

Podcast 134: Equality, Part 1

This is the first part of a special series on Equality, where Denver addresses the question, "What is equality in the eyes of heaven, how can we become equal, and what are the sources of inequality and barriers to equality that we currently struggle with?"

DENVER: The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. The scriptures describe events now underway, and call it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process of the spirit withdrawing will end on this continent, as it did with two prior civilizations, in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which, as the light of Christ or spirit of truth is eclipsed, men's cold hearts will result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked. The covenant established a year ago, if it is kept, will prevent the loss of light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. Be charitable and be patient and labor to reach others. Even if they should judge you harshly because of their traditions, you should nevertheless be kind to them. They are going to grow to fear you, but that's only part of how darkness responds to light. Give them no reason to fear you. The time will come for us to gather, but between now and then, be leaven. Preserve the world. Be salt. Preserve the world, even if it hates you. The soul of every person is equally precious to God as is yours. If your kindness and example should awaken another soul, you will rejoice with the angels over them.

The Book of Mormon is filled with ascension lessons and examples. There is one verse that captures Joseph Smith's ascent theology. That verse compresses it into a single sentence. It explains why the Book of Mormon contains the "fullness of the gospel." And it's perhaps Joseph's most inspired declaration:

Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my Voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I Am, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world[.] (T&C 93:1)

"Every soul" includes you and me. Every one of us has equal access to the Lord. The conditions are the same for all. Forsake sins; come to Christ; call on His name; obey His voice; keep his commandments. This is far more challenging than obedience to a handful of "thou shalt nots" because so much is required to be *done*, so much required to be *known*. A great deal of study and prayer is required to stand in the presence of the Lord. Once done, we shall see His face and know that He is the true light that enlightens every one. He is the God of the whole world.

Long before the Sermon on the Mount taught us to bless those who curse us, and do good for those who hate us, The Dhammapada taught, *Let us live in joy, never hating those who hate us.* And when Christ said in that same Sermon on the Mount: *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?* Several centuries earlier the writings of Buddha put it this way: *Do not give your attention to what others do or fail to do; give it to what you do or fail to do.* What higher light illuminated Buddha when he spoke these words? Was it the same light that illuminated our Lord? Well, our Mormon scripture puts all light and truth into one, singular source for this world. That source is God the Son.

Consider the very ecumenical nature of the following revelation given to Joseph Smith: *For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.* Notice this is without any restriction on who can receive the light of the Spirit. "Every man that cometh into the world" receives equally. There is no individual, in any corner of the world, who does not have equal access to obtain "truth" and "light" from that same source, who is Jesus Christ. If any soul in any age hearkens, or listens and follows the "voice of the Spirit," they are in communication with Jesus Christ. To them He bestows light.

Compare the following sample of Biblical Proverbs with corresponding quotes from Buddha:

Proverbs 23:7 – *For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*

The Dhammapada – *We become what we think.*

Proverbs 15:1– *A soft answer turneth away wrath.*

The Dhammapada – *Speak quietly to everyone, and they too will be gentle in their speech.*

Proverbs 16:32 – *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

The Dhammapada – *One who conquers himself is greater than another who conquers a thousand times a thousand men on the battlefield.*

The Gods of Mormonism literally mean it when they proclaim, *he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.*

I'm going to deviate from the paper and just add this thought: I think he's giving a descending order. I think when you get into scripture there are always orders when you get lists. I think he is giving a descending order in which he clarifies what seems superficially to be the most justified, and as he goes on in the list, what becomes truly petty. So let me read the list again:

- Black and white. Easy, divisive.
- Bond and free. Of course, you look down on those that are bond, if you happen to be free.
- Male and female. Now we're descending into the petty.

All, even those swarthy heathens, are included within the ambit of the Mormon Gods' concern. They speak through the Spirit the same truths to all mankind and have done so since the beginning of creation. To Mormons the Gods declare: *I am no respecter of persons.* To the Hindus the Gods declare: *none are less dear to me and none are more dear.* Both the Mormon and Hindu Gods respect all mankind equally.

At one time the account in Genesis read: *This is my work, to my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. The Gods of Mormonism take seriously their commitment to the eternal advancement of mankind.* That means ALL mankind, including the heathen, and none are above others.

This raises the question of "chosenness" of the Gods' special people. Israel, after all, was at one point "chosen" by the Gods as Their special people. But that does not mean what we think it means. Being "chosen" means we are put on display as either the faithful servant, elevating others, or the unwise steward who is condemned, beaten with a rod, and made the display of Divine ire.

Consider that for a moment. Have we gentile Mormons been told of Gods' other sheep for some important reason? If so, is it to alert us that we are no more special, nor in any greater possession of Gods' words, than many others who have been scattered around the world and are known to the Gods, but unidentified to us? Is it to make us more careful about how we regard strangers? Ought it to suggest there are other religious equals in the world? May it suggest there are perhaps religious superiors in the world? In other words, have we received news of other sheep to help keep Mormons humble?

If these words from Christ are not enough to make us cautious about dismissing others, in the Book of Alma there is another reminder of how the Gods deal equally with all mankind. Alma 29:8 states, For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; ... The Lord is concerned about “all nations” and not merely Israelites in their scattered condition. Each nation, in its own tongue, has been given a portion of His teachings. It is measured according to what He “seeth fit that they should have.” I do not believe this means that ‘while God gives everyone something, we have the most.’ I think it instead means, ‘everyone is remembered by God, and when you close down revelation, you get less—humble people get more.’ This more probable meaning is suggested by Alma 12:10 which explains, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until he know them in full. It is abundantly clear that Mormons do not know the mysteries of God in full. The farther back we look in human history the more appears to have been lost. Earlier stages, including the patriarchal era, knew God and therefore understood His path better. How else would Enoch and Melchizedek have achieved their heavenly breakthroughs? Like mankind, institutional Mormonism continually atrophies, knowing less and less, year by year. However significantly this may impact the truth-claims and arrogance of Mormonism, we must at least allow for the possibility that there are “other sheep” who are much better informed than are any of us Mormons.

The Alma 12 material helps clarify the remaining statement in Alma 29:8: therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true. The Gods’ wise counsel does not regulate dispensing truth on things external to us, but on what is internal to us. We determine whether we have hard hearts or open hearts. One of the ways to determine if our hearts are open and not hard is the degree to which we regard those who are “other,” not only with respect and charity, but also curiosity.

“Wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent. ...At that day, whosoever will not repent and come unto my beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, Oh House of Israel.” It has been a gift that the people before have failed, because the clock hasn’t been ticking but if a people adopt a covenant and receive what has been restored, the clock will begin to tick.

“If they will repent and hearken unto my words and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them.” “Church,” not, as sister Adolfo explained, [an] institution. “Church,” as she explained, meaning a spiritual body of believers. “Church” as defined by the Lord in the revelations, not “church” as defined by filings with the corporate Secretary of State identifying an institution that owns property. If you want one of those, go choose,

there is an infinite variety. We want that group of believers, that assembly who accept covenants from God and who are spiritually connected, not institutionally connected.

Many of us suffer from post-traumatic religious stress. We don't need to go there. We don't need to repeat their mistakes. We should learn from them. I don't care who it is among us. I don't care how soft your heart is, or how inclined you are to follow God. The institutions are such a perfect mouse trap that if I were to call any one of you to be the newest member of the Quorum of the Twelve or the new president of the Relief Society, you couldn't fix it. It cannot be done. The only way is to begin anew and to learn the sad lessons of where it takes you if you go down one route. No matter who it is you trust at the beginning, everything is susceptible to corruption and abuse. Therefore we need to be equal, we need to be on the same footing.

If we will repent and *"hearken unto my word and harden not our hearts, I will establish my church among them and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among THIS remnant."*⁶ *"This the remnant of Jacob unto whom I have given this land for an inheritance."* It is talking about the gentiles but it's talking establishing His word, which is a prerequisite to establishing His people. *"Numbered among this the remnant of Jacob unto whom I have given his land as an inheritance. And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob and also many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city which shall be called the New Jerusalem. Then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in who are scattered over all the face of the land unto the New Jerusalem and the power of heaven shall come down among them and I also will be in their midst. At that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea even the tribes which have been lost which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem."*

Take another look on your own at 3rd Nephi chapter 21, and in particular pay attention to how the words in the covenant play into the fulfillment of the prophecies and the reclaiming of the gentiles to become part of His covenant [people] and then those who likewise inherit, as their possession, this land.

Recognize that if you want a sign that the work of the Father has commenced, I can think of no more tangible, physical sign to hold up than that the work has commenced and is now available for your review, and if you will receive it can become a covenant that the Lord intends to vindicate.

THE LORD: I desire to heal you from an awful state of blindness so that you may see clearly my will, to do it. I promised to bring unto you much of my gospel through the Book of Mormon and to provide you with the means to obtain a fullness of my gospel, and I have done this; yet you refuse to receive the truth even when it is given unto you in plainness.

How can you who pursue the truth yet remain unable to behold your own weakness before me?

Unto what can I liken it, that you may understand? For you are like a man who seeks for good fruit from a neglected vineyard—unwatered, undunged, unpruned and unattended. How shall it produce good fruit if you fail to tend it? What reward does the unfaithful husbandman obtain from his neglected vineyard? How can saying you are a faithful husbandman ever produce good fruit in the vineyard without doing the work of the husbandman? For you seek my words to recover them even as you forsake to do them. You have heretofore produced wild fruit, bitter and ill formed, because you neglect to do my words.

I speak of you who have hindered my work, that claim to see plainly the beams in others' eyes. You have claimed to see plainly the error of those who abuse my words, and neglect the poor, and who have cast you out, to discern their errors, and you say you seek a better way. Yet among you are those who continue to scheme, backbite, contend, accuse and forsake my words to do them, even while you seek to recover them. Can you not see that your works fall short of the beliefs you profess?

For the sake of the promises to the Fathers will I labor with you as a people, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace. If you will hearken to my words I will make you my people and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but also to do as you profess.

DENVER: We are not like those who organize into hierarchical structures. Every one of us is considered equal. I'm an invited guest here. The people that organized this asked me to come and I did the work to prepare to come at their invitation. I don't have any right, other than the same right as all of you, to preach and teach and expound. If what I say persuades or brings light then you're welcome, as a gift, to receive it. No one holds authority over me, or over you, or over any of us. We associate freely because we like focusing upon the restoration of the gospel that came through the prophet Joseph Smith and recognize that work was never completed. We also recognize the ease with which having a hierarchy can be compromised. As soon as you create a seat of power and authority all that's required to overthrow the entirety of the organization is to gain control of that seat of authority. Among a group of equals, so long as anyone remains true and steadfast to the gospel, no one can tell them that they must do something other than retain that steadfast conviction and belief and practice of the gospel in its fullness.

Zion won't be composed of people who are presided over by anyone other than Christ Himself, as between one another, they're brothers and they're sisters, and they're equals, having one heart, having one mind, and having all things in common because there's no one who can exert control or authority over one another. That's what we seek, that's what we're working for. However clumsy, however awkward, however difficult it may be for siblings to get along as they grow up through their childhood and adolescence, that's exactly how the people that will form Zion are going to begin. You can't stand back and say, "Oh, I prize the orderly thing I see in the uniformity of lessons, uniformity of dress, uniformity of conduct that I can see in structured and organized congregations, and what I see among these people is clamoring disorder." That's because we're alive. That's because we're equal. That's because we respect one another and we want to hear the differences. We want to see the differences. We want to consider an idea that isn't correlated out into the darkness and excluded from our attention. We want to know what others have to say because we might miss something if we don't allow them the equality of standing and saying to us something about which we may disagree. That's what we call healthy. That's what we call normal. That's how humans relate to one another. In a hierarchy it's possible to suppress all of that but we're not interested in forming a Kremlin, we're interested in forming Zion.

There is a great deal left to be done. And there is no one seriously entertaining the possibility of constructing a city of holiness, a city of peace, a people that are fruit worthy to be laid up against the harvest. No one has made the effort until now. And while you may look at us and say, "You've done a crude job. You've done a rudimentary job. It needs improvement." Then help us improve it! Stop sitting back and throwing rocks! This is a time to gather, not to disperse. The same garbage that existed at the beginning (when Joseph looked around and saw confusion and disharmony) wants to creep in among us. Recognize that's a false spirit.

If you'll cast it out of yourself and if you'll look at the words of the covenant that was offered in September of 2017, what you'll find is that Christ wants us-like the Book of Mormon explains-to be meek, to be humble, and to be easily entreated. And therefore, entreat one another to honor God, and recognize that all of us aspire to be equal, whether you're at the top or at the root. The aspiration is the same: to be equal.

I have a real problem, as I hope many of you likewise have a real problem, with the concept that some man or men can vouch for something and say, "*Trust me, it's gonna be GOOD for you to go ahead and take the pill we're asking you to swallow.*" The view that replaces that is the view no one of us is greater than another. No one has the right to dictate. No one has the right to tell you, "*trust me.*" Instead, everything is being made available in advance for everyone to view so that no one need stand, as was done in the ceremony on the 17th of

August when the Doctrine and Covenants was first sustained, when the audience only heard second-hand people telling them, this is a good thing, go ahead and adopt it, without ever having had the opportunity to review it. We ask no such thing. And none of us should expect to be treated that way. We're all equal, we're all accountable, and we all should be shown the respect of being allowed the opportunity to review, and that review critically and to comment and to make suggestions, and to advance criticisms and to deliberate, so that when the end of this is reached and people raise their hand to accept it as the basis for governing a body of believers, a body of equal believers, a body of believers who respect one another, they do so knowingly and they do so with the full light of understanding and not trusting some group to tell them, *"Trust us - we're not going to let you read it, but we're telling you - it's good stuff."* You're going to be able to read, to pray, to examine, to criticize, and to determine that for yourself.

QUESTION: Oh, how does equality work when we're all given different gifts, abilities, and levels of understanding, some of which may be more outwardly manifest? Should we encourage one another to use our gifts to benefit all, even though this makes us appear unequal?

DENVER: Equal means that you do what you can do, to the best of your ability to do, for the benefit of all that can receive. Not everyone can do what someone with a gift or a talent can accomplish, but all can appreciate the benefits of that gift or talent. We're supposed to find joy, worship God, and bless our fellow man through the gifts that are given. In fact-I don't know what section it is now; I know what the old number was-but the gifts that are given, the Lord says, specifically, are given as a benefit for the church (the definition of the church being all those who repent and are baptized, not some institution). So the blessing that is given to one has been given in order to bless and benefit the lives of all others. And as a consequence of that, you're depriving the community of faith-of the gifts-when you don't do the best you can with the gifts you've been given. They are intended by you, to be a sacrifice by you, for the benefit of others. And if others look on and say, "Gee, I wish I could do that, but I'm not double-jointed, and I'm not interested in riding on one of those things," then, you know, you can admire the X-Games, but you don't have to join 'em.

In Alma, the Nehor incident included Nehor advocated that priests should not labor with their own hands, that they should get supported with the believers' money and this was something the Book of Mormon condemned being guilty of priestcraft. Alma, on the other hand, ordained priests in Mosiah 18:18 and he instructed them that they must labor with their own hands for their own support. In Mosiah 18:24:

"And he also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands for their support."

King Mosiah adopted this standard as the law. In Mosiah 27:4-5:

“That they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support. Yea, and all their priests and teachers should labor with their own hands for their support, in all cases save it were in sickness, or in much want; and doing these things, they did abound in the grace of God.”

See, I could raise money if I wanted to. I could raise a lot of money if I wanted to. And if I raised money off of the religion I preach I could get a lot more done. Instead I labor with my own hands and I work nights, evenings, weekends. The amount of work that is going into the book that will come out next - that includes not just me, but my wife, and practically every spare moment that we have - involves enormous sacrifice. But it has exactly the effect, “we should esteem our neighbor as ourself laboring with our own hands.” We should not think that we are better than anyone.

If you take money from someone in order to advance your religious purpose. The mere act of doing that creates an inequality. It creates an arrogance. It removes the burden of sacrifice. It removes the humiliation of having to lose sleep, and to fret, and to worry about things, and to face an uphill battle, and everything that you do in order to please God. But you can't please God by taking advantage of your fellowman.

I'm going to talk about Zion, and Zion is going to be gathered. But the gathering of that group will not necessarily come exclusively from any party, group, denomination or lineage. Priestcraft damages the practitioner, I think more so than those on whom he practices. I don't see how you can destroy equality, and injure and grieve the Spirit by holding yourself up as a light and interfering with the work of the Lord in bringing about Zion, and not suffer the greater loss.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's remarks entitled “Keep the Covenant: Do the Work” given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 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

- His talk entitled “Other Sheep Indeed”, given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29th, 2017
- Denver’s conference talk entitled “Things to Keep Us Awake at Night” given in St. George, UT on March 19th, 2017
- The presentation of “Answer and Covenant”, given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017
- Denver’s conference talk entitled “Our Divine Parents” given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018
- Denver’s lecture entitled “Signs Follow Faith” given in Centerville, UT on March 3, 2019
- The Q&A Session following Denver's conference talk given in Grand Junction, CO on April 21, 2019
- A Q&A session entitled “A Visit with Denver Snuffer” held on May 13, 2015; and
- His talk entitled “Zion Will Come” given near Moab, UT on April 10th, 2016