

Episode 100: Love, Part 1

This is the first part of a special series on Love, where Denver teaches us how we can live according to the two great commandments: Love God, and Love One Another.

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). Those are the characteristics of a child that manages to change their mind or to facilitate their development.

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: “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 symbols, or signs—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, who 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. I could say "I hate it, I just hate this love that I have to show to other people, 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."

When you run into a phrase in which you find agreement between John and Paul and Moroni, and they use virtually identical language in what they're saying, then that sort of leaps out, because these divergent personalities converge on a thought, and the thought suggests something, I think, profound. I'm going to take the one that John wrote, which is in 1st John chapter 4, verse 18, and since this is not a sacrament meeting you won't offend me if you get your scriptures out and you choose to turn to 1st John 4:18. The statement that all three of them make is: *there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. [Well], He that feareth is not made perfect in love* (see also 1 John 1:20 RE).

When it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which according to Joseph Smith comprehended all truth, it is our own fear that limits our capacity to gain from what's being offered. And it's a measure of our ingratitude, when declining the invitation that Joseph extended to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, we elect to withdraw fearfully and conclude that we're just not interested in what might have been had.

It's actually a trick of the devil to get people to close their minds and close their hearts, because they fear what they may be learning will do damage to them. You see, when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit and then Satan called to their attention the fact that they were naked—and that's the beginning of the mischief that gets visited on humanity by the adversary who seeks to bind, and control, and to limit the freedom of all mankind, to imprison them—He pointed out to them that they ought to be ashamed. And when, therefore, they heard the voice of God speaking, they withdrew—not because of shame, but because the shame triggered within them fear. They were afraid to come into the presence of that being whom they knew to be just and holy, because now they were in a state in which, fearfully, they were naked. And their "nakedness" came to them as a consequence of understanding the difference between what they were and what they are, and that knowledge came to them by partaking, out of season, of the fruit that they weren't scheduled to receive a command to partake of, until after a day of rest had been observed. So now, not only are they naked before God, they're also violating the Sabbath and beginning the labor of the mortal existence out of time, out of sequence, out of season; and that's the way a great number of errors are made in humanity.

You see, we're commanded *not* to partake of some things out of season, and then we are commanded *to* partake within season; and when we get the timing wrong, we wind up with difficulties and problems that ought not to have been visited. Well, the other references on that same statement, about the opposite of love is fear, is 2nd Timothy

chapter 1, verse 7; and Moroni 8, verse 16 (see also 2 Timothy 1:2 RE, and Moroni 8:4 RE).

It is a terrible thing for anyone to presume that they can proscribe and limit the scope of truth into which any of you can inquire and get an answer for yourselves. It is a terrible responsibility. I would suggest that anyone who tries to keep you from inquiring of your Father to know the truth of all things is, like Satan, trying to use fear in order to eliminate your approach to that Being who loves you more than life itself. Who would gather you as a hen gathers her chicks. Who would have done that and brought again Zion time after time after time, but WE would not.

You know, no one should be allowed in the Missionary Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who isn't a convert—better still, an adult convert to the Church; because no one joins because of some silly program. You join because of doctrine. And when you choke away the doctrine, there's no reason to stay.

And so, in gratitude for the principles which brought me aboard the Restoration, we're going to spend this next year looking at the doctrine that compels belief. That doctrine which doesn't abuse, control, compel; but invites and entices, that is delicious, that makes you hunger for more. The principles of the gospel that not only edify but enlighten and enliven. The kinds of things which, despite everything else that separates you, you find you can come together in love and appreciation. That's the gospel. That's the Restoration.

What do you suppose it means: “*having a form of godliness... deny[ing] the power?*” (2 Timothy 3:5; see also 2 Timothy 1:8 RE) How do you deny the power of godliness? How do you obtain the power of godliness? What does it mean to have possession of the power of godliness?

Let's go back to that section 76 again; it's got some nice stuff in it. I want to go to the very end because we're gonna run into the same notion in the First Vision and in section 76. And 76 is a transcript that is given to Joseph that was dictated, transcribed, read back, approved, then the dictation continued until I reach the end. But look at, beginning at verse 113:

*This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy [Ghost], which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, **while in the flesh**, they may be able to bear his*

presence in the world of glory (D&C 76:113-118; see also T&C 69:28-29 RE, emphasis added).

Is this related to *not denying the power of godliness*? I mean, to have the ability to *bear his presence in the world of glory*, as we get farther along in our discussion about the topic of Zion, it becomes critical that you become able to bear His presence. For those who are unable to bear His presence will be destroyed at His coming. Therefore, whatever this power of godliness is, I think we need to get some.

If you turn in Joseph Smith History to the next verse—verse 20, he says: *He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time* (see also Joseph Smith History 2:5 RE). That is always the case. Those the Lord ministers to invariably know more than they say. There are reasons for that. There are laws that involve that. And section 76 suggested that man is not even capable of making some things known. It's really hard to convey into this linear world things that don't relate well here.

Turn back to Mormon—in the Book of Mormon, Mormon chapter 9. I wanna begin in verse 2 of chapter 9. And this stuff really sounds ominous, so I'm gonna read it with an ominous voice, because I just... I just want to make you feel... *Behold...* You know, this is Mormon; and this is late in the gig. He's lived an NC-17 life. Between the rape, followed by the cannibalism of the women that had been raped, and the murder and the mayhem and the torture, and the...I mean, this is the guy who abridged the Book of Mormon, ...K? That's the life that he was subjected to. So look at these words:

Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God? Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose...ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your [own] guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws? Behold, I say unto you...ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and...the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you. (Mormon 9:2-5; see also Mormon 4:6 RE)

Now I want you to read those verses and ask yourself, “Exactly what is it that God is doing?” The only thing that God is doing is *being*. He simply exists. This is you. God is. And He's simply revealing Himself to you. And this is your reaction. And why is this your reaction? Because you don't have the power of godliness. And why don't you have that?

Because you need to repent. And what is it that you must repent of? The absence of knowledge about God. You don't know enough yet to be saved.

The plan of salvation is the plan of education—the plan of knowledge about God and the principles of godliness and the basis upon which all of you can live together and be of one heart and one mind. And it doesn't matter that some of you have strange political beliefs. And it doesn't matter that some of you would like to see every gun in the universe recalled and melted down, so we could all, I don't know, attack one another with the remaining butts of the guns that weren't melted down, 'cause they're wood? I don't know; I mean— And others of you would like every child issued their own concealed-carry permit and to be armed in kindergarten. None of that stuff separates you from being able to love one another and be one. Because much of what you think matters, doesn't matter one whit to the Lord. And you know what? When you're anxiously engaged in the right cause, you'd be surprised how much of our deepest concerns are merely trivial. The things of the heart are what matters. The things upon which we are capable of becoming one, in love toward one another, are infinitely greater.

That's why we really need to keep you distracted in this Celestial kingdom about all the crap that goes on down here. You're worried about the Kardashians—it doesn't matter. (I suppose at a certain level, it's possible that the Red Sox don't even matter. But we're eight and a half games ahead in the A. L. [American League] East right now; and I'm telling ya, it's lookin' good.)

In any event, you take... you mark that page—484 in your Book of Mormon—and you go back and you re-read that, and you ask yourself, “What is God doing, other than merely being?” The only thing He does is “be.” And then you react, because *you* are running around hysterically, doing a “pee-pee dance,” because you're all concerned that your presence is unacceptable; you're unclean; you're unworthy. That's what He came to fix. And when He fixes it, part of the fix consists of telling you: “Set it aside. Set it aside; be my child. Accept love.” And then, in turn, you love. Because what “fixes” is love.

You're supposed to be asking and getting answers from God. And the answers from God are going to tell you what you need to do. And the sacrifices that He will require of you are unique to you, because the contribution that you can make for the salvation of yourself and others is unique to you. There are things that you and only you can do. And if you will sign up with God, He will have you do them. And you may find yourself doing things you would rather prefer not doing. It doesn't matter. If you have faith in Him and you do what He asks, you'll *know* that the course you are pursuing is according to His will. And doing things He asks of you, according to *His* will, invariably produce faith. And they produce faith unto salvation. Because it always grows. Light grows or dims; it never stays static. Therefore, when you set on this course, you never turn back. If you turn back, you lose everything that you've gained up to that point. Look at verse 5 (this is third):

*An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but **with** this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Lectures on Faith 3:5, emphasis added).*

Therefore, these three things you need to know. God exists. You need to study until you have a correct understanding of His character, perfections, and attributes. And then you have to live your life so that you actually know that the course you're leading in your life conforms to what He would have. Turn to verse 23:

But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respecter of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him; because if he were a respecter of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all; but all must be confusion. But no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point—that he is no respecter of persons—than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respecter of persons and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege. (ibid, vs. 23)

That's you, *that's you*. God has done nothing for Joseph Smith He will not do for you. I understand all of the doctrinal arguments. I can make them all. I *have* made them all. And I've made them to the Lord. I've argued with Him on every point of doctrine that any of you— I've quoted to Him every scripture that any of you have advanced, and many more besides. And the Lord has always borne testimony back, consistently. This stuff is true. You're hedging up the way of your own salvation and of the salvation of others when you say, No one has the privilege in our day, yet, to lay hold on salvation. You're hedging up the way, you are damning yourself, and you are damning those that will listen to you when you say people in our time are not yet authorized to exercise faith in God unto salvation, because you *are* authorized.

I have done so. I have spoken with Him as a man speaks to another. He speaks in plain humility, reasoning as one man does with another. He will reason with you. The first night I got a testimony, I was in the middle of an argument with God—I thought with myself—until when I got down to the final question in my mind, which was, “How do I even know there is a God?” To which the response came, “Who do you think you've been talking to the last two hours?” I didn't realize that that still small voice, which will talk with any and all of you, was God. When you exercise the required faith to permit Him to step out from behind the veil, like the brother of Jared, He'll do that, too. He's no respecter of persons. You should not question what your privileges are, nor how far you

are authorized to exercise faith in Him, or whether you're authorized to do it at all. Don't have doubts about your privileges.

And then verse 24, twice: *He is love...he is love. He is love.*

In verse 3 it talks about:

Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take not only the spoiling of their goods and the wasting of their substance joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms, knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. (Lectures on Faith 6:3)

That's why Joseph could say, as he did, that he left with a conscience void of offense against God or any man—going as a sheep to the slaughter (see *TPJS*, p. 379). But he was okay with it. He was okay with it: *Such was, and always will be, the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds, and faint (Lectures on Faith 6:4).*

That's the problem with many of us. We grow weary in our minds and faint because we don't know that the course we're pursuing is according to God. Don't grow weary. Stay on that course. I have the absolute conviction that much of the stuff that we plague ourselves with, and think is such a heavy burden of sin, is because our minds are occupied with the wrong stuff. Study the things of God and fill yourself with light—and how quickly it is that all the rest of that stuff will simply dissolve away and evaporate. President Boyd Packer said you can fix behavior a lot more quickly by studying doctrine than you can by studying behavior (see 'Little Children,' *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).

You know, I have this—well, it's that, ...It's really that first parable where the busy young man who was on his way winds up braiding rope and doing that for years on end; braiding rope, occupying his hands. And then tying the net with the Master. And during the course of that apprenticeship, he came to know who the Master was. So that when, finally, the Master asks him if he knows who He is—and he did—and the Master asks him, "What would you want of Me?" The response comes, "Well, there was a time when I would've asked a lot. But now, I'm just content." Because it's enough. Well, it's enough and to spare (see *Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.). Having an actual knowledge that the course that you are pursuing is according to the will of God *is* enough and to spare.

[Paragraph] 4 (towards the bottom of that):

...nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of Heaven, and of their having embraced [the] order of things which God has established for the

redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him necessary for them to overcome the world and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God. (Lectures on Faith 6:4)

Because we ought to fear God more than we fear man. We ought to fear God more than we fear the loss of *anything* that is down here. We ought to fear God more than we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism. We ought to love God and fear Him because it's our relationship to Him, and Him alone, that matters. This requires more than mere belief or supposition that he's doing the will of God, but actual knowledge. Realizing that when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God. It does require more than mere belief or supposition. But it's obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price, paid by each of us in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets it on any other condition.

I genuinely believe that almost every person in this room—I say almost because I know there's a Marine here—almost every person in this room has lived a life that has been better, more pure, more decent, more honorable, more noble than my own. I am unworthy of anything other than your pity. But I can bear testimony of Someone who *is* pure, who *is* true, who *can* save you. My belief is that every one of you, with a couple of exceptions, every one of you have lived lives so much more worthy of the Lord's recognition than my own. That for the life of me, I can't understand why you don't have the faith and confidence to realize that He loves *you*. And *you* are more lovable than am I. He probably finds it a lot easier to love you than me. I feel like I'm the idiot that's writing graffiti on the walls of heaven, and they really wish the guy would leave, and wonder what *he's* doing here. I mean, I get that you're into forgiving the sinners, but you've got to be kidding me. I think if *you* were to arrive there, there would be a lot more propriety to that. Have faith. Be believing. Trust in Him.

Verse 10:

Those, then, who make the sacrifice will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God, and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (ibid, vs. 10)

Them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ is talking about not just the Second Coming, that is talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—whenever He should come, to whomever He should choose to come to, when He chooses to do that. And it is supposed to be an ongoing event.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's talk given at the Chiasmus Conference in American Fork, Utah on September 18, 2010
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered", given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith" given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013