

Podcast Episode 17: Prayer, Part 1

QUESTION: To whom do we pray? How should we pray? Why do we pray? And what happens when we pray correctly?

DENVER: Christ is the Father. Think of the word “Father” as a role and not identity. If you take it as a role, and not identity, all the problems go away. If you hear the voice of God speaking to you telling you (Psalms 2:7): “*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten [you],*” the voice you will be hearing will be Christ’s. No one gets out of this world back into the family of God in eternity without Christ as their Father. We’re all descendants of Adam, which means we’re going to die. But if we become sons of God, we become sons of that God who won the victory over the grave, who becomes our Father. Which is why the *Book of Mormon* calls Him the “very Eternal Father” because Christ has to be your father in order to escape the doom that belongs to Adam.

If you track the genealogy back of every one of us, you're going to find at the head of all that is a dead man who offended the Father. But Christ worked out His salvation right down here among us. When you read in John, He’s talking about Himself. He said “I can of my own self do nothing; what I see the Father do, that do I.”

The closing verses of Matthew, after He’s resurrected, after He’s ascended back to the Father, after He’s reported to the throne, He comes back, and He says, “All power is given to me in heaven and on earth.” He no longer says, “I need to follow what the Father did.” He says, in essence, “I have completed the ascent. I am at the throne of God. I am now the one who will rescue you. I have the power to rescue you. I have conquered death on your behalf.”

Christ is the Father when you think of it as “role” instead of “personality” or “identity.” When you get into personality or identity, you wind up with a mess in your head.

MAN: You then as you just said, in our prayers, when we open up the prayer in the name of the Father, in doing that, then the concept of the role, then it is, changes the whole...

DENVER: There is no reason why that Father to whom you address should not be expected to have wounds in His hands and in His side and in His feet. If you hope to be rescued from the grave, He’s going to be the Father that gets you out of that. You address the “Father,” but He has become the Father.

The problem that we have is that we want to assign a personality; we want to assign a role. We do not want to accept a status. We want personality instead of a role that gets played. Christ is the Father. Christ was the Son. Christ-- He had to come in a subordinate position. He had to come into the world contaminated with blood. He had to have within Him the seeds of mortality in order to have the capacity to die, because without the capacity to die, He couldn't die. But His death had to be unjust so that it violated the law of Justice. Justice had to be offended by the death of the Lord so that He, going into the grave, could say, "An eternal wrong has been committed." Because someone upon whom... "The wages of sin is death and I committed no sin. I did not earn the wages of death. Therefore I have the power to lay claim upon my life and take it up again, because that is the law of Justice." And Justice had to surrender to His resurrection.

So Christ comes out of the grave and is resurrected, and He wants to pull you out of the grave. And Justice says, "No, she is a sinner." And He says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Justice has been satisfied. I was entitled to eternally live. What you took away from me when you killed me, when you took my life, was eternal. You robbed me of eternal life. Therefore, I can claim her, too because the infinite of what you stole from me satisfied you infinitely. I am giving her a pass because, Justice, you offended me infinitely." And Christ did this in order to bring us all back. But the only way we're getting out of here after we shed these and return from the grave, is through Him. And He becomes the Father.

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). He's going to do it as a free gift to everyone. The only question is, what will the quality of the afterlife then be? Because that's based upon a law that was predicted before the foundation of the world, upon which infinite blessings are conferred.

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul, and all they that hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:33-36).

These interesting words do not mean just discovering the abstract presence of "Wisdom" as a characteristic attributable to the Mother in Heaven. Instead they require us to discover Her existence and to acknowledge Her-- otherwise we've not "found" Her. When She declares, *"Whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord,"* it should be taken literally. This does not mean we now pray to Her, for we are commanded to pray to the Father. But it does mean when we use the word "Father" to describe God, we finally regard God to be both "male and female"-- the original "image of God."

When something provokes a person to inquire of the Lord, particularly when what they are inquiring about is something that really matters to them about which they would really like to get an answer, they're struggling-- an interior lighting problem with your barges, for example. That's a pretext used by the Lord in order to get you in a circumstance in which you are petitioning and open so that He can tell you something that really matters. "We'll take care of your interior lighting problem right there. Now what did you see? Okay, let's get after it. Now let's talk about redemption of you, Mahonri, from the fall, taking you back into My presence, and then let's give you a plenary tour through the endowment, so that you can know how everything fits together." But the problem that he approached Him with was interior lighting.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Let him ask of God. God gives "to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." I can ask God; God will give to me. God will give to me liberally. God will not tell me, "There are lines here you musn't cross. There are things about which you must not inquire. There are things your heart is not yet prepared to receive." He gives liberally. He can let you know what you need to know from your study and inquiry into the truth. And no man can stop that! Because this is a matter between you and God. It has always been a matter between you and God. There is no friar with a brown frock that you need to bend the knee to in order to please God.

Well, when you're laboring, as verse 11 suggests, and when you hit the right verse, as verse 11 recites, then verse 12 confirms how you get answers to these kind of inquires. *"Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force..."* (JS-H 1:12).

You know, turn back to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 76, and look at verse 18. This is the vision of the redemption of the dead that gave us the three degrees of glory. They're reading in John. And he gives you the verse in John that they were reading, in verses 16 and 17. And look at 18: *"Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit."*

The Spirit cannot lean upon you and cannot focus your mind upon the revelation that you are entitled to receive, unless you use the scriptures as they were intended to be used: as a Urim and Thummim, as the basis from which you draw out the truths of God. And the best version of that is, of course, the *Book of Mormon*.

It entered (this is back, verse 12 of the *Joseph Smith- History*), it entered into his heart "...with great force (of) every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again...." Now that's an interesting statement because it doesn't appear that this "labor" was a one-off event. But it

occurred over and over as he sought more understanding, searching deeper and deeper into trying to understand what it was he ought to do and how it is he ought to accomplish it.

“Again and again, knowing if any person needed wisdom from God, I did....” You should be asking God so that you can understand scripture. You shouldn't be trusting the expositions of anyone, myself included. These scriptures have a message for you. God has a message for you. God would like to talk to you, not through me or any other man-- God would like to talk with you. To be saved by knowledge, then the things you need to know are uniquely situated. The things you have the right to get from God are uniquely situated.

Your lives should be filled with wonder. Be not faithless, but be believing. And be of good cheer. He knows you better than you know yourself.

The Stake President asked me a few weeks ago about whether I was praying at the time that I had one of the encounters he and I discussed. And I said, “It's not a fair question. I wake up in the morning, and I start to pray. Throughout the day, I will take care of a thousand things, and whenever I am free, my mind will revert back to the prayer, and we'll continue the dialogue. And it goes on all day. There is not a moment in my life in which I am not being prayerful.” And so the answer to the question is, I suppose, yes, I was praying. Because there's hardly a moment when I'm idle, when I am not praying.

Well, God intends to speak to each of us about us, and about what matters to us, and about what matters to you. He, unlike us, is not bounded by the linear existence that we have. All things past, present, and future are continually before the Lord.

In fact, it's really sort of an interesting study. If you take and you look at what the Lord does in 3 Nephi, He has this agenda that He's been assigned by the Father. And Christ discharges the agenda. And He goes through, and as you read the chapters in 3 Nephi, it's really structured, it's really orderly. And then He announces, “Now I have finished with what the Father told me to deliver to you,” and He just begins to talk. And as He begins to talk, what unfolds is non-chronological. It's topical, but it's past, present, and future. His thoughts are not like our thoughts. They aren't. They're nonlinear. And sometimes it's not easy.

“At length,” he says in verse 13, *“I came to the conclusion I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God.”* And so it is for all of us. You want to know the truth of a proposition? You ask God. And don't be fearful. If you ask, He'll answer. But you better be prepared for the answer, because the battle that is already upon us is going to require valiance.

Well, here now we have this peculiar scene where a young lad put at ease by the Almighty, calling him by an intimate name, putting him in the position where he's been drawn into intimacy with Almighty Himself, is then given a pause. You see, They're not quick to speak. You see, They'll wait. And They waited. And so now you have the lad: "*My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood [before] me...*" (JS-H 1:18). We don't know how long this took. We don't know how long it takes a lad to get himself composed. To God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, it didn't matter. God is in no hurry. And He's in no hurry to fix you. He will wait on whatever it is you need to be allowed to dispose of to come along. And He will wait.

Joseph Smith said: "I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness" (TPJS p. 364).

Turn to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 8. This is one of those interesting little notes. Oliver wanted to translate. This was in April of 1829. He had arrived to become the scribe to Joseph shortly before this, and he tried to translate. It didn't work out so well. He told him in verse 2: "*I will tell you in your mind and your heart by the Holy Ghost*" and so on. He talks about a gift that he has, "the gift of Aaron," (verse 6). That's the rod-- he was able to use a divining rod. We're kind of embarrassed about that now, and we don't really preserve that much anymore, because we think gifts like that are kind of wacky. And yet here it is in scripture.

And some of you probably have gifts that you find a little odd. And yet, you all have gifts. And not everyone has the same gift. And if it gives you access to information from a divine source, you ought to trust it. And it doesn't matter that the way in which you do it, and the way in which someone else does it, is differently situated. No one had ever thought about a seer stone until Joseph Smith encountered it and then found it ratified in the *Book of Mormon*, in the book of Mosiah.

Well, in any event, I'm interested in verses 10 and 11 in the revelation given to Joseph in April of 1829, where it says: "*Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not.*" So okay, you've got to be careful. Don't you ask for something that you ought not be asking for! For goodness sake! Es prohibido! Okay? Followed immediately by this statement: "*Ask that you may know the mysteries of God.*" That's a commandment. And anyone that tells you, "You ought not be searching deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God," well I think we've just read about them in Luke, didn't we (Luke 11:52)? You don't enter in yourself, and you don't suffer those that are entering in to be permitted to go. Because you do not understand the power of godliness. You deny the power of godliness.

I declare to you in the words of scripture: *“Ask that you may know the mysteries of God!”* That's a commandment, given to us by revelation, enshrined in the scriptures that you folks claim to believe in. Stop denying the power of godliness. And stop falling for the sophists and lawyers who would deceive you by suggesting that you should not inquire into the mysteries of God. They are anti-Christ. They are opposed to the doctrine of salvation. They deny the power of godliness.

Everything that's going on in the Restoration comes back to James 1:5. Why don't you ask God who giveth to all men liberally? And He would like you to know a great deal more than you presently do. He doesn't upbraid. He doesn't scold you; He doesn't say the mysteries are off-limits. He says, “Come and learn of me.” He says, “I command you to ask and inquire into the mysteries of God.” He says, “Salvation itself is dependent upon knowledge.” *“And this is life eternal that you may know Christ”* (John 17: 3). How can you serve the Master you don't know?

“So on the above mentioned night of 21 September,” this is verse 29 on the next page, *“...I retired to bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies....”* So he had waited, but he waited until he got to the point in which he had some apprehension about his standing before God, because it had been a long time. But notice that it's Joseph who is driving the events that will occur now on the autumnal equinox, when he makes an inquiry involving his sins. And he's asking, he's supplicating for forgiveness of his sins, and he also wants to know of his state and standing before Him, saying at the end of verse 29: *“I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one”* (JS-H 1:29).

If Joseph Smith can go get a divine manifestation respecting his standing before God, so can you. If Joseph Smith can go out and inquire to know of God what church to join, so can you. Moroni 10:4-5, particularly 10:5, tells you that: *“By the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things.”* The truth of *all* things. There is nothing off limits. There's nothing about which you're going to be upbraided and told, “Don't ask. Don't inquire. I won't tell.” Now you may ask for something that you are unprepared to hear the answer for because there's some preparation yet left. But if you ask, you set in motion on the other side permission to fix what's wrong with you.

Have you read the 10th Parable (“The Missing Virtue,” *Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer)? If you've read the 10th Parable you know there is a time lag in which a missing virtue gets supplied as a consequence of real world experience. The answer gets set in motion as a consequence of the laws of God, upon which all blessings are predicated, which mandate as we're seeing here in this verse, that you must ask.

And by the way, the answer to the question that you ask from God will always be "yes." However, if you're not ready for the "yes," then you're going to go through a period of renovation and repair. How long you need to be renovated and repaired depends upon just how much of the toxic nonsense you've drunk in and how much of it you continue to drink in that opposes the ability of God to speak to you. So soon as you will lay down that nonsense and in faith be believing, so soon will God be able to plug the leaks, repair the hinge, fix the broken window.

He really does have a house of order, or better put a temple, that is holy "...*which temple ye are*" (1 Corinthians 3: 17). It's not built by human hands. It was built by God in the womb of your mother. And you were endowed with it when you took your first breath. That-- you're wearing it now-- is His temple. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, but it must not be defiled. Clean yourselves up.

If you want to know what your state and standing is 'cuz you're uncertain-- we're reading in the Joseph Smith testimony. Look at the next verse. "*While I was thus in the act of calling upon God...*" (JS-H 1:30). In the act of calling upon God! If you are in the right way, with the right faith, looking for the right answers, you don't even get to finish the sentence. God knows what you have need of even before you ask. It's from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ tells you that. That horrible aching, that longing, that hollowness, that emptiness within you, is what Christ was designed to fill. That's His purpose in coming to His temple.

The extent of any man's knowledge concerning the character and glory of God depends upon the diligence and the faithfulness of the individual until "... *like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God, and power with him to behold him face to face. We have now clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings; and also, upon what foundation the testimony was based which excited the inquiry and diligent search of the ancient saints to seek after and obtain a knowledge of the glory of God; and we have seen that it was human testimony, and human testimony only, that excited this inquiry, in the first instance, in their minds. It was the credence they gave to the testimony of their fathers, this testimony having aroused their minds to inquire after the knowledge of God; the inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty*" (Lectures on Faith 2:55-56). And what is "the most glorious discovery?" It is the person of God. And what is the "eternal certainty" that you want? It is your own salvation. Because no man can give that to you, but God can.

At the time of the First Vision the Lord says to Joseph: "*This is my beloved son, hear [ye] him.*" And then you have the Father and the Son, and a pause. "No sooner had I collected myself than..." Joseph writes (JS-H 1:18). He goes on and asks his question. You have the controlling

power of the universe on standby, waiting for Joseph to formulate and ask the question. That ought to tell you something.

The Lord clearly prefers a dialogue with us. He doesn't pontificate. He talks, He communicates, He wants it to be... I mean, He insists upon prayer for a reason. He'd like to hear from you, because in the process of hearing from you, you expose something to Him, and you expose something to yourself, about yourself. He almost insists on treating us like we're equals, even though clearly we're not. And that ought to tell you something about yourself, as well. All of these things are extraordinary revelations that the Lord is giving to us about who we are and who He is.

The work of salvation is not achieved by your ignorance and indifference. And the gospel of Christ is not limited to making you feel better about yourself. Quite frankly, my wife and I marvel all the time at how unprepared and unworthy she and I feel in everything that has gone on. But I know God. And therefore, because I know God, I am confident that you can know Him, too. Absolutely confident that you can know Him, too. And that He will speak to any one of you, just as He spoke to Joseph Smith and that He will answer any earnest seeker. No one is sent away disappointed.

Do you think the Lord, who would not turn away the blind and the halt, the crippled and the leprous-- do you think the Lord who, seeing the widow whose only son was being carried away dead and was moved with compassion to restore the life of that young man so that she, in that circumstance, in that culture, in that environment, she now had future security because she had a son to look out for her-- Do you think that that Lord doesn't intend to answer the prayers of the earnest seeker? My suspicion is that God has answered, and you've turned a deaf ear to much of what you've looked for because you want something other than the answers He's already given in the material that sits in front of you unexamined. My suspicion is, that if you would spend time looking into the revelations given us by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and studying the history, however perilous that may be a prove to you, that you will conclude that God's already had an answer to the inquiry that you've made. And that with a little effort, you can find it. And when you find it, you'll hear the voice of God saying, "There it is. Now was that so hard? Why don't you keep going and see what else is in there for you."

When I finally got around to taking it seriously, and I finally got around to hesitatingly praying about whether or not this stuff I had been hearing was true-- and you need to understand I had been visited and pamphleted and filmstripped back in those days for about nine months before this, so I had heard a lot of the message that the missionaries wanted to deliver. It didn't take, I wasn't particularly interested, I was merely polite. But I had heard a lot. So when I finally got around to praying about it, the fellow who had originally-- I had made the mistake of

complimenting-- loaned me his journal. And he wanted me to read about his conversion, because in his journal he had his testimony of how he had come to realize that it was the truth. I was in the military at the time, and Steve, whose journal had been loaned to me, was converted while he was serving in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. I don't think he was in Vietnam proper; I think he was in Cambodia, but he was in an outpost, and it was under fire, and he was converted on the night of a firefight, while he's on the perimeter praying to know if the *Book of Mormon* was true.

And I had this journal, and I was alone. I was in a military barracks at night and reading the journal and felt again inclined to pray and ask if this stuff was true. And so I knelt, I prayed, and then I got up from the prayer, and there was no pillar of fire, and there was no conduit into heaven. In fact, it was rather uneventful at the moment. And I sat on the bed and just thought about what the missionaries had been saying and what they'd been asserting and the verses that they'd encouraged me to read. Back in those days there were quite a few biblical sources used by the missionaries.

So after praying with nothing happening, I sat down and I contemplated what it was the missionaries had been saying. And I first concluded that Joseph Smith couldn't be a prophet because there weren't going to be any more prophets. I mean that's *Bible* stuff; that's not today. That doesn't happen. As I thought about that, a verse and a question came to mind. The verse being, "*By your fruits ye shall know them,*" from the New Testament. And the question was, Well if there is a test to apply in order to determine whether or not this is a prophet, the presence of the test suggests the possibility of a prophet. I mean, why would you get a test if there is not going to be another prophet? So "by their fruits ye shall know them" suggests the possibility that there will in fact be someone you better apply that test to-- someone about whom that test will become both relevant and important. So I couldn't categorically dismiss, okay, I can't say, "Joseph's not a prophet because there's not going to be another one." Therefore, what is his "fruits"?

Now, I had no universe to draw from to apply the test of Joseph Smith's fruits other than the missionaries that had been teaching me and those families whose houses I had been taught in. Okay? Now you have to understand, I'm young. I'm still a teenager. I'm sitting in a barracks, and I'm trying to figure this stuff out, and I apply the fruits test to what little sampling I had. And you know, those missionaries were so earnest, and they were my age, and they were giving up two years of their lives. I was serving in the military, but they were serving in a church organization without being paid. They had the same military haircut I had. They had a disciplined life. They didn't smoke, and they didn't drink, and I couldn't say that at the time about myself or about the people I associated with. But I could tell the difference between the lives of these young men and the lives of those that I served with and myself. I also could see a difference between the families whose houses I had been taught in, and the families I knew from my background-- although I had

a wonderful family that I grew up in. I'm the son of the man whom I regard as heroic. My father was really the exception and not the rule among my friends. My father's families were populated by abusers and alcoholics and a variety of other shortcomings, none of which I saw in any of the families whose houses I had been taught in. So my conclusion was, "Well there's some fruit. I don't know what the standard is by which you measure fruit, but there's some fruit that suggests that Joseph Smith had a rather positive influence on these people's lives."

Well then I went on to think, "Wait a minute, the last verse of the New Testament says you can't add to the *Bible*. So, Joseph Smith added a whole lot to the *Bible*. I mean, when they carry their scriptures, the Mormons bring the *Bible*, and then they bring this other thing that's almost the same size, and Joseph did that, so you know, that can't-- there's something wrong with that." So I got the verse out, I looked at the verse, I thought about it, and what became apparent to me was that the verse doesn't say that God can't add more scripture whenever God chooses to do so-- it says man is not supposed to do this. And so if God, through Joseph, chose to add, then He certainly has the ability to do that.

Well, to make a long story short (and I give an account of this in the little vignettes in the book *The Second Comforter*), after about a little over two hours of sitting on the bed and going through doubt and question after doubt and question, and each time being able to come up with an answer to, or a solution-- a solution from the scriptures themselves to every doubt, to every apprehension, to every question that I had-- my final question sitting alone that night was, "How do I even know there is a God? I could be spending this whole wasted effort, and there isn't even anyone up there." And that quick, as soon as I finished the thought, the thought came to me, "Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two hours?" It was a startling thought.

God speaks to us in our own language, in our own tongue, according to our own understanding. And He doesn't use an editor. He talks to us the way we talk. Let me tell you, the thought that I had been talking with and had received an answer from God was a startling moment to me. It was startling, first of all, because it suggested that God was willing to talk to even some guy sitting in a barracks in New Hampshire, long away from where they grew up, on the topic of whether or not Mormonism was true. And so it took a long time for me to be able to see the pattern, but the pattern in which the Lord reveals and discusses new truth is the same in every generation. And so when He came in answer to prayer and spoke to me sitting in a barracks, despite the fact that there were no fireworks, no pillar of fire, no shining man in a robe, He used the scriptures and expounded them to increase my understanding.

When I have had discussions with Him, they have invariably been parsing through the scriptures, explaining things. When I have inquired and gotten answers, it has been because of things that are in the scriptures that I do not understand.

The brother of Jared, like we saw yesterday, went to the Lord to inquire about a practical matter. And the Lord, in response to the inquiry about the lighting, first of all, asks him if he's going to believe Him-- asks the brother of Jared if he's going to accept the words (in other words, the covenant) which He is about to put into the hands of this man. And then once he agrees to the conditions, there is this revelation that unfolds to the brother of Jared in which God makes known to him all of His revelations. Okay?

What happens with the brother of Jared once the revelation begins to roll forth has nothing to do with the problem that brought him in prayer to the Lord. He wanted to solve a lighting problem inside a barge. The revelation has nothing to do with the lighting problem inside the barge. It has to do with all of God's revelations.

Joseph Smith went into the Sacred Grove trying to find out which church to join. In answer to the revelation about which church to join, he was told to join none of them and that they were all corrupt and that he would be the means of bringing something else about.

When Joseph prayed to find out what his state and standing was before the Lord, and the angel Moroni came, perfunctorily the inquiry that he made was answered, "Your sins are forgiven." Then he goes on to tell him about everything, including the existence of the plates of the *Book of Mormon*. So the subject about which someone inquires in going to the Lord does not necessarily control the content of what the Lord is going to reveal.

But when you submit to the rule of God, and you place yourself in a position in which you must be dependent upon Him, every one of you realize your own weakness. Every one of you has to grapple with the uncertainty, "Is this right, or is this wrong?" Every one of you has to grapple with the fact that in answer to some questions, there is silence, and you're forced to choose. And if you choose right, you don't know that you chose right because He refused to tell you. And then you act in reliance on that going forward, only later to be told, "If you had made the mistake, I would have corrected you. But you needed that experience."

God answers prayers. And sometimes He forces you to make choices. And very often (I can't tell you how often), very often I make the wrong choice. It's almost like I got a compass pointing south; I don't know what the deal is there. I choose wrong, and then I get an answer. But I got an answer because I made a mistake.

Let me give you a description of the Prayer for the Covenant. It took months of pondering, testing, questioning beforehand, before I even dared to ask. The idea that presented itself to my mind was that Joseph's prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple was a pattern to be

followed when some great event involving God was to take place. The House of the Lord was one such event in Kirtland, but having a new volume of scripture was at least equally important to that. Therefore, a prayer to God asking for His acceptance was an idea that continued to press upon my mind.

But it concerned me that the idea of my offering that prayer may be based on my own will and not Heaven's. Before proceeding, I questioned my motive, my desire, and why I would even ask. I was haunted by the continuing impression that it needed to be done and was required of me. Finally, when the idea could not be shaken from my mind, I determined it was not my own thought but God's beckoning voice telling me that this was an obligation I needed to act upon and not suppress. I want you to think of Joseph's description that says: *"Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of heart. I reflected on it again and again"* (JS-H 1:12).

Joseph did not act hastily when the impression came to him. He couldn't shake it. It persisted. He reflected upon it again and again. I don't know whether that's days, weeks, or months, but I can tell you before the Prayer for the Covenant was offered, for me it was months, because if it isn't of God I have no right to step forward and do something. I ought not be volunteering for things of that nature.

At length I determined that I should act on the impulse, and therefore, I ought to offer a prayer for the acceptance of the scripture. When I began to compose the prayer the content was provided by inspiration from Heaven and not my own words. It took me nearly 200,000 words to write a history of the Restoration from the time of Joseph to the present, in a book that's fairly lengthy. The Prayer for the Covenant, coming by inspiration, only took a few pages and stated in more concise terms, more correctly, the history of the Restoration from the beginning until now. The Prayer for the Covenant, the prayer for the scriptures, is not me being clever and insightful and succinct. The words were given, and the words are God's view of what has happened.

Twenty-seven years of preparation and pursuit was involved before I found God, which then brings this point: If a group of prayerful people spend months focused on a challenge and then many hours together, and individually, discussing, searching, praying and looking to Heaven for guidance, and then reach a conclusion they can all individually and collectively testify came from Heaven, how can I adequately test their outcome without giving it careful, solemn, ponderous thought and take the time to test and retest the answer we get? People who can make truly inspired snap decisions are far better at obtaining God's voice than am I. For gravely important matters it takes me a great deal of wrestling with Heaven before I can trust that I am humble enough before God to accept what He has to offer, and to exclude all of what I want, all of what I hope, and all of what I expect. Those who have a "short order cook" for their God can do what I cannot.

In a letter on August 24, 1834, Joseph Smith described the only way falsehoods could be avoided. He wrote: “If the Saints are very humble, very watchful and very prayerful, that few will be deceived by those who have not authority to teach, or who have not the Spirit to teach according to the power of the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures” (*JS Papers*, Documents Vol. 4, p. 117).

The Atonement isn't like Tinkerbell spreading some magic dust that will make you rise up. The Atonement will erase your sins and mistakes, but *you* must rise up. You must acquire those virtues. The glory of God is intelligence. And repentance requires you to acquire that intelligence, that glory of God. And you acquire it by the things that you do in His name and for His sake. And those that are here with you in need, they represent Him. And when you do it to even the least of them, He will credit that as having been done for Him. And no good deed will be gone unnoticed with Him. He even notices when the sparrows fall. So is He not going to notice when your knee bends with compassion, praying for His mercy for someone that has offended you? And when you pray for those who have offended you, do you think for one moment that that doesn't change your own heart?

The foregoing are excerpts from:

- Denver's comments during a fellowship meeting in Sandy, UT on February 22, 2015;
- His talk entitled “Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus,” given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007;
- His talk entitled “The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered,” given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism* series, given during 2013 and 2014;
- A fireside talk on “Plural Marriage,” given in Sandy, UT on March 22, 2015;
- His conference talk entitled “The Doctrine of Christ,” given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- His fireside talk entitled “That We Might Become One,” given in Clinton, UT on January 14, 2018; and
- His conference talk entitled “Our Divine Parents,” given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25, 2018.