

*Become a Seeker:
“The Way, the Truth, and the Life”*

MICHAEL A. GOODMAN

Good morning, brothers and sisters! I am grateful to see many friends and family and wonderful students. It humbles me to be with you today.

I believe in truth in advertising: what I share today is far more important than I am capable of expressing. Those of us who teach the gospel soon realize that we are just not good enough. But I know that with the Lord’s help I can do what needs to be done. I pray for that help for all of us as we spend the next few minutes together.

There is power in truth. The Savior taught that “the truth shall make you free.”¹ In theory, we have all come to BYU in search of truth. I realize that there are many other possible motives for being here, from career preparation to the supposed mystery of marriage preparation. Much of my career has been spent helping my students learn how to date, court, and marry well.

I was tempted to speak on those issues today but decided to speak on another issue I am passionate about. Thirty minutes will not allow a full exploration of this topic, but it will allow an introduction. I will be teaching a four-day version of this speech at Camp Education

Week this August for any who are gluttons for punishment and would like more detail.

Courage in the Quest for Truth

We live in a world filled with differing views, opinions, and philosophies. Never have we had more access to information. Our task is to decide what is true and what is false. On some issues, that decision is not so crucial, such as whether Cafe Rio or Costa Vida is best. Other issues are fraught with immense—at times even eternal—consequences.

For example, my dear friend Daniel Judd and I chaired the committee that created the new Eternal Family cornerstone class in Religious Education. I don’t have to work hard to convince my single students of the importance of knowing how to select an eternal companion. Understanding the vast consequences of that decision, most students are strongly motivated to understand truth. In fact, many students are terrified that they don’t know and can’t know that truth.

Michael A. Goodman was an associate professor of Church history and doctrine when this devotional address was given on 12 July 2016.

A 2002 BYU study asked students how they would know they had found the one they wanted to marry. Most gave a few possible answers, but a full 11 percent simply answered, “I don’t know,” with men being almost twice as likely to express that fear.²

In humility, it is wise for us all to acknowledge our imperfection in determining truth. None of us have all the answers, least of all me. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf explained, “It seems to be part of our nature as human beings to make assumptions about people, politics, and piety based on our incomplete and often misleading experience.”³

An example I often use in my Eternal Family class is of a husband who observed his wife turning back and forth in front of a mirror. Since her birthday was not far off, he asked what she would like for her birthday. Still looking in the mirror, she replied, “I’d like to be six again.”

Well, on the morning of her birthday, he rose early, made her a big bowl of Lucky Charms, and then took her to a Six Flags theme park. After five hours enjoying every ride, he took her to McDonald’s, where he ordered her a Happy Meal with extra fries and a chocolate shake. Then it was off to the movies, with popcorn, soda, and candy. They finally wobbled home, and with a big smile he asked, “Well, dear, what was it like being six again?”

Her eyes slowly opened, and her expression suddenly changed: “I meant my dress size.”

So, are we hopeless? Are we unable to know truth? Of course we can know truth! Heavenly Father has not sent us here without revealing the principles and practices we need to recognize and follow truth. And yet for many—even within the Church—there appears to be a crisis of confidence in our ability to know truth.

We see the same scenario play out over and over again. Friends or loved ones come across information that seems to contradict what they thought they knew. They investigate further and find out that their past understanding really was flawed. Church history turns out

to be far more complex than the basic Sunday School narrative. Church leaders, past and present, turn out to be mere mortals indeed. The unfairness of life challenges their understanding of the results of righteous living. And the list goes on and on.

Have you experienced this? Has someone you loved experienced it? I guess there is not a person here who has not been touched by such circumstances. Though you may not have personally experienced such a crisis, each of us must continue to grow in light and truth. What are we to do? How do we make it through such a crisis ourselves, or how do we help those we love? When such questions arise—and they will arise for us all—*how* we approach them will have almost as much impact on the outcome as will the truthfulness of the issues we are grappling with.

When questions and doubts arise, it is easy to feel vulnerable. We may feel like our whole world is crashing down. Finding that our understanding of one issue is in error can lead us to doubt everything else we thought we knew. With wounded hearts, some people come to the conclusion that they have been purposefully deceived—that they have been lied to. For some, such feelings of betrayal are harder to deal with than the historical or doctrinal issue that began the crisis. My heart hurts for those who feel this way. The feeling is real, even if the purposeful deception is not.

Others faced with such a crisis may begin to question the possibility of knowing any truth. Since their past efforts to know truth seem to have proven faulty, they question whether their current efforts are also destined to fail. It does not have to be this way. It should not be this way. I testify that there is a better way. We and our loved ones can approach these moments in a way that leaves us more—not less—confident in our ability to know and live truth. If we face our questions with courage and integrity, our knowledge can continue to expand and our faith can continue to be strengthened.

President Howard W. Hunter made a promise that I would like to echo today:

*These doubts can be resolved, if [those who doubt] have an honest desire to know the truth, by exercising moral, spiritual, and mental effort. They will emerge from the conflict into a firmer, stronger, larger faith because of the struggle. They have gone from a simple, trusting faith, through doubt and conflict, into a solid substantial faith which ripens into testimony.*⁴

How do we help ourselves or our loved ones in our combined quest for truth? There are three crucial steps: (1) Become a seeker—do not fear questions; (2) love and respect all, regardless of whether we agree with the conclusions they reach; and (3) learn and share the vital principles and practices for knowing truth.

Become a Seeker—Do Not Fear Questions

Far too many of us fear questions. We have nothing to fear. President Uchtdorf explained, “My dear young friends, we are a question-asking people because we know that inquiry leads to truth.”⁵ The scriptures make it clear that we are commanded to seek.⁶ They are replete with examples of those who went from darkness to light through seeking: Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Paul, Alma, Joseph Smith. Even Jesus Christ grew “from grace to grace”⁷ through seeking for and adhering to truth.

As we ask questions, we must avoid a fate similar to that of a character in C. S. Lewis’s classic book *The Great Divorce*. This character became so driven by questions and questioning that he ceased to believe in the possibility of answers. This character was counseled:

*Once you were a child. Once you knew what inquiry was for. There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them. Become that child again: even now.*⁸

That is great advice. The scriptures command us to seek and warn us not to be “ever learning, [but] never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”⁹ This way of being is as bad as its evil twin: “Never learning but always believing we know the truth.”¹⁰

We must become seekers. We must encourage learning. We must “hunger and thirst after righteousness,”¹¹ which just happens to be another name for truth and for Jesus Christ Himself.¹²

I must make one important clarification: many people use the words *questioning* and *doubting* synonymously. I believe this leads to serious epistemological confusion. *Epistemology* refers to how we know what we know. I will use this word several times today. Conflating doubt with asking questions leads people to value doubt as if it were itself a virtue. You hear sayings such as “If a person has never doubted, they have never thought.” But doubting and questioning are not the same thing.

Doubt is part of the belief spectrum, which goes from disbelief to doubt to hope to belief. Where do questions fit on this spectrum? Can you see that questions can occur at any point on the spectrum? So what is the role of doubt? Is it evil? Is it good?

Doubt in many ways is neither moral nor immoral but rather amoral. If the object of our doubt is false, such as believing in prophetic infallibility—that any human error disqualifies a person from being a prophet—then doubting that falsehood leads to good outcomes. However, if the object of our doubt is true, such as God commanding us to give heed to the words of His servants the prophets even with their imperfections, then doubting that truth leads to bad outcomes. One thing is for sure: doubt has consequences.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen quoted the famous American philosopher William James, who explained:

*Belief and doubt are living attitudes, and involve conduct on our part. . . . If I doubt that you are worthy of my confidence, I keep you uninformed of all my secrets just as if you were unworthy of the same. If I doubt the need of insuring my house, I leave it uninsured as much as if I believed there were no need. . . . There are . . . inevitable occasions in life . . . when not to be for is to be practically against.*¹³

So should we never doubt? Of course not—there are too many false ideas to safely navigate through life without doubt. But doubt must never be seen as a final destination or as proof of our intellectual honesty.

Elder John A. Widtsoe explained:

Doubt, therefore, can be and should be only a temporary condition. . . .

In other words, doubt . . . must never itself be an end. Doubt as an objective of life is an intellectual and a spiritual offense. . . .

*. . . Doubt, unless transmuted into inquiry, has no value or worth in the world. Of itself it has never lifted a brick, driven a nail, or turned a furrow.*¹⁴

It may be for this reason that the scriptures never, not even once, speak of doubt as a positive.¹⁵

The Lord counsels against doubt, not to create guilt but to give guidance. Think about the following scriptural admonitions, which, when paired together, teach similar lessons: “doubt not” and “be believing”; “fear not” and “be of good courage”; “be not dismayed,” “be steadfast and weep not,” and “be of good cheer.” God is not trying to create guilt with His command to fear not. Similarly, He commands the positive in each couplet not to make us feel guilty but to help us escape the negative consequences that come from doubting truth. We should never feel guilty or make others feel guilty for having doubts. Please do not do that. But as the Savior encourages, we should seek to answer our questions and act on those answers, not wallow in our unsurety.

Love and Respect All

Though we should not villainize those who have questions or concerns, we should not lionize doubt either.

Elder M. Russell Ballard clearly taught:

*When someone comes to you with a question or a concern, please do not brush the question off—do not tell him or her to not worry about the question. Please do not doubt the person’s dedication to the Lord or His work. Instead, help the person find the answers to their questions.*¹⁶

There is no place for condescension or judgment on our part. If we would be of help, if we would have the right to share in another person’s journey, we must respect and love them. We must see their goodness and value their insights and integrity, even as we may not always agree with their conclusions. It is okay. They may also not always agree with our conclusions, yet we hope they will love, value, and respect us as well.

Learn and Live Truth

Heavenly Father has given us every tool needed to discover and live by truth—both temporal and eternal. I would like to spend the remainder of our time discussing three ways of knowing truth. At the risk of sounding cliché, I am going to liken these methods to the legs of a stool.

A one-legged stool can serve a purpose but will be much less stable than a stool with more legs. A two-legged stool would be more stable but still be fairly easy to topple. But a three-legged stool provides solid stability.

There are three methods I want to speak on today: (1) using our best thinking (logic or reason); (2) learning from our lived experience (sometimes called utilitarianism or pragmatism); and (3) seeking revelation, which, I will work hard to explain, is a relational concept. This point is crucial. It is the main point I want to get across.

The ordering of these methods is not random. I will try to show how each method builds on the other and leads to capital-T truth itself.

1. *Our Best Thinking (Logic or Reason)*

Blind faith has no productive role in the acquisition of truth. The Lord requires us to use not only our hearts but our minds in seeking truth. Both faith and knowledge are dependent on “evidence of things not seen,” to quote Paul.¹⁷ Peter counseled us to “be ready always to give an answer [for] a reason of the hope that is in you.”¹⁸ Alma admonished us to “experiment upon [the] words”¹⁹—a clear allusion to seeking evidence. The Lord promised that He would witness to both our mind and our heart.²⁰ Clearly God requires us to think, reason, and weigh evidence.

Joseph Smith taught:

*The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity.*²¹

Such mind-stretching effort, far from being discouraged, is required if we would know the things of God.

But our best reasoning will not be enough. Because of this, many who begin to doubt stall in their search for truth. We cannot simply reason our way to ultimate truth. If we refuse to exercise the faith sufficient to add the other two necessary ingredients for knowing truth—that is, sincerely acting on what we want to know the truth of and seeking revelation from the source of all truth—we will likely be stuck “ever learning, [but] never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Fearing that we are deceiving ourselves or are being deceived, we may cease to exercise

the faith necessary to act so that we can receive the very evidence we seek. We become like a chef who purchases all of the ingredients for a master meal but refuses to prepare and eat the food. Such a chef will never know the possible result of their effort. They may believe that the process is flawed, when in reality they are only doing a portion of what must be done to reap the rewards they seek.

You see, logical argument and sound reasoning, as important as they are, were never intended to be sufficient for knowing truth,²² but they do provide the ground upon which such knowledge can grow.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell regularly quoted a statement made by Austin Farrer regarding C. S. Lewis:

*Though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish.*²³

Sound reasoning not only leads to faith but can also help us avoid many of the sincerely believed but unsound arguments that cause people to doubt their faith. We must learn to reason more soundly to know truth. Whether that reasoning takes the form of authoritarianism, rationalism, empiricism, or any other cognitive epistemology, that support can provide the scaffolding on which to build a living, breathing faith and come to a correct understanding of truth.

Besides the obvious spiritual challenges, there are numerous cognitive challenges that keep our best thinking from being sufficient alone. For example, authoritarianism is only as dependable as the expert we are relying on. Rationalism simply tells us that what we are learning agrees with the premises we already believe in. Add to this the other challenges of confirmation bias, and rationalism

cannot be the sole means of determining truth. Empiricism, as with its cousins statistical empiricism and scientific empiricism, is only as reliable as our methods and interpretations are. None of this negates the necessity and profitability of using our best thinking. It simply helps us see that there are limits to what we can claim based solely on reason and logic.

Perhaps an example would help to clarify. Understanding our history provides crucial context with which to understand God’s work among His children. But as mentioned above, our history is far more nuanced than the summaries contained in most of our curriculum. With the subjectivity of historical recorders and reporters and the vast differences in the quality and reliability of historical sources, it requires our best thinking to interpret and comprehend that history.

Elder Bruce C. Hafen once explained that most historical “evidence” would never be allowed in a modern court of law because it is nearly impossible to verify its accuracy.²⁴ If we wouldn’t want to be judged on the basis of such weak and biased evidence, why do we feel it is sufficient to definitively judge others with such evidence?

But even supposing we had a completely accurate and bias-free history (which, of course, we do not), we would still be fairly limited in the conclusions we could draw regarding much of what is most important. History may be able to show the possibility and, in some cases, the plausibility of an event, but rarely its inevitability or actuality.

For example, what can we really know of Jesus Christ from a purely historical point of view? Some even question whether there was a Jesus Christ, based solely on the historical record, let alone the reality of His miraculous birth, the details of His ministry, the truth of His teachings, the miracles He performed, or, most important of all, His Atonement and triumphant Resurrection.

The same can be said regarding a historical study of His servants. History can give us valuable context, but history alone cannot confirm the Savior’s appearance to Paul or to Joseph Smith. History has value, especially if we learn some basic yet essential principles of historical analysis.²⁵ We simply have to be careful not to ask of it more than it can deliver.

2. Lived Experience (Utilitarianism or Pragmatism)

I believe a careful reading of Alma 32 helps us understand that the experiment Alma recommended involves more than simply thinking about what we are trying to prove true. Heavenly Father is not interested in turning His children into bright, philosophically sophisticated adults who value thinking above being. We were not sent here to simply gain a cognitive knowledge of truth but rather to live by truth to become as He, meaning God, is.

For this reason, the second means of discovering truth—lived experience, which philosophically may be referred to as utilitarianism or pragmatism—seems perfectly designed to augment and deepen what we can learn through our best thinking.

The Savior instructed us to discover and ultimately live truth based on our own lived experience. He stated:

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.²⁶

I marvel at how perfect this arrangement is. The only way we can deepen our knowledge of truth beyond mere philosophy is to be willing to live it. Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother’s ultimate goal is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”²⁷ They want us to become as They are. By Their requiring us to believe, to choose, and to act, we are

required to move beyond mere supposition to the work of becoming.

But more than disinterested action is required. God is not interested in empty gestures. Mere curiosity or even scientific inquiry won't work. God requires a deep sincerity and real intent. President Russell M. Nelson explained that "'real intent' means that one *really intends* to follow the divine direction given."²⁸ This is exactly what the Lord desires—not just our actions but our heart.²⁹ As the scriptures explain, we are required to "follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent."³⁰

Just as with logic and reason, acting alone has limitations and is insufficient for knowing ultimate truth. There are challenges that must be understood. For example, the law of justice demands that there be a fitting consequence to every thought, word, or deed.³¹ However, one reason we left God's presence for a time was to learn to act because we wanted to, not because we were compelled to act based on immediate and overwhelming consequences. The law of justice is real but not immediate. People who do evil do not necessarily reap the reward of that evil immediately any more than people who do good reap the reward of that good immediately. But the results will always come.

Because of this reality, it is not enough to simply "check our pulse" immediately after we act. We must examine more deeply the consequences of actions. An immoral life may feel wonderful in the short run, but as even social science clearly attests, it is a very poor philosophy of life in the long run. True principles should bear good fruit in the long run. There is a reason why studies of active, believing Latter-day Saints find that Mormons are almost always near the top when compared with other groups, whether the studies be about finances, health, education, happiness, prosocial behavior, or family life. Though Latter-day Saints are

far from perfect, and we must become better, the research is overwhelmingly affirmative. To quote President Uchtdorf, the gospel "works wonderfully."³²

There is another caveat to consider: neither we nor our actions are totally evil or totally good. There is usually some good mixed with some bad—both of which will bear fruit in our lives. We sometimes see a person doing something we know to be wrong and yet see that they aren't miserable and hence conclude that what they are doing must not really be wrong. It behooves us to learn to better understand cause and effect.

Let me use the example of immorality again. Two people who have allowed immoral behavior to become part of their relationship may also treat each other kindly and do many other good things. Though the immoral behavior will have consequences, this does not mean that everything about their relationship is based on unrighteousness. Therefore it would be simplistic and wrong to believe that their relationship can only produce misery. We will all reap the fruits of both the good and the bad we do. Understanding this reality helps us more intelligently learn truth through lived experience.

3. Revelation: The Relational Epistemology

As helpful as our best thinking and our lived experience are for knowing truth, neither of them are sufficient in and of themselves. God is not limited to our mortal sphere and therefore stands outside of man's ability to measure and investigate by using nothing but secular means.

In the Book of Mormon, Jacob taught:

*Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God.*³³

Elder Bruce R. McConkie once stated: “True religion is revealed religion; it is not a creation of man’s devising; it comes from God. . . . God stands revealed or he remains forever unknown.”³⁴ Any attempt to know the truth of God and His gospel while denying or denigrating the need and utility of revelation is doomed to fail.

A popular refrain in the blogosphere is that revelation cannot be trusted. It is pointed out that people of many faiths claim revelatory experiences and come to disparate conclusions. The question is asked, “How can you trust a process that leads to such disagreement?” There are a dozen reasons why convergence, meaning mutual agreement, will never be a valid means of judging the epistemological value of revelation, but suffice it to say that outside of concrete, naturalistic scientific experiments, convergence is limited—not absent, but limited—for all methods of knowing truth.

You generally do not hear educated people denigrating the value of using our best thinking—be that historical, logical, or scientific—simply because people reach different conclusions. This same reality exists for lived experience. People often draw different conclusions as a result of their actions. And yet, when it comes to revelation, the popular argument persists that because people come to different conclusions, revelation cannot be trusted. This argument is sophistry—pure and simple.

It is definitely true that our interpretations of revelation can vary or be flawed. Just as with our best thinking and our lived experience, our interpretation of revelation is not sufficient to carry the load alone—not because of any inadequacies in God’s revelations but rather because of our less-than-perfect power to interpret them. However, as we learn the principles that govern the receipt of revelation and combine revelation with our best thinking and our lived experience, we can have great confidence in our ability to come to a knowledge of truth.

Again, I marvel at how perfect an arrangement this epistemological triad is. We were not intended to merely become philosophic sophisticates, nor were we intended to simply become good people by living truth. We are here on earth to learn what we need to learn so that we can become what we are intended to become and return to the presence of our loving Heavenly Father and Mother for eternity. We are meant to more fully develop those sacred relationships.

Our theology clearly teaches us that we cannot be saved through our own unaided efforts.³⁵ We totally and completely depend on God’s grace, specifically the redeeming love of our Savior Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder that we are also dependent on God for our deepest understanding of truth?

For this reason I titled this section of my talk “Revelation: The Relational Epistemology.” It is also the reason for part of the title of my complete address: “The Way, the Truth, and the Life.”³⁶ Jesus Christ is not simply the truth we are trying to ascertain; He is also the deepest, most poignant, and most sure means of knowing that truth. He will reveal Himself and all truth to us.³⁷ True spirituality is simply another way of describing a close relationship with God.

So, unsurprisingly, many of the same principles that lead to strong relationships apply to learning truth. Both require a choice. They are both acts of agency. No one can make the choice for you—not even God. Does a person choose to love their sweetheart or do they not? If not, they will never know the depth and exultant ecstasy that could be the result of that relationship. Similarly, God requires us to choose Him, to choose to believe, and to choose to come to Him. He won’t force us or overwhelm us with incontrovertible evidence. We choose whether to respond to His invitation or not. He has already chosen; it is now up to us.

Similarly, you will never build a meaningful relationship on earth without a deep

commitment, without sacrifice, without great effort, or without great love. Likewise, if we would know the truth of God, it will require that same type of commitment, that same sacrifice, that same heart-stretching effort, and that same love. Those who refuse to give these things will never understand the deep and powerful love of a companion in this life. Likewise, those who refuse to give these same things in their search for God will fail to know the truth of His love for them. We cannot passively—or even passionately—study and expect that our best thinking will find God. We cannot simply go through the motions of being a Mormon and expect that the power, joy, and might of the Holy Spirit will bring us near to God. If we would come unto God, we must ultimately bring all that we have—all that we are—and lay it on the altar. The good news is that all God requires of us to start is to turn our softened hearts to Him, and He will draw near unto us.³⁸

A Firm Conviction

I have shared three ways of knowing truth. I then showed how each is insufficient in and of itself. However, by combining all three methods, we stand on solid ground in our search for truth. For this reason God has instructed us to use every method He has put at our disposal to know truth. Every branch of science has a version of this same process—called triangulation—to come to more firm conclusions. By using our best thinking, by choosing to act with real intent, and by seeking direct revelation from God, we can come to a humble yet firm conviction of the truth of all things. Our “confidence [can] wax strong”³⁹ and our foundation of faith can be steadfast.

Do not buy the argument that you cannot know truth. Do not fear to ask questions and to be a seeker. Do not fear that God or His gospel cannot stand up to scrutiny.

I testify that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ. I testify that Joseph Smith was God’s prophet. I testify that the Book of Mormon is

the word of God. I testify that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is led today by Jesus Christ Himself and that He directs His living prophets. And I testify that if we will courageously use all means of knowing truth, we and our loved ones can know these things for ourselves. I leave that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. John 8:32.
2. Bruce A. Chadwick, Brent L. Top, Richard J. McClendon, Lauren Smith, and Mindy Judd, “A Survey of Dating and Marriage at BYU,” *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 85.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “What Is Truth?” CES devotional address, 13 January 2013.
4. Howard W. Hunter, “Secretly a Disciple?” *Improvement Era*, December 1960, 948; quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 276.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Reflection in the Water,” CES fireside address, 1 November 2009.
6. For example, see 3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 4:7; D&C 88:63; and D&C 88:118.
7. D&C 93:13.
8. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 41.
9. 2 Timothy 3:7.
10. Quoted from a dear friend, Bob Tomco.
11. Matthew 5:6.
12. See 1 John 2:1.
13. William James, *Essays on Faith and Morals* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1947), 24; quoted in Bruce C. Hafen, *The Believing Heart: Nourishing the Seed of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1990), 77; emphasis in original.
14. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations: Volumes 1-2-3*, arr. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 31–32.
15. See, for example, Matthew 14:29–31; Mark 5:36; Luke 12:29; Romans 14:1; Mormon 9:25, 27; D&C 6:36; D&C 58:29; and D&C 90:24.

16. M. Russell Ballard, “To the Saints in the Utah South Area,” Utah South Area conference, 13 September 2015.

17. Hebrews 11:1; emphasis added.

18. 1 Peter 3:15; emphasis added.

19. Alma 32:27.

20. See D&C 8:2.

21. HC 3:295; quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 267.

22. See Moroni 7.

23. Austin Farrer, “The Christian Apologist,” in *Light on C. S. Lewis*, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965), 26; quoted in Neal A. Maxwell, “Discipleship and Scholarship,” talk given at the annual banquet of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies at BYU, 27 September 1991; published in *BYU Studies* 32, no. 3 (summer 1992): 5; also in *Educating Zion*, eds. John W. Welch and Don E. Norton (Provo: BYU Studies, 1996), 198.

24. See Hafen, *Believing Heart*, 27.

25. For example, assumptions matter. Any history that assumes only natural causes eliminates the possibility of God being part of the process, and any history that assumes only supernatural causes eliminates the possibility of man being part of the process. We obviously believe that both God and man were part of the process. Avoiding the mistakes of presentism

and interpreting events out of their context is also crucial.

We must realize that there is no such thing as objective history. This is true of all history but especially where history intersects with strong beliefs, be they religious, political, or social. Every event is colored by the perceptions of those recording and reporting it. The same exact event or issue may look dramatically different depending on the perceptions and beliefs of those recorders and reporters. This is true even when we have access to most information—such as current events—but even more so when we have access to much less information, as is usually the case with history.

26. John 7:16–17.

27. Moses 1:39.

28. Russell M. Nelson, “Ask, Seek, Knock,” *Ensign*, November 2009; emphasis in original.

29. See D&C 64:34.

30. 2 Nephi 31:13.

31. See Alma 42:22–25.

32. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “It Works Wonderfully!” *Ensign*, November 2015.

33. Jacob 4:8.

34. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Lord’s People Receive Revelation,” *Ensign*, June 1971.

35. See 2 Nephi 2:6–9.

36. John 14:6.

37. See John 14:26.

38. See D&C 88:63.

39. D&C 121:45.