

## *The Still, Small Voice*

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Welcome to Brigham Young University for the 2007 school year. Hopefully you had a wonderful Christmas holiday as you remembered and honored the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. I so enjoy this time of year because it also includes gatherings with those you love—family and friends. These times and others create memories to be remembered and recalled throughout one’s lifetime.

One such memory of mine includes an extended family portrait taken several years ago. Whenever someone who has not seen it before views this portrait, a puzzled look appears on the person’s face and this question is usually asked: “Why is there a little boy in the picture holding a blue bucket?”

To the viewer, this appears to be rather odd in a formal portrait setting, and the individual’s curiosity is piqued. This cute little boy in the picture is my nephew, Jeremy. Jeremy is autistic. His parents brought the bucket to the photographer’s studio filled with some of his favorite toys. Having a picture taken with so many people is a tedious process, and much confusion can arise. Since Jeremy didn’t like to be in crowds or in an unstructured environment, his parents wanted him to have something to entertain him until the time came to take the picture. His security and comfort on

this occasion was found in clutching firmly his blue bucket, and he would not let it be taken away from him when the time arrived to pose for the picture—even by his lovingly pleading parents. Thus Jeremy has his bucket in the picture, and our family members smile with love for Jeremy when we view the photograph.

During the Savior’s ministry, He was asked by His disciples this question: “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”<sup>1</sup> In response He

*called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,*

*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

*And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.<sup>2</sup>*

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*Sharon G. Samuelson, wife of BYU president Cecil O. Samuelson, delivered this devotional on 9 January 2007.*

The scriptures also teach us that “a little child shall lead them.”<sup>3</sup> Jeremy has taught his family many spiritual lessons, and often the family has felt that he at times was more spiritually in tune than they. May I tell you of one of these times that occurred to me when I was taught by this young boy?

At nine and one-half years of age, Jeremy expressed a desire to be baptized, and so it was arranged to have him baptized at the same time as his younger brother. Jeremy was very excited. As family and friends were waiting in a classroom for their turn to proceed to the font for the baptism to be performed, Jeremy went about greeting everyone with excitement as he repeated to each of us the words “I am going to have the Holy Ghost in me. I am going to be baptized and have the Holy Ghost.” My heart was touched as this little boy—who often didn’t relate to others in such a way—felt that something very important was to occur in his life that day. He was going to be baptized and then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and he was pleased. One may wonder how much Jeremy really understood about baptism, the Holy Ghost, Jesus, and Heavenly Father. However, his parents have had experiences and conversations with Jeremy that testify that he has had spiritual lessons through the Holy Ghost in the ensuing years.

Those of you here today who have been baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been given by the laying on of hands by one in authority one of the greatest gifts you can enjoy on earth, the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, if you but heed the promptings of that Spirit and keep yourselves worthy of its presence. Are you as excited about it as was a little nine-and-one-half-year-old boy? How often do you express gratitude to your Heavenly Father for the great privilege it is for you to have the companionship of one of the members of the Godhead? Do you

seek to use this blessing in your lives each and every day?

During the weeks and months ahead in this new school year, you will have many opportunities to make choices and decisions based on your beliefs, values, and desires that will define your integrity, worth, decency, honor, and spirituality. You are blessed with the scriptures; a prophet of the Lord, President Gordon B. Hinckley; Apostles; and righteous models in your families and associates who can provide teachings and examples of true conduct in your lives. Many wonderful blessings await you when you are faithful and serve others and the Lord.

However, sometimes you will run into stumbling blocks in your path. There may be difficult decisions to make, temptations that may seem overwhelming, crises in your faith and feelings of personal worth, or times of sorrow where you find it difficult to find solace. Sometimes you may feel confused and alone in your struggles. At times such as these there is the need for inspiration, understanding, and guidance to assist you as you forge onward in your pursuits.

As our Savior approached the conclusion of His ministry on earth, He spoke to His disciples and members of the Church about leaving them. They had often been in the presence of the Savior, and He had guided, taught, and ministered unto them. They sorrowed at the prospect of Him leaving them. They also feared that they would feel alone and distraught without Him. However, He promised:

*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. . . .*

*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.<sup>4</sup>*

Just as the Saints at that time were not left alone, the Holy Ghost can abide with you

every hour of the day wherever you may be. It can be your constant companion; however, in order to enjoy the benefits of this wonderful gift, you must be worthy to receive it and thus be able to use it in your lives. The Holy Ghost can be a compass to direct you back to your Heavenly Father.

In 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. Brigham Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Brethren. The Prophet said:

*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 you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it.*<sup>5</sup>

This is also a message for you today. With this wonderful gift you may know what to do and what not to do to obtain happiness and peace. You can resist temptation, be warned of dangers, and be guided as you make important decisions and solve problems. Every aspect of your lives can be influenced by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

President Boyd K. Packer has taught:

*You can never make a serious mistake without being warned. You will never take the wrong road or go around the wrong bend or make the wrong decision without you having been warned. That pattern is the pattern of the Latter-day Saint. You were confirmed a member of the Church, and you had conferred upon you the gift of the Holy Ghost to be a guide and a companion to you, to be a comfort to you. The Holy Ghost is a comforter.*<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Ghost can communicate with you if you but seek this communication and are worthy to receive it. Revelation from the Holy Ghost is often described as a “still small voice”<sup>7</sup>

and most often comes as words you feel more than hear. How many times have you said, “I had a feeling . . .” If you are in tune with the Spirit, this can be a communication from the Holy Ghost.

You have been taught by our Church leaders and the scriptures that the Holy Ghost will not dwell with a person who does not obey and keep the commandments of our Heavenly Father. As you take the sacrament each Sunday, you promise to obey the Lord’s commandments. In the sacrament prayer you are told by the Lord that you can “always have his Spirit to be with [you]”<sup>8</sup> if you keep this promise. Your hearts and minds will be ready to receive the still, small voice and the whisperings of the Spirit if you are worthy.

I have always been confounded by the actions of Laman and Lemuel as described in the Book of Mormon. They rebelled against the Lord and their brother Nephi even though they had been spoken to by an angel and heard his voice from time to time. They even attempted to take Nephi’s life. Nephi said to them:

*Ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words.*<sup>9</sup>

If you are not keeping the Lord’s commandments, you will not be able to feel or hear the still, small voice.

The desire of your hearts, I know, is that you are constantly in tune with the Holy Ghost and have this compass to guide and bless you in every aspect of your lives. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, loves you dearly and wants you to be comforted and guided as you strive to gain strong testimonies of Him and to one day return to His presence. He will give you abundant blessings, and it is through the power of the Holy Ghost that you can receive them if you but strive to serve Him and all your brothers and sisters. It is my prayer that all of us keep our hearts open to receive the

promptings of the Spirit and use this sacred gift in our lives, and I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

**Notes**

1. Matthew 18:1.
2. Matthew 18:2–5.
3. Isaiah 11:6.
4. John 14:16, 26.

5. *Manuscript History of Brigham Young: 1846–1847*, ed. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1971), 529; 23 February 1847.

6. Boyd K. Packer, “Some Things Every Missionary Should Know,” unpublished address, 26 June 2002, new mission presidents’ seminar.

7. 1 Nephi 17:45; D&C 85:6.
8. D&C 20:77.
9. 1 Nephi 17:45.