

Podcast Episode 72: As a Little Child

Today, Denver addresses the question: What is it about little children that led Christ to say that we must become *as a little child* and that *of such is the kingdom of God*? What practical things can we do to become as little children? What are the most hindering traditions, mindsets, attitudes, or beliefs of adults that prevent us from doing as Christ taught?

DENVER: Christ made a comment about those that would be able to enter into the Kingdom of God, and He said that except you become *as a little child*, you shall not be able to enter into that kingdom. And I—

That thought about what it means to be as a little child is one worth considering. It's one worth puzzling over.

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved. (3 Nephi 9:20; see also 3 Nephi 4:7 RE)

The scriptures were given by the power of the Holy Ghost, and now Joseph Smith is explaining that he could unravel their mysteries by the power of the Holy Ghost; and things that did not make sense before began to make sense.

(That was a hiccup.)

If you've read *The Second Comforter*, in the chapter about "Becoming as a Little Child" there is an excerpt taken from a book, *Godel, Escher, Bach*—the brilliant mathematical book about Bongard problems. Bongard problems are designed to test a certain kind of reasoning using symbols in order to test the person evaluating them. And *invariably*, Bongard problems are solved by children, and they confuse adults—because the children's minds have not become cluttered by the kind of mathematical complexity that we have bouncing around in our heads, as a consequence of which, they look at it simply; and they see things simply; and they can solve the Bongard problems in a way in which adults fail to grasp. The gospel is adapted to the simple mind. The statements that are contained in scripture are given in simplicity and in plainness.

That's the purpose of the baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of Christ is connected to this so that once baptized, you can have the testimony of the Father concerning His Son shed upon you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say

unto you, [you] must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or [you] can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth. (3 Nephi 11:37-41; see also 3 Nephi 5:9 RE)

This is Christ's doctrine—nothing more and certainly nothing less. This is His doctrine. This is the power of redemption. This is the means by which the Holy Ghost is given. And it is the Holy Ghost which, when given, *bears record* of all things. It is the Holy Ghost by which you learn.

Believe in Christ, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and become as a little child. There is no more inquisitive a creature on the planet than a little child. That's who you're to become. You should hunger and search for understanding. This is *all* of the doctrine. There is no more doctrine. This is not all of the teachings; this is not all the tenets; these are not all of the precepts; this is not all of the covenants; this is not all of the commandments; and this is not all of the principles—but it's all of the doctrine. There is no more doctrine than this.

We have this absolutely schizophrenic set of pictures in our heads about the Lord. On the one hand, He is this limp-wristed, happy-go-lucky, permissive chap who sashays about, blessing everyone with fairy dust. And on the other hand, we have this stern, unapproachable, ~~distance~~ [distant], galactic ruler who just can't be troubled by any of us; and He *says* this is His work and His glory—to save *you*—not merely to save and preserve you but to bring about your eternal life and your exaltation. *That's* what He's about.

Get rid of the junk in your heads, and let the scriptures speak to you. As Joseph said—

Look, everything in them can be a mystery if what you have done is barred the information from getting through to you by the door that you have erected from the traditions that you have been handed. Many of you were handed traditions from very good and very well-meaning and very honorable Latter-day Saint parents who ought to be commended and praised for the effort that they made with you.

However, I don't care if your parents were nigh unto God or the devil himself. The fact of the matter remains that we all have the freedom to choose to leave behind whatever it is that becomes the door against which the Savior has to knock, hoping that you'll hear His voice.

We have to become as a little child because it's only the little children who are willing to open themselves up and become vulnerable enough to believe; and then hopeful enough to act on that belief so that they develop faith; and then persistent enough to ask again and again and again—are we there yet; are we there yet?

In the parable that Joseph was given in the Doctrine and Covenants about the unjust judge and the aggrieved woman, it was a *constant* petitioning. Little children not only don't know a lot of things, they *know* that they don't know, and they ask persistently, incessantly—because they desire to know what they don't know. They're like sponges, and we're like rocks. You can throw a rock into the water and pull it out again, and it's still a rock. But you throw a sponge in, and you pull it out, and it is *greatly* increased. Children are like the sponge. They're porous, and we are not.

Well—Doctrine and Covenants section 93, verse 1—you probably all can recite that in your head—I hope. I'm not going to read it. Oh, I'm looking in Mormon, and I'm trying to find a verse in Moses. Moses 6, verse 57:

Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time. (Moses 6:57; see also Genesis 4:9 RE)

Institutional forms of Mormonism want to claim that God has finished His work for our day and has given His authority to a select group of professional clergy. Their jealousy and envy keep them out of the kingdom, and those under their control are prevented from entering in. What an odd outcome this is for institutional Mormonism when the religion was founded on the relentless search for truth anywhere it can be found.

What, then, ought to be done? Can we still embrace an original once the original has been so deformed and disfigured? Can Mormonism, whose visage has been so marred by its adherents, yet bring Jacob again to God? Can Mormonism provide a covenant of the people for a light of the Gentiles? Can it again be a marvelous work among the Gentiles, of great worth to both them and the House of Israel? Are there any with the inclination or desire to deal prudently with the marred visage of Mormonism so that some believers will yet see and consider the depth and breadth of the religion hidden from them? Will Mormonism ever arise from the dust and become evidence that the work of the Father has begun to prepare mankind for the glorious return of His Son?

It cannot be done unless those who accept the challenge of Mormonism become as a little child. We must return to the innocent, childlike quest for the truth where others are not dreaded but welcomed with curiosity. We should attract, not repel others by the interest we have for discovering truth—whatever truth they have to offer. Plato observed, “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy is when men are afraid of

the light." How can Mormonism ever achieve its destiny if it fears both the light and the dark, insisting that it knows only *it* can be true?

There's a banner up there that says, "What unites us is greater than what divides us." As I think about what unites us and focus on the word *unite*, the things that—the *only* things that I know that are possible to unite us is if we are *open*. If I *know*... If I *know* the truth... I *know* the Church is true. Yeah... Churches are true? Well, what does that mean? Correctly organized as a legal entity? How can a church *be* true? I mean, *you* are true in that I see you sitting there, and you're breathing and moving. You're true. But what does that mean? Is truth capable of being embodied in an organization?

We have to be open, not to organizational forms but to truth. But, if we're gonna be united, it's not enough to just say, "I'm open." We need to be willing to search because whatever it is we have, it's not enough. It doesn't matter who we are. Whatever we have is not enough. Blessed are they who *hunger* and *search*. I mean, Christ didn't say, "Blessed are they who are content and closed-minded, for they shall be stubborn." He wants us to hunger and search after righteousness so that we can be filled. Well, if you're filled, wait a few hours. You ought to be hungry again, and therefore, you should begin the search yet again. The hungering in mortality does not end until life itself comes to an end. If you're alive, you need to engage in the search. *You don't have enough*. None of us do. And we have to be willing to accept. It doesn't do you any good to sit out at a banquet after you've hungered and thirst if you won't take it in. You have to be willing to *allow* it to come into you.

Christ said we all need to repent and *become* as a little child. Repenting at the fundamental level means to stop whatever it is you're doing in whatever direction you're heading and change directions to face God. That's the first thing—repent. Come to face God. And secondly, become as a little child. There is no more relentlessly inquisitive a creature on earth than a little child. They hunger, and they thirst. They not only don't know things—they *know* they don't know things. Why? What? When? Where? Relentlessly, they want to be filled. They know they're ignorant. The problem with us is we don't appreciate the enormity of the ignorance that we walk about with.

Hearts of people get hard the older they get, although there is at least one exception 'cuz I ran into a guy at my office who was like 85 years old, and he's still as young and as nimble and as open and as flexible as a child. That's why we have to become childlike—because we have to be willing to consider these things.

I have a theory that underlies the reason why we find this pattern that appears over and over. And this pattern appears: it's a *progression*, and then it's a *regression*. And if you take those and you close them in, what you wind up with are two triangles—one pointing upward, the other pointing downward—with the suggestion that if this relates to the heavens and God, then it suggests the notion that God is actively in the process of reaching down to man. And if this suggests mortality, then implicit in that is that it's the obligation of man to reach upward to God. And then implicit in this may be embedded a message about the point at which—the contact at which—the "X" (Kai [chiasmus]) crosses one another is

at *that* moment or *that* instant of revelation *that* point in which we get perfectly aligned with heaven. And heaven is able, because of that alignment, to reach down and make contact with us. And perhaps implicit in the message of why this would appear is the suggestion that it's the obligation of man to reach upward because God is *permanently* in a state of reaching downward in order to make the contact with man.

The *progression* and the *regression*:—if you look at the pattern that you find in the menorah, ABCDCBA, what you're seeing in the pattern of menorah (which was a deliberate symbol located within the holy place of both the tabernacle and later the Temple of Solomon and down from there) this symbol is suggesting in another way the exact same pattern of progression and regression and convergence in the center. See, those that take the chiasmic literary form and explore why it was done—in addition to the ease of memorization—they say the point that you locate in the center of the chiasm is the point at which the central theme of the idea is presented.

And if you go into Alma chapter 36, and you look at Alma chapter 36's suggestion of what the center point is, it's that moment which the conversion occurs; it's the moment which the contact between the man and God occurs; it's the conversion point. And so, it would also be consistent with there being an underlying *why* to chiasmus that's perhaps more important than detecting its presence elsewhere. Because if Alma (or Mormon, and I think the greater light is that it was Alma and not Mormon that wrote that chapter because of its literary form—that's beyond this, but I think it was Alma that wrote it) experienced it and understood the underlying *why*, then of course, the central theme would be the point of contact between God and man because that is the point at which redemption occurs, the point at which the process goes on.

Well, the other thing that this does is, particularly here, this progression and this regression is the process of walking you backwards. It's the process of *returning* you to somewhere as opposed to *going* somewhere. You're already somewhere—you need to get away from where it is you are and back to something which was better and preferable and earlier. And so, the regression is a question about, well, What is it that regression would deliver to you, would fetch for you, if you were to take it seriously?

Matthew chapter 18 has this little incident in it:

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus 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.
(Matthew 18:1-3; see also Matthew 9:10 RE)

And so the idea of progression and regression, and becoming something converted from what you are today (where you find yourself at this extremity) back to where you once were (at the other end of the scale) may also be a reminder that although your mind is currently filled with all of the issues and all of the experiences of adulthood, there was a

time when, previously in childhood, you were capable of much more and much different kinds of things. Christ's comment that you—

The question that drove the answer was the question about who's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. So, the issue on the plate was, "Where do we find something that is great? Show us one of these. Tell us." And I suppose they were hoping for some mention of themselves, but instead, what Christ did was He asked for a little child. And the narrative suggests that this is quite a young child, a toddler (and the younger that can toddle over, the better). So, He has the little child, and He puts the child in front of Him, and He says, "This—here is an example—this is what the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is like."

Well, why is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven something that has regressed from the complexity and the sophistication, particularly of *our* kind of thinking, back into a point at which there is this childlike faith; there is this childlike approach to whatever is out there? We put away childish things. In fact, Paul, in one of his passages (see 1 Corinthians 1:53 RE), makes a comment about childish things and putting them away.

King Benjamin had something to say about the character of a child, and he gives this in his big talk, beginning in Mosiah where they're all together for his farewell address. This is Mosiah chapter 3, verse 19:

The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child. (See also Mosiah 1:16 RE)

Then, he elaborates what it is about the child that is so useful in yielding to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, putting off the natural man, becoming a saint through the atonement of Christ. All of those are driven by these kinds of characteristics which are childlike: *submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father* (ibid, vs. 19; vs. 16 RE). Those are the characteristics of a child that manages to change their mind or to facilitate their development.

I heard again— People keep trying to calculate this and come up with a new number all of the time, but I'm sure all of you have heard said that most of what you're gonna learn in your entire life, you learn by the time you're five years old. The personality of a person is fully developed at five. There's another study that came out and said almost all of the education that a person is going to receive in their lifetime has been completed by the time they're in fourth grade. Then, they simply reapply and reapply the same techniques as they had acquired by the fourth grade repetitively thereafter to increasing levels of complexity; but nevertheless, it's the same tools.

Well, why is it, then, that at the early front end, there is this capacity for absorbing everything there is from the universe around them, and then that begins to quiet down, or

slow down or to become resistant thereafter? It's because, by its very nature, the mind of a child is open.

Submissive is a characteristic that says: I am open to, will submit to, am looking forward to something you can give to me. I don't come here with a hard attitude. I don't come here with my predisposition. I don't come here with a bundle of things that, if you're going to present a truth to me, it must fit within the boxes that I have constructed.

[Speaking as a hard-headed adult]: "I... If you want, I... Wait a minute; wait a minute... How do you reconcile *that* with... Well, wait a minute, I... Now, Elder McConkie wrote in this book... We have to have a bibliography, ok?"

Here's an idea: It's a truth, but it is truth that you must relax, open your heart, open your mind, and accept and see if it contains light and truth.

[Speaking as a hard-headed adult again]: "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, I want a bibliography. If you don't fetch a bibliography for me (and I want footnotes), then—"

See, I have been *so* tempted— I have been *so* tempted to write a book without a single footnote in it. My wife just thinks that's a terrible idea. The most important chapter I ever wrote had no footnotes in it when I wrote it. And it's my wife's fault that it's now riddled with footnotes because she says, "You can't do that. They won't.... You'll get in trouble. You won't.... It's not...." And she's right. She's right because the reader, the typical reader, is not at a point where the typical reader will simply relax and say, "Is it true? Does it resonate with light? Is there something about this that is fulfilling?"

I have been able to put more information about God and man into ten short parables than I'm able to put into 170,000 words in *The Second Comforter*, simply because parables don't require you to vindicate or justify. But what it does impose upon the reader is the obligation, then, to open themselves up and say, "Well, how do we do that?"

Well, there was a time— There was a time, and it was back here in your life, there was a time when you did *not* need to go down to the firing range and have a skeet machine firing off a clay pigeon and a 12-gauge loaded with birdshot in it to be able to enjoy yourself if you had a stick. If you had a stick, it was enough because your mind was *alive* with the kinds of things that allowed you to have just as much, if not more, *joy pretending*, as does the adult with the gun and the ammunition and the skeet range and the machine and the clay pigeon and the thing blowing up in the air, and Oooo, isn't *that* fun? Don't you wish there was more of *that* from Hollywood? Too bad we can't load blood in clay pigeons. Then we'd all be at the firing range.

The idea of *submissiveness* is another way of reckoning into the idea of *openness*—the same with *meekness*; the same with *humility* and being *humble*; the same with *patience*. And we ought to clarify the point about a child and patience because at first blush, you look at a child, and you say there is nothing *less* patient than a child—"Can we...? Can we...? Are we

there yet? Are we there yet? Can I, can I, can I...? Please! Please! Please! Are you sure? [speaking as a child crying] Aaaahhhh!"

[Internal thoughts of the child]: "Crap, how does this work? Can I? Can I? Can I...? Okay, what if I give *this*? Can I get *that*?" See, they go through all of the tantrum stuff until they begin to negotiate; and sometimes that negotiation thing works, particularly if the kids are bright. (And we've been plagued with really bright kids, so they tend to go and negotiate everything.) They are not patient in *that* sense. They are— Children are patient in the sense that relentlessly, endlessly, they are studying to learn more. They *want* to know more.

I write a blog, and on it I ask more questions than I give answers because what people need are not a bunch of answers. And answers end the discussion. Once you've got the answer, that's the end of that. What you need is a question, and you need a question so that you'll open your mind. And you need to open your mind so you can become like a child. And you need to become like a child so that you're a suitable environment in which revelation can take place. And you need to have revelation take place in order for you to reconnect with heaven. And you need to reconnect with heaven so that you get to know who God is. And you need to get to know who God is so that He can, in turn, make you a member of His own household and redeem you from this current plight in which you find yourself—in darkness and distrust. And what people want from me are answers, and I can hand you an answer and cripple you. Or I can teach you to ask and turn you into, potentially, someone that can make this trek backward, that can make this climb.



When you take the symbols and overlay them upon one another, you wind up with the symbol that was adopted by David as one of the symbols of ancient Israel, United Kingdom, priesthood, Star of David. When you place them side by side, if you read the account given by Lucy Mack Smith of the Urim and Thummim, the Urim and Thummim were similarly these two triangular-shaped— (And this is in the stuff that's gonna be published; you can find the site and description in there.) set in the bow that he would look through. And you gotta ask yourself again the question of, If the Urim and Thummim has *that* symbol contained within it, again the question becomes, Why? Why would we wind up with, embedded in the Urim itself, an instrument in which the contact between God and man is to take place— Why would it bear the symbol that appears there?

The Urim and Thummim becomes another interesting issue to think about as a device, as a mechanism. Joseph Smith, when he began the process of translating the Book of Mormon, in using the Urim and Thummim, found that it was so filled with light—his comment was that "I can see everything in looking through it"—was so filled with light that he wound up having headaches because it was physically painful using the device. Later, Joseph would use a seer stone, and he would block out light because it was less painful to make the process. And later still, towards the end of the translation process, the book wasn't even open. The seer stone wasn't even used because *this prop* had resulted in Joseph acquiring this capacity. At the time that we get Joseph in the section 76 revelation, Joseph's just

sitting in an upper room dictating the transcript from heaven while in open vision (without possession of any instrumentality) because the process has *changed the person* into being in contact with the heavens—which was the purpose behind it all.

Well, there is another statement made by King Benjamin that I want to suggest, too, as another way to look into the same meaning. Mosiah chapter 2, verses 20 and 21: *I say unto you, my brethren, that—* Oh, that's right; we're not in sacrament meeting. You can actually open your scriptures if you have them. By that I mean no disrespect. I'm honoring the letter from the First Presidency that says, Stop opening your scriptures in sacrament meeting.

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another— I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another— (Mosiah 2:20-21; see also Mosiah 1:8 RE)

Then he goes on to say that you're still unprofitable after all of that.

So, if you find yourself out here at the extremity of the mortal condition, you are still supported from moment to moment. The breath that you are taking in is loaned to you by God who gives you the power to live and breathe and move and sustain you from moment to moment. So, if that's where you find yourself, then the deeper you look inside yourself, the farther in you go, the closer you will come to the point of contact between yourself and God.

We have a very coarse kind of intellect in the West. We have a give-us-a-rule; give-us-a formula. If I follow the steps, then as a result of following the steps, I will produce the relevant gas, explosion, fire, compound, cake, cookie—*whatever*. So, if all I want from you, therefore, is a list, and if I follow my list, I will produce, at the end, the fire I want, the taste I'm looking for, the whatever-it-is-I'm-trying-to-build.

And so, when we pick up the scriptures, it ceases to be for us a Urim and Thummim, and it turns into a rule book. It ceases to be a contact point between God and us in which God Himself can be speaking—and the manner of revelation that He gives to us are the words contained by other prophets elsewhere. It ceases to be that, and it turns into a bibliography for our behavior; a justification for what we're all about; a way to say, "I'm right; you're wrong." It becomes clutter and noise and nonsense—and useless.

What is inside you, sustaining you from moment to moment, *is God*. What organized you and keeps you intact moment to moment *is God*. What lies at the *deepest core* inside you *is God*. What you should be trying to regress back to and find within yourself *is God*.

The kingdom of heaven is *within* you, said Christ. Well, if the kingdom of heaven is within you—if in your *core*—there is a contact between you and God. Then our rule books don't do us a whole lot of good.

There's another way of looking at the mangled mess that we find in the minds that we have with us. And by the way, the vision of Daniel where it was necessary in the last days to grind up Babylon to dust—despite the fact that Babylon has been gone for 2,500 years—is because Babylon's still alive and well and running around inside your head. That's the manner in which you think. You're the product of Babylon; you're the product of the Medes and Persians; you're the product of the Greeks; you're the product of the Romans. You're the product of all those things as they've accumulated and been handed down. Therefore, *it* must be ground to dust in a regression back to a point where, within you, you find that simplicity.

There's another tradition. It hails from the East. It is, in fact, the tradition out of which Christ Himself came, and *that* was one that focused upon the transcendence. The gospel of John was written by someone who fully bought into the notion of transcendence—that there is this great, and powerful, and over-governing word (or *order* or *truth* or *light*). And that the greatest embodiment of that word (or *notion* or *truth* or *light*) finds itself embodied fully in the person of Jesus Christ. And that great light, that great truth, came down here in the person of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us.

See, there's a statement rather on point with that in the scriptures as well. Doctrine and Covenants section 88, beginning at verse 6:

*He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in...and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; [And] the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth...life, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in **all things**, which giveth life to **all things**, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:6-13, emphasis added; see also T&C 86:1 RE)*

When we read that, we say, “Cool. Wonder how that science works. Wonder what rules we've got to learn in order to have *that* happen.” But an Eastern mystic would say, “Yeah, I have seen that. Yes, I have felt that.”

I have stepped outside the door of a house on a perfectly still day when there was no wind, and the temperature outside was the same temperature as what was in my body, and there was no difference in the feel between myself and the air all around me. And I was, at that moment, connected by my body and by my mind to all that is and all that ever was. And I felt behind me a bird flying because the pressure of the wings of the bird in flight touched me—though it was distant from me—because *I was it*, and *it was me*; and the light in it and the light in me were all one. And I could feel the freedom of flight. And in *that*, I saw God.

And we would say, “Oh, I get it! It’s poetry! Okay, so now, let’s see. That’s probably *free verse*” [audience laughter]. And we miss what is going on. We miss the divine connection that exists.

To stand in the presence of God results in people feeling inadequate and ashamed. Isaiah’s words were, *Woe is me!...I am undone;...I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell [among] a people of unclean lips* (Isaiah 6:5; see also Isaiah 2:2 RE). Well, why is that? [It’s] because of the accumulation of junk that exists inside the clutter of our minds and the inability to see in the simplest of things.

I’m sitting at the baseball game, and my son is playing on the Alta Hawks; and there’s a bird overhead making a relentless noise, and it’s distracting. And I’m the scorekeeper, and I don’t spend much time paying attention to those things. But I finally look up between innings, and it’s a hawk. And there aren’t many hawks that fly in Sandy, Utah around a baseball diamond. And I think, “Huh! That’s strange.” Then I thought, “What are you doing? This might be a message. There might be something to this.” So, I thought, “Well what on earth could the meaning of the hawk be? If it’s a message, what is it?” And I came up with nothing, as is almost invariably the case. When I come up with a good question, I usually have to get a lot of help to get a good answer.

Well, the next time I look up, there are two hawks circling the ball field at the Jordan baseball field—so we’re on hostile territory—this is being a [BYU] Cougar up at Utah State, [inaudible] and we’re on *evil* ground here. And there are two hawks circling the field above going in a clockwise fashion. So, it occurs to me I know *clockwise* generally means *blessing*; *counterclockwise* generally means *cursing*. So, two hawks circling the field—a blessing of some sort.” And I think, “Well, what on earth— What on earth could that mean?”

We make it a regular habit to pray for our kids, no matter what they’re doing, and on this particular occasion, we’d been praying. And my son’s involved in a baseball game, and there’s a hawk overhead (which is the symbol of his team, and there were two of them); and my kid comes up to bat, and I look up, and the hawks are gone. And I think, “Huh! Well, that’s strange.” But we’d been praying about everything, including our kid. My son hit a double. And I thought to myself, “Okay. *So* that I would not miss the point that God answers prayer— *So* that I might not miss the point that God’s hand is in *everything*—”

One of the greatest baseball movies ever made is *The Last Samurai*, which all you good Mormons have not seen because it’s rated R. It is a terrific baseball movie because when

this Western, alcoholic, Civil War veteran soldier gets immersed into the Eastern culture and tries to assimilate to their method of warfare, he's completely unable to master the art; and he's beaten every time he goes up against the fellow who is his chief nemesis until finally, the kid with whom he had been residing comes up to him and says, "Too many minds. Too many minds. One mind." And so, the character, the soldier— He finally gets it, and he ceases to worry about anything other than the reaction to the moment in which he finds himself.

One of the reasons why skiing is appealing—snow skiing—is appealing to people is because you can't plan tomorrow, and you can't worry about yesterday because if you take your mind off this moment, if you're anywhere other than the *now*, you're going to go down, and you're going to get hurt. Riding a motorcycle's rather the same way. If you take your mind off— Skiing and riding a motorcycle are both very childlike experiences.

God is in everything. He's absolutely everywhere. It's necessary for you to pay attention to that in order to open yourself up to that because the process of revelation—

In the East, what people would do to try and get a revelation would be to ponder, to meditate, and to open themselves up. In the West, what we would do to get a revelation is to fast and pray and offer God commitments of 50 different things if He—

"*Please*, please, please, please, *please*, please, please, please, please...! Just this one time...! Just... Oh, please, please... Ever so much... This! And I'll do that! I'll do that! I'll agree to do this. And okay, what am I not doing? And why... What else could... I didn't wear a white shirt to sacrament last... I'll *always* wear a white shirt every time I go! And I believe they ask for dads to volunteer to bless the sacrament with their sons, but I know it's something I need to do. I'm gonna bless the sacrament...! I'm gonna..." And there's a list of 50 things: "I think... I think I can... I think I can... I think I can..."

And God's up there saying, "Hey, I put the answer to the prayer right there. It's in the front yard, ya know?"

"Oh, *oh!* I have to bake some bread! Am gonna make some bread, and take it to the neighbor and welcome him to the neighborhood. And this next-door neighbor who's got this attitude problem... I'll go over and tell them how *wonderful* sacrament meeting is. I'll get it...! I'll get it done! I'll get it done! I'll get it done! Give me the revelation, will ya?!"

And the revelation was sitting right in your front yard waiting for you to come out and to notice.

And we look upon those things, and we keep ourselves distracted from, disconnected with, and incapable of opening ourselves up to the revelation which God, at all points, is offering to us. *The world is filled with revelation*. And our problem is that the manner in which we choose to go about asking for and opening ourselves up to it is so limited in scope, so poor in quality, so alien to the teachings of Christ that it doesn't matter that the Lord is shouting

at us all around. We simply won't pay any attention or give any heed to what it is that He has been offering all along.

Full of love— By the way, *patience* of the child is the relentless openness that a child has to instruction, to receiving more, the perpetual walking about with the empty cup. I would like my cup to be filled. It is always— The child is *always* standing with the cupped hand asking for you to fill it.

And we go about saying, “Ah! I'm gonna offer a prayer now. What's that formula? Oh, we thank Thee; we ask Thee.” We close ourselves off when the child would open themselves up and extend a hand in a petition asking for God to give them something. And it doesn't matter how many different ways the Lord goes about trying to teach us that—either with scriptures or a symbol or a sign. It doesn't matter. We, nevertheless, remain committed to closing ourselves off from and refusing to open up and receive what things the Lord would offer if we simply would be patient, humble, submissive, and come to Him with an open recognition that we lack.

Full of love: Full of love is one of those things which— It's really a reflection of how close you've drawn to the center point. John, whom we call Beloved, seems to have had his eyes opened as to the Savior because at one point, he defines the Lord as *love*. *God is Love*. You draw nearer to that—and it's not a process of drawing nearer without difficulties. When you read, in particular, the strugglings that Enos had in the Book of Mormon, the closer you draw to the center point, the closer it is you reach to the point of love. And you begin to realize that there are people you don't love; indeed, there are people you despise. But the nearer you approach to God, the more you realize that despite the fact that you have legitimate reasons for harboring resentments or grudges or attitudes about others, it is, nevertheless, the case that if you love, you can't hold onto those things. And you could say, “I hate it. I just hate this love that I have to show to other people [audience laughter], but I can't resist it. You know, that guy— He deserves to get what's coming to him, and here I have no more disposition to give it to him. I can actually look upon him with compassion. And yet, in my rational mind, I sure hope the Lord doesn't because he deserves to get stomped on at some point. I'm not going to do it. You know, live and let live. Let him go. I bring no accusation against him.”

And then the phrase, *Willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father* (Mosiah 3:19; see also Mosiah 1:16 RE). That's a long phrase that's capturing one idea, and that is that—from the vantage point at which the connection is made between the two; at the *moment* in which the *clarity* comes; at the *moment* when you realize what it is God would have you do—it *ceases* to be a question of whether or not you're willing to do it.

If you knew God wanted you to do—choose the thing—sell all you have and give it to the poor? That was what was asked of the rich young man, and he didn't do it. But I commented on that fellow in *Come, Let Us Adore Him* and what he would have been involved with had he sold all he had and gone with the Lord. He would have been there for that final trek into

and all of the events that occurred at Jerusalem. And He said, "Come follow me. I mean, sell all you have, give it to the poor, and come. In essence, You're gonna be right there for the greatest moments in history. You're going to ride alongside of me." Now, we look at that as kind of a fool's bargain because he went away mourning because he had great riches, and he didn't want to give them up. But what he didn't know was this was the last opportunity he had to see Christ alive, and he would have and could have been there for everything—all the way from there through the resurrection—had he been on board and done what he was invited to do.

Well, I'm running out of time.

There are portions of the endowment (if you've been through the endowment) that suggests this chiasmic pattern. But the biggest problem is that as adults, we don't see things that children *can* see because our minds are cluttered with craftiness, cunning. We are suspicious of other people; we can be mean; we can be manipulative; we can be jealous; we can be skeptical. Much of the clutter that's in our mind, we learned as we entered into and participate in adulthood and adult services. In order to go forward, we need to go back. In order to get back in contact with God, the regression that was shown in the symbol of chiasmus is part of the process of going back to both an earlier point in time (that is, your childlike attitude) and a more open and a more spiritually welcoming portion that lies only deep, deep inside you at this point.

You know, I think enough of what I've said is what I would be willing to stand on in the presence of God and defend. And so, let me end by bearing testimony to you that this stuff and this symbol and this meaning and this process is, in fact, the path back to God. When you go all the way out to the farthest reach of the universe and you find God sitting upon His throne, one of the shocking realizations that you'll make when you meet God is that God has *always* been with you and that He is as close to you as the very next breath you take.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series* Talk #7, given in Boise, Idaho, on November 3, 2018;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series* Talk #7 entitled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man," given in Ephraim, Utah, on June 28, 2014;
- A fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, Utah, on October 28, 2012;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series* Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, Arizona, on September 9, 2014;
- His talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Utah, on July 29, 2017;
- His remarks given at the Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Boise, Idaho, on June 24, 2018;

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series* Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family," given in St. George, Utah, on July 26, 2014; and
- Denver's talk given at the Chiasmus Conference in American Fork, Utah on September 18, 2010.

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

- [3rd Nephi 11:37-38](#), posted September 29, 2010;
- [Mosiah 3:19](#), posted June 8, 2012; and
- [Tradition's Grip](#), posted February 21, 2013.