

Invitation number two. Many of the individuals and families who most need to hear this message about choosing not to be offended are probably not participating with us in conference today. I suspect all of us are acquainted with members who are staying away from church because they have chosen to take offense—and who would be blessed by coming back.

Will you please prayerfully identify a person with whom you will visit and extend the invitation to once again worship with us? Perhaps you could share a copy of this talk with her or him, or you may prefer to discuss the principles we have reviewed today. And please remember that such a request should be conveyed

lovingly and in meekness—and not in a spirit of self-righteous superiority and pride.

As we respond to this invitation with faith in the Savior, I testify and promise that doors will open, our mouths will be filled, the Holy Ghost will bear witness of eternal truth, and the fire of testimony will be rekindled.

As His servant, I echo the words of the Master when He declared, “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended” (John 16:1). I witness the reality and divinity of a living Savior and of His power to help us avoid and overcome offense. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

A. Roger Merrill

Experience as a missionary

One morning when I was serving as a young missionary in Beaumont, Texas, my companion became ill and needed to rest. Following the counsel of our mission president for such situations, I pulled a chair up by the open window in our fourth-story apartment and began to read in the Book of Mormon.

Soon I became immersed in the scriptures, and after a time I came to Alma chapter 29, verses 1 and 2:

“O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

“Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth.”

As I pondered on Alma’s words, they became deeply personal. My companion

and I had knocked on hundreds of doors in Beaumont, offering to share our message, but with limited success. In my mind’s eye, I began to imagine what it might be like if I were an angel and could cry repentance with a voice to shake the earth. I looked out the window at the people coming and going on the street below. I imagined what it would be like if I were standing there shining like an angel, with my hands raised, speaking with a voice of thunder. I envisioned the buildings shaking and people falling to the earth. Under the circumstances I imagined, they might have a sudden desire to listen to what I had to say!

But then I read the next verse: “But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me” (v. 3).

I was humbled to realize the Lord loves all His children and has a plan for His work. My job was to do my part.

I was also humbled to realize something else. In that moment, I *knew* that

what I was reading was not fiction—it was real. Quietly and peacefully while I was reading, I had been filled with light and with the realization that this Alma was an actual person, that he had lived, and that he too had deeply desired to share the gospel message with others.

If you had asked me in that moment, “Do you know this is true?” I would have replied, “Absolutely!” At that point, it became clear to me that I was receiving a spiritual witness of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

Receiving by the Spirit

As I have reflected on that experience—and many such witnesses since—I have come to better understand how vitally important it is to *receive* by the Spirit. We often focus, appropriately, on the importance of teaching by the Spirit. But we need to remember that the Lord has placed equal, if not greater, importance on receiving by the Spirit. (See D&C 50:17–22.)

Such receiving is a foundational gospel pattern. It is set forth in the very ordinance by which we are confirmed members of the Church. In this ordinance we are instructed to “receive the Holy Ghost.” This is a formal invitation to act, to receive this great gift.

As I have become more aware of this principle, I find that the scriptures are replete with the doctrine of receiving. As President Boyd K. Packer has said, “No message appears in scripture more times, in more ways than ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21).

At the very core of our mortal probation is the choice to receive Jesus as the Christ. The Apostle John taught:

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:11–12).

One cannot help but wonder how many gifts and blessings surround us that we do not receive. The Lord has said: “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift” (D&C 88:33).

In our Church meetings, in our personal and family scripture study, and even this day as we listen to the Lord’s prophets and apostles, some of us will receive more than others. Why? I am learning that those who truly receive do at least three things that others may not do.

Seeking the Spirit

First, they *seek*. We live in an entertainment world, a spectator world. Without realizing it, we can find ourselves coming to conference or going to church with the attitude, “Here I am; now inspire me.” We become spiritually passive.

When we focus instead on seeking and receiving the Spirit, we become less concerned about a teacher or speaker holding our attention and more concerned about giving our attention to the Spirit. Remember, *receive* is a verb. It is a principle of action. It is a fundamental expression of faith.

Feeling the Spirit

Second, those who receive, *feel*. While revelation comes to the mind and heart, it is most often felt. Until we learn to pay attention to these spiritual feelings, we usually do not even recognize the Spirit.

In a recent conversation I had with one of our daughters-in-law, she suggested that we can help even young children become aware of these feelings of the Spirit. We can ask them questions such as “How do you feel as we read this scripture together? What do you feel the Spirit is prompting you to do?” These are good

questions for us all. They demonstrate the desire to receive.

Intending to act

Third, those who receive by the Spirit *intend to act*. As the prophet Moroni instructed, to receive a witness of the Book of Mormon, we must ask “with real intent” (Moroni 10:4). The Spirit teaches when we honestly intend to do something about what we learn.

As I have read back over my journal entry to understand and learn more from the experience I had as a missionary, I have realized that although I had read in the Book of Mormon before, what happened

in Beaumont that morning was different because I was different. As inexperienced as I was, at least on that occasion I was sincerely trying to seek and to feel, and my intent was to act in faith on what I learned. I know now that such witnesses are available to each of us on a regular basis if we will receive them.

The Book of Mormon is the word of God. Jesus is the Christ. The gospel has been restored, and we truly are in the presence of modern apostles and prophets.

I pray that this day and always we will learn to better receive, that we may truly rejoice in both the gift and “in him who is the giver of the gift.”

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Craig A. Cardon

Moving individuals closer to God

Years ago our young family moved into a home on what was then the edge of development in our community, which afforded a view of the mountains to the east. One Monday morning, just as I finished dressing and was ready to rush out the door to work, our six-year-old son, Craig, came bringing his four-year-old brother, Andrew, into the room by the hand. With determination Craig looked up at me and said, “Dad, yesterday in Primary my teacher told us that if you hold the priesthood, you can move mountains. I told Andy this, and he doesn’t believe me. You hold the priesthood, right, Dad?” Then turning his little body and pointing out the window, he looked back at me and said, “See those mountains over there? Show him, Dad!”

What followed was a sweet experience. How grateful I was for young sons who were beginning a lifetime of learning about the priesthood.

While the Lord truly taught those to whom He had given the priesthood that

by faith mountains would move¹—and there are recorded instances of such²—my hope is to bring greater understanding to that aspect of the doctrine of the priesthood which *moves individuals* closer to God, affording them the opportunity to become like Him and live eternally in His presence. This doctrine involves both the sons and the daughters of God. Accordingly, I pray that what I share will be of help to both.

Priesthood authority and ordinances

In 1823 the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith and quoted several scriptures, including the following from Malachi: “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet.”³ This first recorded reference to priesthood in this dispensation anticipated a process that would unfold in the decades to come.

In 1829 John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood,⁴ followed shortly thereafter by Peter, James, and John restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁵