

# *How Do You Open Your Heart to Heaven?*

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**I**t is a great honor for me to stand before you, my brothers and sisters. As I contemplated what subject I should discuss, rather than academic things, I chose as my theme today “How Do You Open Your Heart to Heaven?”

## **“The Natural Man Is an Enemy to God”**

When I have traveled around the world, I have observed an increase in the number of people experiencing anxieties, fears, doubts, impatience, indifference, and confusion, even hatred—especially those with very dark feelings, self-pity, and pure anger. Many live with unsteadiness, depression, frustrations, and pessimism. Generally in the world we see situations of jealousy, slothfulness, disloyalty, rudeness, and even revenge toward each other. It has become common to see people who are boldly dishonest regarding their wrong actions.

My dear friends, when you step away from gospel principles, you will be greatly tempted to do many evil things of the world, and then you will develop great spiritual sickness.

When we have too much pride, become too critical, complain, speak with sarcasm, or are self-indulgent and impatient, then we become trapped in the pit of the adversary. These negative qualities develop when we are too “proud” and live a self-centered life. Truly, “the natural man is an enemy to God.”<sup>1</sup>

## **How to Avoid Contaminated, Contagious Spiritual Sickness**

How can we avoid these things? I ask you: How can we be more cheerful and enthusiastic? How can we be more polite, kind, and sincere and show genuine concern for other people and be patient, especially with family and friends? How can we increase our temperance and be more humble and submissive to the Lord? How can we have increased godly love and be more positive and bring more energy into our lives? How can we increase our self-mastery, self-discipline, and self-control? How can we better govern ourselves and be more honest and true to the teachings of Heavenly Father? How can we exercise our God-given moral agency in inspiring ways?

## **“I Am the True Vine”**

There are ways to avoid spiritual sickness. Our Savior is the greatest source and the solution for any challenge we face. We can improve our sacred relationship with Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ daily.

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Jesus said: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.”<sup>2</sup>

Our Heavenly Father is the Farmer. The Savior is the Vine. We are the grapes. Every day we must cultivate spiritual nourishment from the Vine. The Lord said: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”<sup>3</sup>

He then said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”<sup>4</sup>

The Lord personally testified, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”<sup>5</sup> and “I am the light which shineth in darkness.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Ways We Can Develop Our Own Celestial Peace of Mind**

How do you obtain more humility and celestial nourishment from the Lord? The Savior gives you the key and His powerful promise:

*Verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—*

*Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you.*<sup>7</sup>

Let me suggest three basic, simple principles you can follow daily to cultivate, increase, and deepen your spirituality:

1. Hold a personal morning devotional
2. Immerse yourself in the scriptures
3. Purify your life through the Savior’s sanctifying and atoning power

Let me explain these principles to you.

#### **1. Hold a Personal Morning Devotional**

How would you like to have your personal morning devotional in your “Sacred Grove”?

I am not talking about the sacred experiences Joseph Smith had in the Sacred Grove.

Our prophet, President Monson, shared his insight:

*The boy prophet Joseph Smith sought heavenly help by entering a grove which then became sacred. Do we need similar strength? Does each need to seek his or her own “Sacred Grove”? A place where communication between God and man can go forth unimpeded, uninterrupted, and undisturbed is such a grove.*<sup>8</sup>

One day Elder Marion D. Hanks, now an emeritus General Authority, shared with me an experience he had as a young General Authority. He asked President David O. McKay, “How would you suggest I maintain my spirituality?”

President McKay said he did five simple things every day:

*I arise early.*

*I wash my body.*

*I put on my new linen.*

*I subdue my spirit before the Father.*

*I wait for the inspiration of the Father.*

Brothers and sisters, I would like to invite you to wake up a little early—not super early, because it won’t last, but reasonably early; maybe 20 or 25 minutes earlier than you do now. Wash your body; shave; put on washed, fresh underwear; comb your hair; and put on your clothes.

Then find a very peaceful, secluded place that can be your own Sacred Grove and go there. Now, I am not suggesting you go to your backyard among the trees and kneel in the snow.

Humbly, reverently, kneel before the Father. Call upon His holy name through His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Express your love for Him. Express gratitude from your heart to Heavenly Father. I will not dictate how long you should stay there. You decide.

In your morning devotional you can have your divine and holy fellowship with Heavenly Father in your own Sacred Grove every day. This helps you to cultivate your special relationship with Heavenly Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. What a glorious privilege that is for you and me.

If you will do this, my brothers and sisters, I promise you humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your life will be changed. You will feel close to your Heavenly Father—closer than ever before.

Some mornings you will feel overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. You will just want to cry. These overwhelming, strong feelings tell you that Heavenly Father loves you so much. You will personally feel the love of God as you have never felt it before. You will feel and know: “I am a child of God! My Father loves me! He sent His Beloved Son to us! My Savior loves me so much.”

When you hold a personal morning devotional every day, I promise you again that your life will be changed. Joseph Smith also promised us: “If you will obey the Gospel with honest hearts, I promise you in the name of the Lord, that the gifts as promised by our Saviour will follow you.”<sup>9</sup>

Again, as President Monson taught: “Does each need to seek his or her own ‘Sacred Grove’? A place . . . unimpeded, uninterrupted, and undisturbed.”<sup>10</sup> Please call on Heavenly Father and talk to Him reverently. He wants you to remember Him and to call upon Him.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Immerse Yourself in the Scriptures

When you immerse yourself in the scriptures, you come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>12</sup>

Another time He said:

*I am the bread which came down from heaven. . . .  
I am that bread of life. . . .*

*. . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.*<sup>13</sup>

After returning from your personal Sacred Grove, can you spend seven to eight minutes every morning reading the words of life?

Nephi taught:

*I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.*<sup>14</sup>

In order to be acquainted with the voice of the Lord, read the Book of Mormon and other scriptures daily.<sup>15</sup> By reading the Book of Mormon “you may know the righteous from the wicked.”<sup>16</sup> You can escape darkness.<sup>17</sup> The Book of Mormon prophets powerfully testify that Jesus is your Savior. By reading the Book of Mormon you will come to know that Jesus is your personal Savior. I suggest you read from the Book of Mormon seven to eight minutes every single morning before you leave for class.

I promise you in the name of Jesus Christ, when you read “the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon,”<sup>18</sup> daily, you will come to know He is your personal Savior.<sup>19</sup> You will not treat “lightly the things you [and I] have received.”<sup>20</sup>

Jesus came to this world<sup>21</sup> and died on Calvary.<sup>22</sup> Three days later He was resurrected<sup>23</sup> and appeared to a multitude of people. Even on the American continent He appeared to thousands of people.<sup>24</sup> Father in Heaven introduced Him. And the Savior testified Himself, “I am Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

I know in early spring of 1820, the resurrected Jesus Christ accompanied His Holy Father and appeared to Joseph Smith.<sup>26</sup> I know that Joseph saw Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

### 3. Purify Your Life Through the Savior's Sanctifying and Atoning Power

The third thing you ought to consider to become closer to Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is to sanctify and purify yourself and become clean before the Father and the Son.

Jesus said:

*But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin.*

*And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done.<sup>27</sup>*

The word *atonement* is not from Latin or Greek. Its origin is English: “‘At one’ with a very special someone.” It implies becoming bonded, cemented, and “at one” with a special Person—even Jesus Christ.

As long as you are worthy, pure, and clean, your conscience will be free from guilt from sin in the presence of the Father. Then the Savior's atoning power will affect each one of us.

However, when we are not worthy because of sin, we are uncomfortable and do not feel inner peace, and His glorious Atonement will have no effect on us.

The Lord allows us the principle of repentance.

Now I want to demonstrate something: President Samuelson, would you come and help me? (President Samuelson came up to the podium.)

Brothers and sisters, this is your president. But imagine that your personal Savior is standing in President Samuelson's place. You can feel His glorious, celestial glow. His infinite, atoning, and eternal love permeates from Him to your bosom. You feel His love and kindness. You feel His majestic, everlasting mercy and grace. You can feel it. You cry because of the incredible celestial love He has for you.

May we be worthy before the Lord. It is thus that we are able to have this perfect and sacred

relationship: being one with the Savior. Let me shake hands with President Samuelson. This is a perfect relationship—with oneness. If I am not worthy, I will feel I ought to depart.

Oh, my brothers and sisters, may we stay in true oneness—at one—with the Lord Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank you, President Samuelson.

The Lord promised you and me, “I am able to make you holy, and your sins are forgiven you.”<sup>28</sup> The Lord said, “He who has repented of his [or her] sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.”<sup>29</sup>

Let me repeat that: “I, the Lord, remember them no more.” When you are pure and clean before the Lord, I promise you that the Lord inspires you and envelops you. Again I testify to you that He blesses you with His powerful atoning power so that you and I can be perfectly one with Him. His atoning power will have an effect upon each one of us.

### He Will Send Us the Comforter

The Lord promised that He would send us the Comforter.<sup>30</sup> As we cleanse and purify ourselves through His great, atoning power, this great Comforter blesses and heals us. When you become clean and pure, then the Holy Ghost is working on you.

Elder Parley P. Pratt once gave this description:

*[The Holy Ghost] quickens all the intellectual 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 and social feeling. It develops and invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, invigorates, 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.*<sup>31</sup>

How important it is for you as you study in this great institution to have the Holy Ghost with you.

### **We Have Great and Powerful Resources as Members of the Church**

As members of the Church, may you use the great and powerful resources continually available to you.

First, you can receive great help from our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. You can offer prayers to Them. Then the greatest Comforter helps you.

Second, you can immerse yourselves in prayers and in the scriptures daily and drink from the fountain of living waters, or the tree of life.<sup>32</sup>

Third, you have your living oracle, even President Thomas S. Monson, the living prophet of God. You can listen to his voice and read and ponder his messages from the Lord. You can be taught by all of the apostles and prophets.

Fourth, you can come to His holy house, the temple of the Lord, to learn more about “the great plan of happiness.”<sup>33</sup> More important, in the temple you can partake of His joyous, glorious, and celestial spirit.

May we all have a daily devotional in our personal Sacred Grove each morning through prayer. May we all immerse ourselves in the scriptures constantly. And, finally, may we all purify and sanctify our lives so that we can receive nourishment from the true Vine, even the Lord Savior, Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, as one of the Seventies of the Church, I know that your Father in Heaven lives. He loves us. I know your Savior—my Savior, even Jesus Christ—lives. I know He lives. I know that the prophet—even President Monson—is a living oracle today. This is the Savior’s Church. How

blessed you are to study in His Church institution. May God bless you, I pray. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **Notes**

1. Mosiah 3:19.
2. John 15:1–2.
3. John 15:5.
4. John 15:7.
5. John 14:6.
6. D&C 6:21.
7. D&C 88:62–63.
8. Thomas S. Monson, *CR*, October 2004, 70; or “Choose You This Day,” *Ensign*, November 2004, 68.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 118; quoted by Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevenson, 1893), 4.
10. Monson, *CR*, October 2004, 70; or “Choose You This Day,” 68.
11. See Ether 2:14.
12. John 17:3.
13. John 6:41, 48, 51.
14. 1 Nephi 11:25; emphasis added.
15. See 3 Nephi 26:6–12; 27:22–26; D&C 20:8–17; 84:52.
16. D&C 84:53.
17. See D&C 84:54.
18. D&C 84:57; see also D&C 84:43–58.
19. See 3 Nephi 1:12–14; 9:15–21; 10:2–7; 11:3–7, 10–11, 14.
20. D&C 84:54.
21. See Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–53.
22. See Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23:26–53; John 19:16–42.
23. See Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20.
24. See 3 Nephi 11–28.
25. 3 Nephi 11:10.
26. See Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
27. D&C 50:28–29.

28. D&C 60:7.
29. D&C 58:42.
30. See John 15:26; 16:7.
31. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards; London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855), 98–99; spelling modernized.
32. See 1 Nephi 11:25.
33. Alma 42:8.