

Denver Snuffer Podcast 151: Persuasion, Part 1

This is the first part of a series about Persuasion. In the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, we've been commanded to study how to respect one another and to come together by precept, reason and persuasion. In this first part, Denver discusses

- What we have been taught about how to respectfully come together;
- How God goes about persuading us; and
- The process we should follow in coming to a unity of faith, when we are all at different levels of understanding.

DENVER: You call me Lord and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety.

There are only two ways: the way I lead that goes upward in light and truth unto Eternal lives, and if you turn from it, you follow the way of darkness and the deaths. Those who want to come where I am must be able to abide the conditions established for my Father's Kingdom. I have given to you the means to understand the conditions you must abide. I came and lived in the world to be the light of the world. I have sent others who have testified of me and taught you. I have sent my light into the world. Let not your hearts remain divided from one another and divided from me.

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity, and come unto me and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore if you regard one another with charity then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word and in very deed. For I will come to you if you will come unto me.

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason and persuasion rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me I will tell you my part.

We've been commanded to measure our words before giving voice to them and to consider the hearts of others. Although a man **may** err in understanding concerning **many** things, if we regard one another with charity, then our brother's error in understanding will not divide us.

We're commanded to study to learn how to respect our brothers and sisters and to come together by **precept, reason, and persuasion**, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. God warns us to take care how we invoke His name.

This is His command. Do it on this wise.

And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have 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, one against another. (Ibid, vs. 28-30)

Do it... Do it in this way. If someone disputes and says, "They ought not be doing it, and you ought not be doing it," leave it alone. Don't fight. Don't quarrel. Invite; persuade. And if they're unpersuaded, let them go. If you invite and they will not come, let them go. If you entice—if you entreat—and they say, "We will not hear your entreaty..." If they mock you, let them go. There is no need to harbor ill-will and to fight with people.

No power or influence can or ought to be exercised by one man over another. The only way that you should exercise influence is by meekness and gentleness and persuasion. If you know more than I do, then enlighten me. Persuade me. Teach me, that my heart will resonate with what you have to say. But don't presume that you have the right to "call me" and afflict me and tell me that if I don't bend my knee at this particular moment then you're going to use some compulsory means in order to get from me exactly what you hope to extract from me. No one should be imposing upon anyone else.

The new scriptures is a historical event that throughout the entirety of history, going back to the time of Moses, has only happened three times. It happened with Moses; it happened with Ezra; it happened through the prophet Joseph Smith and through the faithful diligence of a remnant of the people who sought to reconnect, in our day, and to honor that third restoration through Joseph Smith. It is beyond historic. It is something designed to alter the course of history.

But some people look upon signs like that as inconsequential and easy to dismiss. I can testify to you that the heavens themselves rejoice at what happened there. Even if you're dismissive; even if you're nonchalant about it. It is, nevertheless, one of the greatest developments to occur in history, and it happened in your lifetime. The saints were rejected in 1844. Nothing has been done to repair the condemnation in [1832] or to reclaim people since the rejection in 1844. No one has attempted to repent and remember the former commandments—not only to say, but to do—until today.

Stop your damn squabbling! Don't go back and revert to pre-1820 Christian conduct that aroused God's ire. I use the word 'damned' in the scriptural sense because that's exactly what it is. Stop squabbling! Stop disagreeing! Surrender your pride! If you think you're right; if you think someone needs to be corrected; if you think you have a higher, holier

better way—stay and persuade. Be meek. Be humble. Solicit other people, and appeal to their heart.

The question is never whether God *will* vindicate His promises. The question is, Will there ever come a people who will respond to the Lord's willingness to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and be gathered, and be content with being gathered and being at peace with one another. We have that opportunity, but so many generations before us have had the same opportunity, and they would not. The question isn't whether God *is* going to do it or whether God is *willing* to do it now. The question is, Are we willing to cooperate with Him in that process to do our part? We get really petty with one another, and we shouldn't be. We ought to value one another so highly that we will do anything we can to support one another and to assist in bringing about the purposes of God. At the end of the day, obedience to God is simply blessing one another by the way we conduct ourselves. I like the Lamanite king's prayer, "I will give away all my sins to know you." We tend not to be willing to give away our sins. We want to harbour them and cultivate them and celebrate them. We ought to be more— We ought to love God more and our sins less. God *can* fulfill His promises in our day, before we leave this stage of the action. It can happen. Whether it happens or not is up to us and how interested we are in doing as He bids us.

By the time you got to 1838 in Missouri, Joseph Smith had a presidency of the Church, and he had a presidency in Zion, and the presidency in Zion was headed up by David Whitmer. (David Whitmer was going to be the replacement president if Joseph were slain.) In 1838, everything fell apart. David Whitmer, the successor, was excommunicated (as was his counselors in his presidency, including Oliver Cowdery). The Church Historian was excommunicated. Several of the Apostles not only left, but they signed affidavits that helped get Joseph Smith arrested. And so, he's sitting in Liberty Jail, and he's writing the letter from Liberty Jail, and it occurs to him that this hierarchy, this... It doesn't work. And he writes in that letter, "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by patience, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, pure knowledge." We have an opportunity to say, "Okay, let's run with that; let's take all of this bigger and lesser hierarchical... Let's take all of that; let's say that we're all exactly on the same footing." Now, every one of us have an opportunity—with gentleness and meekness, kindness, with pure knowledge, and with persuasion—to persuade one another to something that is good. Let's use that as the criteria; let's not use status. Steph was right; there isn't any status. But let's make sure that we don't inadvertently allow there to become some. If it is not gentleness, meekness, persuasion, kindness, pure knowledge... If it doesn't enlighten and enliven, then give it no heed. Require that of every man. Don't excuse anyone, not myself, not Steph, not any of those people that blog or write or want an audience.

...no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only [you don't have any authority by virtue of that; you have authority virtue of only]...persuasion [that's your tool—persuasion—and since that is not going to work, the second tool is]...long-suffering [because all you're armed with is persuasion, you can't say, "I'm the authority, you need to do this. I'm the authority; the thinking has been done." If all I've got is persuasion, then I'd better be willing to be long-suffering, because I'm not going to bring you on board with the truth anytime soon, and then]...gentleness [I don't care how frustrated you get] and meekness, and...love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul (D&C 121: 34-37, 41-42).

These are the tools.

When the restoration began to roll out Joseph Smith aggregated a central position, central authority. He established an organizational hierarchy in which, when they finally got it organized in the land of Zion – that is in Missouri – and they had a presidency there with David Whitmer in charge. He departed after establishing the presidency in Missouri, headed back to Kirtland, and he said now, now if his life came to an end he had fully organized the Church, because there was a church with a presidency in Zion that could replace him in the event that his life were taken. That had been done. His life, his mission, his work had been fulfilled. This is in the 1833-34 time period. Joseph is talking in these terms. By 1838 members of the presidency in Zion had not only forsaken the Church, excommunicated, but many of them signed affidavits and participated in what eventually resulted in the Missouri..., the Mormon War, the imprisonment of Joseph Smith, and the scattering of the entire gathering in Missouri. An extermination order was issued and everyone had to flee. Joseph was taken prisoner, sitting in prison. You need to read all of the words of the letters that Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail but you also need to look at the affidavits that were signed by the members of the Church that had turned on Joseph. You need to look at the transcripts of the trial that was held in front of Judge King. You need to look at how Joseph Smith could not be bound over for trial on the charge of treason if it were not for Mormons who came to testify against Joseph Smith. The very people in whom authority had been invested were the ones that had the credibility to keep Joseph Smith in prison on the false charge of treason. And so sitting within Liberty Jail and reflecting upon the lessons that he had learned, Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail is not talking about how joyful and wonderful it is to have a hierarchy with authority. He's come to a different recognition and a different realization and he's saying, "*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood*" (T&C 139:6). The only thing that ought to matter is persuasion and gentleness and pure knowledge that will greatly enlarge the soul. The standard ought not be what office one holds.

The standard ought to be what truth you bring with you. What is the content? Is it delicious? Does it bring me to Christ? Does it make me desire to be better than I am, to rise above the condition in which I presently find myself in this fallen world? Then when Joseph Smith gets to Nauvoo and he gives a talk to the Relief Society in Nauvoo, he tells the women of the Church that the saints are depending too much upon the prophet and that they are

darkened in their own minds because they're neglecting the responsibilities that are devolving upon themselves.

Joseph Smith may have established a hierarchy but through the Missouri experience he came to realize the limitations of the value of having that, and the necessity of changing the format and looking instead to persuasion, truth, pure knowledge, love, gentleness, meekness; those are the things that matter, not hierarchy. And he came close to denouncing even his own position when he said your minds are darkened because you're depending too much upon the prophet and you're neglecting the duties that are devolving upon yourselves.

If we're required to develop the attributes of Christ, how is it possible for us to do so, unless God **patiently** tries to persuade us to **voluntarily** be like Him? And how can **you** hope to be like Him, **if you refuse to be persuaded?**

God came as one of the weak things of this world. The only way He's ever going to invite you is through one of the weak things of this world, speaking in weakness, asking you to be persuaded. It doesn't matter how earnest I am, I know my standing before God. What matters is **your** willingness to **be** persuaded—over that I have no control and want no control; over that I simply put the case as the Lord has put it to me, in the hopes that what **He** has to offer and what **He** says needs to be said will get through to you. But your relationship and your accountability is not to me; it's to Him. Therefore, be persuaded. Be persuaded.

In the wisdom of the Lord, unfair and harsh condemnation of this work is permitted to expose for our view those who will always be disruptive to a community. They need to be identified so they are not gathered. Accusations, condemnation, and lies are welcomed at present. They not only tell us who acts the part of Satan but also capture those who are easily taken by the adversary. Accomplishing what the Lord invites people to do is hard enough with the humble and meek. It becomes impossible when the hard-hearted are whispering accusations and insults (as Wormtongue), hindering the work.

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The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant", given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017
- Denver's general conference talk titled "Religion of the Fathers," presented at Aravada, Nevada on March 27, 2021
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 titled "Preserving the Restoration" given in Mesa, AZ on September 9th, 2014
- A regional conference Q&A session held at Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT on September 20, 2015
- Denver's lecture titled "Signs Follow Faith" given in Centerville, UT on March 3, 2019

- Denver's remarks titled "Book of Mormon as Covenant" given at the Book of Mormon Covenant Conference in Columbia, SC on January 13, 2019
- Denver's fireside talk titled "Constitutional Apostasy", given in Highland, UT on June 7th, 2013
- Denver's remarks given at the First Annual Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Boise, ID on June 24, 2018
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 titled "A Broken Heart" given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014; and
- Denver's conference talk titled "The Heavens are Open", given in Hurricane, UT on March 22, 2020.