

Episode 104: Love, Part 5

This is the fifth 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.

DENVER: Wisdom and prudence go together as companions. *Prudence* means good judgment or common sense. It is the quality of assessing things correctly and making a sound decision in light of the circumstances and persons involved. Prudent judgment is not hasty or unfair. Arrogance is destroyed and pride overtaken by *fear of the Lord*—meaning that we do not want to disappoint our Lord by our low, vulgar, and mean conduct.

She mentions, a second time, Her opposition to the froward. This time She declares She hates the froward mouth. We repel Her by being argumentative and contrary with one another.

Continuing:

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.
(Proverbs 8:14; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE)

The Mother must possess great strength because She hates the froward—the contentious. She does not welcome that spirit in Herself or any of Her offspring. But yet, She loves us.

Christ taught this idea to the Nephites, which seems to be clearly taken from the Mother’s wisdom:

And there shall be no disputations among you, as there hath hitherto been, neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there hath hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger [against one] another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. (3 Nephi 5:8 RE)

It requires strength to refrain from contention and disputes with froward and arrogant people. When we feel strongly that we’re right or are firmly convinced someone else is wrong, it’s difficult to bridle our tongue and meekly persuade without contention. But the Heavenly Mother possesses the strength required to look with compassion on our failings. She deals with Her offspring using good judgment and common sense. She’s opposed to arrogance, and when we’re arrogant, we offend Her.

How many religious arguments, even religious wars, have been caused because mankind is too weak to patiently reason together? The history of this world is a bold testimony of what weak and deceived men do when they reject wisdom.

Mankind cannot have Zion without wisdom to guide us. Zion must be a community. Developing wisdom requires us to patiently interact with one another. This counsel from the Heavenly Mother is a gift to help us understand what we lack.

When first created, man and woman were joined together by God. This union happened before death entered into the world. Therefore, their companionship was eternal when first established and, when rescued from death, would return. As Christ put it:

*Have you not read that he who made man at the beginning made him male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave [unto] to his wife, and they **two** shall be **one** flesh? Wherefore, they are no more two, but **one** flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 9:19 RE, emphasis added)*

This union of Adam and Eve and this plan of God for all who would thereafter be married was to make the man and the woman *one flesh*. What God has joined together and made into one, no one should *put asunder* by rejecting the eternal nature of marriage. It was always intended to last through the resurrection.

Continuing with the Heavenly Mother's declarations in Proverbs 8:

I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honor are with me—yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. (Proverbs 1:36 RE)

Of all our Mother's *fruit*, the most valuable to fallen man is, without doubt, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The account of how Jesus Christ came into the world begins with a virgin and an angel. There is more to this than Christians have noticed. The prophecy relied on to identify the birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem continues with a description of His Mother. It was prophesied that only when *she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel* (Micah 5:3; see also Micah 1:11 RE). Because of the labor and travail of His Mother, the prophecy of Israel returning to God was fulfilled. She made His entry into this world possible. The redemption of the remnant is as much the consequence of Her as of Her Son.

What was Mary's role? Who was She? Is it possible She was the Mother of God before She came into mortality? These are important questions that ought to be asked. If we can learn the answers, they would indeed be glorious.

The Book of Mormon gives an extended description of Mary, the Mother of God. In the original translation text, the words *mother of God* were used, but that was changed by Joseph Smith in 1837 to *mother of the Son of God*. Here is how it reads following that change:

*And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white. And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God? And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the **Mother of the Son of God**, after the manner of [the] flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for [a] space of [a] time the angel [said] unto me...Look! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul. (1 Nephi 11:13-23; see also 1 Nephi 3:8-9 RE, emphasis added)*

Most who read this passage interpret the *condescension* reference **solely** as Christ's. They view it as Christ alone who descended by being born of Mary here in mortality. However, when leading up to the angel's question (*Knowest thou the condescension of God?*), the text focuses exclusively on Mary. When the angel clarified the condescension, he again focused primarily on Mary and secondarily on Her Son. The angel explained:

*Behold, **the virgin** whom thou seest is **the mother of the Son of God**, after the manner of the flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that **she** was carried away in the Spirit; and after **she** had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and **beheld the virgin** again, bearing a child in **her arms**. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God. (1 Nephi 11:18-21; see also 1 Nephi 3:8-9 RE, emphasis added)*

Who would you reasonably expect to be the woman chosen before the world was organized to become the mortal Mother of the Lord? Who would you expect Heavenly Father would want to bear His child if not His Spouse? Together, God the Father and Mary can be acknowledged as the Parents of Christ. The scriptures shift the focus of the condescension from Christ to His Mother and then back to Her Son, the seed of the woman.

Lectures on Faith describe Christ as *the prototype of the saved man*. Lecture seven focuses attention on Christ as the Savior and Redeemer. But the lecture extends the requirement met by Jesus Christ to also apply for every saved man. In other words, for any man to be saved, they must attain to the resurrection—like Christ. Shifting attention for a moment

from Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Savior to His Mother, we could acknowledge Her as *the prototype of the saved woman*. In other words, we could consider what She did, a Divine pattern to be followed by women.

Returning to the words of the Divine Mother in Proverbs 8:

I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.
(Proverbs 8:20-21; see also Proverbs 1:36 RE)

These treasures are not earthly but *durable* and incapable of depreciation. What the Mother offers cannot be harmed by moth or rust nor lost to thieves. They are in Heaven. But obtaining them requires us to walk as She guides *in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment* (ibid, vs. 20; see also vs. 36 RE). The great white throne is not occupied by the Father alone. Nor will that great judgment be made without the Mother's involvement, for She lives in *the paths of judgment* and wisely counsels Her children to obtain durable *riches and honor*.

The Mother explains how She was present from the beginning as part of the God we call Father or, in Hebrew, the Elohim:

*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, **I was there**: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then **I** was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.* (Proverbs 8:22-31; see also Proverbs 1:37 RE, emphasis added)

Before this creation, the Mother in Heaven was with the Father. She was beside Him when His work began. She was there when the plan was laid, the boundaries established, and the compass applied to establish order for the creation. All the Father knows, the Mother knows. All the Father established and ordered, the Mother established and ordered. They are one. She is the Father's *delight*. And the potential of Her sons to be like Her Husband, brings Her *delight*.

To be like their Father, Her sons must become one with Her daughters, for it is not good for man to be alone. The Father and Mother are one, and Her sons and daughters must likewise become one. Only when the man and woman were together was the creation *good*. When

men rebel, disobey, act cruelly, or mistreat Her daughters, we are anything but a delight to the Heavenly Mother. When we offend Her, we also offend Her Husband.

Before any of us will plan, measure, set a compass, and apportion the foundations of another earth; we must grow together and become like Them. Their work is glorious. They possess love—the power that creates and organizes. Love is the power behind all that They do. We cannot be like them without a loving relationship that mirrors Theirs.

The presence of the female counterpart to God the Father does not include a scriptural command or permission to single Her out and worship Her apart from the Father. Indeed, the psalm of Mary in the book of Luke and the words of the Mother in Proverbs direct our attention to the Father. She may be part of a Divine Couple, but it is clear She wants honor and worship to be on Her Husband and Her Son.

Their character, perfections, and attributes are: mercy, righteousness, love, compassion, and truthfulness. They are without partiality, no respecter of persons, regarding all alike. They make the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. They regard wickedness as an abomination. They prize truth, meekness, and peacemakers. They *abhor* the froward, prideful, evil, and arrogant. They're full of grace and truth and are more intelligent than us all. They are the Creators and will be the final Judges of this cycle of existence, and no one will be permitted to progress further without Their permission. There is nothing vile or perverse about Them. They are repelled by contention and seek for us all to associate with one another equally, as brothers and sisters. They are *perfect* in the sense of having completed the journey to the end of the path and entered into eternal lives and exaltation. They now seek to guide Their children along the same path.

The law of consecration is almost in and of itself an oxymoron. How might I make your heart and my heart one by a law? Even if with a deed we all have all things in common. Give me the law that will make your heart and my heart one. Give me the law that will make your mind and my mind one. Because against such there is no law. The only way I know to become united in a way in which I care for you and you care for me, in a way that we could successfully consecrate our lives together, is if both of us have for the other love unfeigned. It's easy to feign love. It's very difficult to have unfeigned love—authentic, I would lay my life down for you love. Which doesn't mean you always get along and agree. You can fight and yet love one another. You can disagree and yet love one another. If you love your children, there are times you're going to correct them. There are some times you may reprove them with sharpness, and then reluctantly show forth afterwards an increase of love [*laughs*]. That's just life.

There are two great competing forces in the whole of creation: Love and fear. I think God's love for us is exemplified in Him speaking to Joseph Smith. And I'm grateful for how that has enriched my life.

All truth must come from God. The precepts of men are not only unreliable but they're corrupted by their source. God's truths do not end. This thought, like the one before,

reminds us that we must seek the constant nourishment of our minds and souls to be in God's path. When God is silent, then you're cut off from the truth. Those God can save are those who will listen for His voice no matter how unlikely the source from which God's voice comes. If it is God's word, it's to be prized, even when it comes from the Joseph Smith your mother warned you about.

The hallmark reaction from those disinterested in what God is saying is their angry rejection and refusal to acknowledge more. When you are content, you perish. When you hunger and thirst, you live. Living organisms require constant additional nourishment; that's how you know they're alive.

There's another profound declaration along the same line:

And because I've spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another, for my work is not yet finished, neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because ye have a bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words, neither need ye suppose I have not caused more to be written. (2 Nephi 29:9-10; see also 2 Nephi 12:10 RE)

Last year I delivered a talk at the Sunstone Symposium titled *Other Sheep Indeed*. In it I invited others with sacred writings to come and bring them. That invitation was first offered by Joseph Smith in 1840. He anticipated a temple to be built in Nauvoo to which records would be brought from all over the world. "Bring every thing you can bring and build a house of God and we will have a tremendous City which shall reverberate afar...then comes all the ancient records dig them up...where the Saints g[ather] is Zion." Not all of God's words are in the Bible. God has spoken to every nation (meaning every religious division of people). Truth is everywhere, among all people. If we love God and truth we will want to search for it. We will not be content to leave it unexplored and undiscovered. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after more righteousness. Blessed are those who are followers of righteousness, desiring to possess great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge. And blessed are those who do not suppose the scriptures contain all God's words and They (the Gods) have not provided more.

Alma taught a lesson that we accepted by covenant as a statement of our faith:

*And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might awaken you to a sense of your duty to God, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God after which ye have been received. And now I would that ye should **be humble and be submissive and gentle, easy to be entreated**, full of patience and longsuffering, being temperate in all things, being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times, asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and*

temporal, always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. (Alma 7:22; see also Alma 5:6 RE, emphasis added)

The greatness of a soul is defined by how easily they are entreated to follow the truth. The greatest of those who have ever lived have been submissive and gentle souls. In a day when Satan accuses and rages in the hearts of men, it requires extraordinary will and steely determination to remain easily entreated by truth.

I have pondered how much more ought to have been accomplished during Joseph Smith's lifetime. Joseph was only able to accomplish a fraction of what needs to be restored. Joseph faced continuing troubles because of the ambition of the believers. Too many of the saints aspired to lead. They wanted control over others. It hindered the work. Joseph was not able to finish the Restoration. Our hearts must turn to the Fathers in Heaven, and we cannot ignore that duty because of any other vain ambition here and now. We should be less astonished by the earlier failure and far more astonished at how little we have learned from their failure.

In a letter written in July 1840 Joseph explained:

In order to conduct the affairs of the kingdom in righteousness it is all important, that the most perfect harmony, kind feeling, good understanding and confidence should exist in the hearts of all the brethren. And that true Charity—love one towards one another, should characterize all their proceedings. If there are any uncharitable feelings, any lack of confidence, then pride and arrogance and envy will soon be manifested and confusion must inevitably prevail... (*Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 7, p. 362, as in original*)

In that same letter Joseph said he wished the people would progress, but did not see that possible until a different spirit led them:

It would be gratifying to my mind to see the saints in Kirtland flourish, but think the time has not yet come and I assure you that it never will until a different order of things be established and a different spirit be manifested. (*Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 7, p. 363*)

It is in consequence of aspiring men that Kirtland has been forsaken. (*Joseph Smith Papers, Documents, Volume 7, p. 364*)

After nearly a half-year of imprisonment, Joseph described the importance of a calm mind in order to hear the still small voice of God. His mind was afire with all the distractions of being in prison, and his family and friends expelled from Missouri at gunpoint. Friends had been killed. Church members had betrayed him. God spoke to Joseph when he freed his mind of these concerns and quietly pondered, opening himself up to inspiration.

Learn from these words Joseph wrote while in Liberty Jail about how to set aside all that distracts us to hear God's voice:

We received some letters last evening: one from Emma, one from Don C[arlos] Smith, [and] one from bishop Partridge, all breathing a kind and consoling spirit. We were much gratified with their contents. We had been a long time without information, and when we read those letters, they were to our souls as the gentle air is refreshing. But our joy was mingled with grief because of the suffering of the poor and much injured saints, and we need not say to you that the floodgates of our hearts were hoisted, and our eyes were a fountain of tears. But those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation can have but [a] little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is. One token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling. It brings up in an instant everything that is passed. It seizes the present with a vivacity of lightning. It grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger. It retrogrades from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice, and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings, and mismanagements, lie slain victims at the feet of hope. And when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the Voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My son, peace be unto your soul, your adversity and your afflictions shall be but a small moment, and then, if you endure it well, God shall exalt you on high[.]
(T&C 138:11)

This world is a place of trial and testing. Before creation it was planned that when we came here we would be **proven** by what we experience. **That happens now.** Prove yourself by listening to God, hearing His voice, and obeying. Sometimes we are like Alma and want to do greater things to help God's work. But the greatest work of all is to respond to God's voice and prove you're willing to listen and obey Him.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents" given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018
- His remarks given at the Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Boise, ID on June 24, 2018
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope", given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work" given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018