

Podcast Episode 70: Effective Study, Part 2

QUESTION: How do I get the most out of gospel study? Where do I begin? It can be frustrating to read and not really get much out of a text aside from the most obvious and superficial reading. What can I do, or what skills or approaches do I need to utilize in order to make my study effective so I can both understand *and* experience the gospel as well as prepare for Zion?

DENVER: When Moroni—excuse me—when Nephi (Second Nephi chapter 9, verse 14-ish, about how the things that he had seen and heard)—he constantly meditated upon that, writing some 40 years after the fact. The revelations that Joseph Smith received, including that one that he received in the sacred grove, is not all to be comprehended in the first pass-through.

The things of God are of deep import. Why did God reveal what He revealed when He revealed it? Why did He reveal it in the order in which He revealed it? What was He building upon? Why in the first revelation did He go there? Why in the next did He go to that point?

If you think Joseph's mind wasn't caught up on the things that he had seen and heard (just as *yours* should be about the things that *you* have seen and heard), then you need to think again, because the things of God are of deep import—and time and care, and careful, and solemn, and ponderous thoughts are the only way in which you or anyone can find them out; and that applies especially to you because you control you.

You determine how much light and truth you will receive, and it's predicated upon a law that was ordained before the foundation of the world. Any one of you can obey it. God is no respecter of persons, and you are authorized to exercise faith in Him unto salvation. *You* are authorized to exercise faith in Him until you know Him. *You* are authorized to see His face and know that He is, every one of you—because if you intend to survive His return, you're going to *have* to be able to bear His presence—hence the need to now talk about this stuff and hence the agenda that we're on. We introduced it; we talked about faith; we talked about repentance; we're going to talk about covenants next.

I know not all of you come to all of these. I don't expect you to. I don't even expect you to get the disks and listen to them. But I'm trying to transcribe them and fill in the things that I'm thinking about even if I don't give you the scriptures—and they're up, and they'll be on the Internet and available for you to read.

I'm introducing things. I'm trying to provoke you to study. I'm trying to provoke you to go look into this stuff. But I can't babysit you and shouldn't. I'll only make you weak and not strong if I attempt to do that. *You* need to take this as the beginning point and go on and discover for yourself *how* great things the Lord intends to do, and one of the neglected

volumes of scripture you need to spend some time with is the Lectures on Faith. They remain scripture.

I told you how the Lord vouched for Joseph Smith. The Lord vouches for Joseph Smith again, and if no one else will say it, I'll declare it to you: If you ignore Joseph's words, you ignore it at your peril; and if you allow any man or men—if you allow any committee, any institution, or organization to claim that they have the right to alter, neglect, or discard the words of revelation given by God through the Prophet Joseph Smith—they will damn you if you listen to them. And they will surely be damned for doing so because *no one* has the right to do that.

God's work is *the same* yesterday, today, and forever—and those who would like to throw you about by every whim of doctrine are teaching you merely the commandments of men as if they *were* doctrine, and they aren't! When God speaks through Joseph, and we forget him, we have no right to expect collectively that He's going to move anything forward for us. The first order of repentance is to remember what God gave to us through Joseph. You do that, and then you'll find God's perfectly willing to pick it up and move it forward. You don't do that, and God will simply wait for you to get around to discharge the duty that's devolving upon you.

God vouched for Joseph Smith. God spoke through him, and I don't have the right to move one of his words; but I do have the right to listen to him, to follow what came through him, and to lay hold upon the blessings that were promised as a consequence of remembering him—because to remember the words of Joseph is to remember your Lord. Remember Him, and don't let anyone tell you that they hold some authority that allows them to neglect, change, discard, veto, forget, or contradict what God told *you* through the voice of a prophet.

In verse 12, it talks about how there's going to be this restoration of *knowledge of their fathers in the latter days...also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord* (2 Nephi 3:12; see also 2 Nephi 2:4 RE).

And then in 15, it says: *His name shall be called after me...it shall be after the name of his father* ["after me" being Joseph of Egypt—so, the name should be Joseph; that will also be the name of his father]; *he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord [God] shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation* (ibid, vs. 15; vs. 5 RE). And then he goes on, and he tells—

Lehi tells his son in verse 23: *Because of this covenant* [that is, the one that was done with Joseph of Egypt], *he* [the son of Lehi] *is blessed, for his* [the son of Lehi's] *seed shall not be destroyed...they shall hearken unto the words of the book. And there shall rise up one mighty among them* (ibid, vs. 23; vs. 7 RE). I talked about that in Boise.

And so, if Joseph Smith fulfills the prophecy that was delivered to Joseph that is recovered in part in the Book of Mormon (in this third chapter of Second Nephi), then Joseph Smith

should give to us the ability to know something about these covenants that were made with the Fathers.

Well, we do not have to rely upon merely what we have in Second Nephi chapter 3. Nor do we have to have the brass plates, as it turns out, because Joseph Smith restored the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt, and you can read it right now in the Joseph Smith Translation beginning in Genesis chapter 50 at verse 24. It reads slightly different than Lehi's summation given—and Lehi's choice of what he adds in, and what he selects out, and what Joseph says has some interesting things. It's absolutely worth your time to study out all the differences and to pick apart what it is that Lehi did because it tells you much about Father Lehi—what he chose to include, and what he chose to pass over.

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.

You think the Lord who would not turn away the blind, and the halt, the crippled, and the leprous—

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 have 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 prove to be 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?"—because this stuff was given to us at the price of the life of a 38½-year-old young man and his older brother whose blood was shed in order to restore what we now have in our possession. And we take it lightly? And we look away?

I could write my own gospel. I could bear my own testimony. I could invent a new narrative

about our Lord if it were necessary to do so. But I'll tell you, the only thing that is necessary is to open the scriptures and read them and to tell you the things that we looked at tonight are true—like Jacob. In fact, if you go all the way back to Jacob chapter 6:

And now, behold, my brethren, as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass (Jacob 6:1; see also Jacob 4:1 RE).

So here's the words of *my* prophecy—that the things that we have looked at this evening restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith (the seer named Joseph, the son of a father named Joseph) fulfilled the promise of Joseph of Egypt; and they are all true, and I know them to be true. And you can know them to be true, too, but the price you have to pay in order to gain that knowledge is to pay some attention to what it was that was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Otherwise, they're just something gathering dust on a shelf.

Don't read them as if you're trying to vindicate the religion that you think you already understand. Don't read them as if you're trying to defend your current group of preferred doctrines. Read them as if you are as ignorant of the will of God as the convert is that you hope to make (living somewhere in Florida, or New Guinea, or Guatemala) because the truth of the matter is that we have been devolving in our understanding from the day of Joseph Smith until today at an ever-accelerating rate. And what we have left, Enoch called *gross darkness*.

As we get to sealing power—and we will get there before the day is up—there are some things about that you need to have parsed, and you need to understand. But the fact of the matter is that when we talk about priesthood, we throw about *lavish* claims among ourselves because we have a vocabulary; and as a consequence of possessing that vocabulary, we think, then, that we have understanding when, in fact, the scriptures are telling us a whole different story. And that whole different story is what we're pursuing here today. Hopefully, when we get to the end of this today, you'll walk away saying, "I need to go back and study my scriptures 'cause it sounds like there's a whole lot in there about priesthood that makes distinctions which I had not heretofore appreciated."

As you read Section 76, remember that the things of God are not to be taken lightly. Nor are they given to you *merely* by study. You must also receive revelation in order to understand revelation. The scriptures are a launching point to take your mind upward. You must commune with God to understand the things of God. Do not be fooled by man's pretensions into sloth. No man, or committee, or organization will ever save you. Nothing some financial institution (managed by lawyers, bankers, managers, businessmen, and professors) offers will matter in the afterlife. The only things which will matter at *that* place will be what you secure for yourself from the Powers of Heaven while you live here.

This is a probation. Act like the choices you make are the choices a God-in-the-making would choose. Be responsible for *your* life's outcome. When the Day of Judgment comes, you'll not be able to hand a temple recommend to your Divine Judge and have Him respect a mere man's judgment of you. All that document proves objectively is that you paid money to the church. It's a *receipt*. And you don't even know what your money got used for because you do not even dare to ask the question of your leaders about how the money was spent. For the rest of the temple-recommend questions, they're merely subjective in nature and allow the vain, the misled, and the blind to announce their purported *worthiness*. All of that is a mirage which will pass away when you depart this life.

It is not that God loves one more than another. It's that some of you love Him, and others do not. And by this He knows whether you love Him: It's whether your heart is soft and willing to receive, or you deliberately choose to be blinded by the false traditions that you've studied through and hold fast to—*because* you have not faith.

Religion is intended to be between you and God—deeply personal, individually redemptive. Christ is as accessible to you as He was to Moses on the mount. And what was Moses' ambition? It was to bring everyone up on the mount to see God, too. And what did the children of Israel say? "You go talk to Him. We don't want to." And why don't we want to? Because *I* can study about God, and *I* can develop a set of authorities, and *I* can expound upon the history of the church, and *I* can parse through the vocabulary of the restoration, and *I* can *prove*—*I* can *prove* what God is going to do next, and that what's going on right now today in Ephraim, Utah, isn't it—and in the pride of your heart, and in the blindness of your mind, and in the hardness of your soul, you will not receive God saying, "Ignore the man with the microphone and come to Me." You will not say, "Perhaps the words of scripture mean something different and more intensely personal than I have ever taken them to mean before."

I'm not the best messenger. I wish I had the voice of an archangel. I wish I could do something to soften the heart. Christ is, in fact, holy, and I'm deeply aware of the fact that I am not. I can't redeem any of you, but He can. I can *testify* of Him. But when it comes down to it, at the end of the day, you can feel faith, and you can feel that something important is being communicated by God to you.

But if you read in the Doctrine and Covenants, look at the process: the wicked one comes, and he takes away the light from you, and he does this through your disobedience—and what is your disobedience? *That wicked one cometh and [take] away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers* (D&C 93:39; see also T&C 93:11).

My voice is going to fall silent in your ears in a few moments, and you're going to leave here, and you're going to go on, and there are going to be a thousand voices and traditions that intervene. And come the morrow, you're going to attend meetings in which you're going to hear a lot of things expounded that just aren't true—and their traditions will take over; and your families are going to impose upon you the traditions that they have handed

down; and you're going to sing about *blessed, noble pioneer*; and the cacophony of voices will rise; and the critics will chirp up—and the wicked one will come and take away light and truth. And I cannot be with you always, and if I were, it would only cripple you; and I'm not here to cripple you.

I hate the fact that these are ten talks given by me. I wish they were ten talks given by ten different people. That way you wouldn't say, "Well, he's, you know, something." I'm *nothing*. I'm keenly aware of my own limitations—but I am keenly aware of our Lord.

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.

I bear witness of Christ. I have seen Him. I know He lives. I know He is coming in judgment, and I know that before His coming, He has wanted some things to be declared. I have been as faithful as I can be in declaring the things that I've been asked to declare. I sense keenly my own inadequacy. I beg you to overlook all that. Look at the scriptures; look at the words of Christ; look at the explanations we got from Joseph; look at the things that are true—and go to Him in faith believing.

When I started out, I gave you a description of Him. I want to repeat that. The Lord is affable, but He is not gregarious. He is approachable; He is not aloof. He is patient, and He is willing to guide, and He is willing to teach. He is intelligent, but He is not overbearing. He is humble and approachable in His demeanor even though His power is absolutely undeniable. Therefore, He is both a Lamb and a Lion, and if you come to Him in the day that He offers redemption, you will be coming to the Lamb. But if you wait for His coming in judgment, you are waiting on the Lion, and you will not like what it is that you will see.

I asked you to remember He is quick to forgive sin; He allows all to come to Him; He is no respecter of persons. I said that when I began. I'm saying it again as we end today.

He is *real!* He *lives!* His work of redemption continues right now, just as it continued throughout His mortal life; just as it continued as He hung on the cross; just as it continued in His resurrection in Palestine and as He came to visit with the Nephites.

He ministered to *other sheep* (3 Nephi 16:1; see also 3 Nephi 7:3 RE)—and for the life of me, I can't understand why the Nephites didn't ask Him about those other sheep. It's one of the things about which mankind has had absolutely no curiosity for some reason. He's ministered to other sheep. He's called other people, and there are, in fact, *holy men [whom] ye know not of* (D&C 49:8; see also T&C 35:3) that still remain.

If there was anything more I could do or say that I thought would convince or persuade you to believe in Him, I would do it, or I would say it. But despite it all, I realize some of you are going to walk out of here thinking that I'm just another one of these latter-day blowhards, and that's all good and well. Please, however, give heed to the scriptures I've read, the

words of Joseph I've quoted, and the fact that I do have a witness that He's approachable and that He's every bit as much alive today as He was when He walked on the road to Emmaus. And He's every bit as much willing to come and redeem you from the Fall as He is willing to redeem anyone. His work and His glory is culminated in *you*. His success is redeeming *you*. If you think that, well, He's aloof, He's distant, and this is an impossibly high thing to achieve, the fact of the matter is—it is a greater achievement on *His* end to redeem you than it is at your end to *be* redeemed. There is more anxiety; there's more desire; there's more *rejoicing in heaven* when He redeems someone from the Fall than there is here.

*Because of the many great works which the Lord [God]...showed unto him [This man knew he was God.]...And [then] because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he **knew**, nothing doubting. Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him. (Ether 3:18-20; see also Ether 1:14 RE)*

God is known by his many works. Faith gives way to knowledge. He ministers to him. Notice that—verse 18: *ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites...* [Verse 20:] *he did minister unto him* (ibid, vs. 18-20; vs. 14 RE). Christ has a ministry. His ministry is not yet complete. His ministry includes coming and bearing testimony, and that ministry continues, as we've looked at. Turn to chapter 4, verse 7:

And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of ...[heaven] and of...earth, and all things that in them are. (Ether 4:7; see also Ether 1:17 RE)

This is the ministry of the Lord. *This* is the *comfort* that He would have—that He promises to bring to us.

This text that we're looking at in Ether chapter 3 is probably the best single text in existence to study about gaining the knowledge of God and the process by which it is gained. But most importantly, it exposes the attitude that is possessed by the person who comes back to be redeemed. It tells you—not directly—it tells you *indirectly* by telling you what he did. Go thou, and do likewise.

Everything that you have been put through, and every challenge that you have been given, and every weakness that you possess have been given to you in a studied way to bring you, hopefully, to your knees—to bring you, hopefully, to feel the chastening hand of God so that you, in your day, in your circumstance, can look upon that as a gift—because it *surely* is.

I give unto men weakness that they may [come unto me, and if they'll humble themselves and come unto me, I'll make weak things strong] (Ether 12:27; see also Ether 5:5 RE). That's also in the Book of Ether, and that's in an aside in which Moroni is complaining that the Gentiles aren't going to believe this book. The Gentiles aren't going to believe this record. They're going to say, "This stinks!"

Ether chapter 12, verse 26: *And when I had said this, the Lord [God] spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn...my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness (Ether 12:26-27; see also Ether 5:5 RE). That's an unavailability. That's an inevitability. You stand in the presence of a just and holy being—you're going to realize your weaknesses. You're going to recognize what you lack.*

I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them (ibid, vs. 27; vs. 5 RE).

How do weak things become strong? Not by fighting the battle that you're going to lose. It's by appreciating, as the brother of Jared did, the fact that none of us can come into the presence of God without feeling keenly this scripture: *Fools mock...they shall mourn. I* [this is Christ speaking] *[I] give unto men weakness [for one purpose; I give unto them weakness] that they may be [strong] (ibid, vs. 26-27; vs. 5 RE).*

The anvil that you're dragging around? That anvil was given to you. Don't curse it. Pray for God to come and lift it. You're never going to be able to get far carrying it anyway. You may not even be able to lift it, but in the economy of God, *that* is a *gift*. It's a gift—not for you to act upon and surrender to but for you to fight against in humility and meekness and to say, "I'm not winning. I haven't won. It goes on and on, and yet *still*, I fight against it."

When will you finally come to Him and cry out? When, in the bitter anguish of your soul, like Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail—How long must I endure this? How long do I have to suffer from the abuse of the guards? How long do I have to sit inside a gated room in a dungeon to hear stories about the rape of the people who followed me and the murder of the people that believed what I was teaching?

How long did Joseph's heart break in Liberty Jail? He emerged from that ordeal a fundamentally different man than the man who went in. People who say, "Ah yeah, in Nauvoo he got carried away with all kinds of things." We'll talk more about that tomorrow. We'll talk more about this whole idea of marriage, and we'll touch upon the notion of plurality of wives. We'll brush up against that tomorrow.

Look, these scriptures, these invitations, these prophecies, and *this* message that began in Boise and will conclude in Phoenix— *This* message is inviting you to do what was originally

prophesied as this dispensation began that we looked at at the beginning in Boise, Idaho. The game's afoot. The challenge is underway. The opportunity is here.

There's some eagerness that Father Hyrum had—to get busy (before the Book of Mormon was even done) preaching repentance because he believed it—and the Lord held Hyrum back. If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 11 beginning at verse 13, there's a revelation given to Hyrum that says:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, [I'll] impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy; And then shall ye know, or by this [you shall] know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, which are pertaining unto things of righteousness, in faith believing in me that you shall receive. [But], I command you that you need not suppose that you are called to preach until you are called. Wait a little longer, until you shall have my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you may know of a surety my doctrine. (D&C 11:13-16; see also Joseph Smith History 14:13-14 RE)

See, Hyrum was being told, “It's good to be eager, but don't go out and try to preach something, because you're not yet qualified. You don't have enough knowledge in order to do so.” Likewise, Adam and Eve—not because the Lord held back and told them, “Don't do it! Don't do it!” but because the circumstances of their lives did not prepare them to do it until there were generations already alive on the earth—*then* they were given the gifts that were necessary in order to begin their preaching. Hyrum was told in verse 21:

Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men. But now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all [that] which I...grant unto the children of men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto. (D&C 11:21-22; see also JSH 14:15 RE)

Hyrum Smith, who would eventually become co-president with Joseph; Hyrum Smith, to whom the Lord would command that he be ordained not only to priesthood but to become the one possessing the sealing power over the Church; Hyrum Smith, who would be the successor to Joseph (though he was killed before Joseph); Hyrum Smith, who was the prophet of the Church (and Joseph rebuked the Church because they weren't giving heed to Hyrum's words); Hyrum Smith, whose letter to the Church ought to be in the Doctrine and Covenants because he was a president, and he issued a general epistle admonishing people; Hyrum Smith, whose name is omitted from the list of Church presidents even though it should be there—Hyrum Smith is told by the Lord, “Don't go out and start preaching yet. You need to learn something first. You need to be qualified first.” In the revelation to Hyrum given in 1829 (and in the lives of Adam and Eve), God is in no great hurry to get people running around preaching before they're qualified.

There's this comment that Joseph Smith made. He said, "I am learned, and know more than all the world put together. The Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and He is within me, and comprehends more than all the world: and I will associate myself with Him." (That's in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 350.) *This* is what qualified Adam and Eve to go declare repentance to their children. *This* is what qualified them to know the truth of all things and have the wisdom with which to impart it so that they could persuade their children to believe in Christ. *This* is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You, to be competent in teaching *your* children, must first have the Holy Ghost as your guide. Then, once you have that, you ought to have command of the scriptures, just as Hyrum was told to learn what's in them. *Then* you are qualified to go and to teach your children, and you have an obligation to do that. Children are the means to preserve Zion. Without the conversion of children, Zion has no chance of surviving.

I read this before, and it belongs again right here. This is Joseph Smith, writing from confinement in Liberty Jail. This is after Joseph has been confined in the Liberty Jail and had months of opportunity to reflect upon what it was that had gone on among the Saints while he was still free and living among them:

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—thou must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart! None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations—too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God. (TPJS, p. 137; see also T&C 138:18-19)

Don't waste your time when you're with one another! Learn. Study. Testify. Search the scriptures. Worship God. If you are still LDS, use whatever good you find there. This is what we should lay hold upon—truth, light, understanding, edifying, growing in knowledge of the principles of truth. You should not waste another three-hour block of time fiddling around with nonsense, because you don't have permission from God to do that. Preach the principles, and if you don't think you know enough to do anything else, get together and read the scriptures out loud.

In the early church in this dispensation, when they got together, one of the things that they regularly did was they got together, and everyone prayed in turn. Everyone prayed. And the meeting would last until all had prayed. They called it a *prayer meeting*, oddly enough. One of the early brethren didn't like that. He didn't feel like he could pray vocally around other people (and there's a section in the Doctrine & Covenants admonishing him in a

revelation that he needs to pray). If you don't have any wisdom to impart to one another, get together and pray. Get together and read the scriptures—but don't get together and read out loud out of any recent publication from Deseret Book.

If we are going to begin again, it must be in conformity with the doctrine of Christ. It must be taught by the Spirit of truth, and it must follow the pattern that was given in Kirtland for us to follow.

God could, does, and will work through anyone who awakens and then pays attention. There's an army of witnesses and awakened individuals that are being assembled by God.

It's required to know Him, and I know Him. I've been taught and understand His gospel. The first task is to assure people that He lives, and His gospel exists as an authentic method for saving souls. The second task is to remember the restoration Joseph gave his life to begin. We're ungrateful when we fail to remember and practice *it*.

At the moment, there is almost no clear understanding of that gospel. I'm working to set that out in a comprehensive way. It's never been completed. There's a great deal prophesied to roll out as part of the restoration that has not even commenced! Do we have Zion? What about the lost teachings of the brass plates? Do we have the rest of the Book of Mormon? Do we have the testimony of John? Do we have restored knowledge of the Jaredites? The list could be very long. But the fact that there *is* a list tells us that the restoration *must resume* at some point in order to be completed. We don't have it on the table; but we've *forgotten* what we once had.

So, the first job is to show that we're grateful enough to remember and to remember it in a fulsome, comprehensive way before God is going to say, "Now I will permit it to move forward." We haven't gotten to the point of remembering yet—which is why we ought to be studying a lot more diligently the material we got in the restoration. We ignore it at our peril.

Mormonism is true, but it is possible for people to believe in Mormonism and have a whole bundle of ideas in their head that I don't share with them. But the difference between the views that I have of Mormonism and the views that that person has of Mormonism can largely be accounted for based upon how much study, effort, review, thoughtfulness has gone into where they are and where I am. The effort to uncover the story of the restoration is still left undone; it's still incomplete.

I have been working as diligently as I can in every spare minute that I have, but I have to tell you, there is still a monumental pile of material yet to be reviewed before I get to the end of what's out there—and you know, I work full-time for a living. I don't have the luxury of doing this as a profession. I do it as a hobby, and these things are expensive to acquire and require months to review and get through and find. But let me tell you, the search is worth it.

No matter how shallow the pool is that you've drunk out of in trying to figure out what the history of Mormonism is, let me assure you that if you uncover a question, there is an answer to your question. There is something out there that will give you the truth of the matter.

I get so tired of reading these silly, inane, anti-Mormon rants like that Grant Palmer book. *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* is silly. It's trite. That letter to the CES thing that has caused a crisis? I read it, and I laugh out loud at how superficially silly it is.

But in my view, there is a great work left to be done, and I have to stay focused on some things that are important, some things that still never got completed in Joseph's day that God promised would be completed at some point. We may yet see the restoration take on a power and a glory that it hardly attained to at the beginning. The easiest way to hijack that is to spend all of your time dealing with refuting arguments about our history. I have given up any ambition of either refuting critics or refuting my own critics.

The only thing I'm interested in doing is trying to at last state truthfully, based upon the work that God had Joseph do, what it was that God accomplished through him. Historians can go back and take everything I've written, and they can fill in all the gaps, and they can defend everything I've written. I'm going to keep pressing on, and I'm going to keep plowing new ground in order to try and construct what it was the restoration was intended to accomplish.

I would encourage every one of you to take seriously the restoration of the gospel. I would encourage every one of you to realize that Joseph Smith was exactly what he said he was and probably a whole lot more than he was ever willing to disclose.

Well, I haven't said for many, many, many years that the Church is true, but I have said, and I say again, the gospel's true; the restoration's true; Joseph was what he claimed to be and probably a lot more. *And*, if you stumble into questions in LDS Church history that raise some doubts in your mind about the restoration itself, trust me. If you'll just study the matter out and take the time to look into it, you're going to find an answer, and very often those answers are quite glorious—glorious beyond anything that you could imagine. If anything, Joseph Smith *understated* what he did. That list I read you (which is found in Doctrine & Covenants section 128) doesn't tell you what *divers angels from [Adam or Michael] down to the present* (D&C 128:21; see also T&C 151:15) who came and declared their keys, their rights, their honors—doesn't tell you what was involved there. Joseph Smith left out more than he put on the table.

Joseph's original Mormonism was inclusive, not exclusive. All truth belonged to Mormonism, but it never pretended to have it all. Mormonism was the search for truth. It was originally the search to discover truth without fear of finding something new. To Joseph, Mormonism did not possess all truth. His religion was not based on *conceit* but on *humility*—the willingness to continue to search, pray, study, and hope for newly revealed additions. It was understood there was a great deal more *yet* to be discovered. The claim

that Mormonism was the only true and living church *presumed* the willingness to hear God's voice and receive new truth. It was not because it already had all truth. It was *living* during Joseph's life because it continued to grow and expand. Living organisms grow; dead ones decay.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talks 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10, given during 2013 and 2014;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer," held on May 13th, 2015;
- A fireside talk on "Mormon History," given in Bountiful, UT, on November 22nd, 2015;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original," given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29th, 2016.

In addition, Denver has written extensively about this topic. If you are interested in learning more, please review the following blog posts, among others:

[Gospel Study](#), posted November 17, 2011;

[Christians Should Study Mormonism](#), posted January 12, 2017;

[How I Study the Scriptures](#), posted March 18, 2010;

[3 Nephi 11:36](#), posted September 29, 2010; and

[Scriptures, Not Traditions](#), posted February 24, 2014.