritual protection during our mortal journey. We invite the Holy Ghost into our lives through meaningful personal and family prayer, feasting upon the words of Christ, diligent and exacting obedience, faithfulness and honoring of covenants, and through virtue, humility, and service. And we steadfastly should avoid things that are immodest, coarse, crude, sinful, or evil that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

We also invite the ongoing companionship of the Holy Ghost as we worthily partake of the sacrament each Sabbath day: “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (D&C 59:9).

Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins (see Mosiah 4:12, 26). In addition, we are reminded on a weekly basis of the promise that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. As we then strive to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world, we become worthy vessels in whom the Spirit of the Lord can always dwell.

In February of 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. President Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Brethren. The Prophet Joseph replied: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom” (see Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young [1997], 41; emphasis added). Of all the truths the Prophet Joseph might have taught Brigham Young on that sacred occasion, he emphasized the importance of obtaining and keeping the Spirit of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of the living reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. May each of us so live that we may always have His Spirit to be with us and thereby qualify for the blessings of direction, instruction, and protection that are essential in these latter days. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.