

When I was six years old, Uncle Fred was my worst nightmare. He was our neighbor, and he was always drunk. One of his favorite pastimes was to throw rocks at our home.

Because my mother was a great cook, single adult members from our small branch frequented our home. One day when Uncle Fred was sober, these members befriended him and invited him into our home. This development terrified me. He was no longer just outside but inside our home. This happened a few more times until finally they were able to convince Uncle Fred to listen to the missionaries. He accepted the gospel and was baptized. He served a full-time mission, returned with honor, pursued further education, and was married in the temple. He is now a righteous husband, father, and priesthood leader. Watching Uncle Fred today, one would find it difficult to believe that he once brought nightmares into the life of a six-year-old boy. May we always be perceptive to opportunities to share the gospel.

A mother's unselfish service

My mother was a great example of helping others by giving them a boost. She taught us many important lessons. The one lesson that has had the most lasting effect on my life was her desire to help anyone in need who visited our home. It bothered me to see many of them leave with our food, our clothing,

and even our money. Because I was young and we were poor, I did not like what I saw. How could she give to others when our family did not even have enough? Was it wrong to attend to our needs first? Didn't we deserve a more comfortable life?

For years I struggled with these questions. Much later in life I finally realized what Mother was teaching. Even as she struggled with the effects of a crippling disease, she could not stop giving to those in need.

Out of small things

"Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great."⁶ Serving others need not come from spectacular events. Often it is the simple daily act that gives comfort, uplifts, encourages, sustains, and brings a smile to others.

May we always find opportunities to serve in my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Genesis 4:9; Moses 5:34.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (2002), 201.
5. "Have I Done Any Good?" *Hymns*, no. 223.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

Elder Keith K. Hilbig

Quench not the Spirit

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Paul admonished the members to act in a manner as becometh Saints. He proceeded to list appropriate attributes and behaviors. In verse 19 Paul counseled with these four simple words: "Quench not the Spirit."

Interestingly, some 500 years *before* Paul's writings, a Book of Mormon prophet named Jacob sought to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to a resistant people. He boldly inquired of them as follows: "Will ye reject the words of the prophets; and will ye . . . deny the good

word of Christ, . . . and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and quench the Holy Spirit?"¹

In our day, so many centuries *after* both Paul and Jacob, we too must be careful *not* to hinder, disregard, or quench the Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Ghost guides and enlightens us

The beckoning invitations of the world attempt to divert our attention from the strait and narrow path. The adversary labors to dull our sensitivity to the promptings of the Spirit, whether we are teenagers, young adults, or mature men and women. The role of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is essential in every season of our mortal lives.

From the beginning the Father has promised each of His spirit sons and daughters that through the Atonement and Resurrection of His Beloved Son, we *all* might return to God's presence and inherit the blessings of eternal life in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.

Each of us knew that the journey to exaltation would be long, strenuous, and sometimes lonely, but we also knew that we would not travel alone. Heavenly Father provides all who fulfill the prerequisites of faith, repentance, and baptism with a companion and guide, the Holy Ghost.

The path to eternal life is not on a plateau. Rather, it is an incline, ever onward and upward. Hence, ever-increasing spiritual understanding and energy are required to reach our destination. Because the pernicious opposition by Satan continues, the continuous enlightened guidance of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential. We dare not hinder, disregard, or quench the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Yet when it comes to drawing upon the promptings and the blessings which flow from the Holy Ghost, we often "live far beneath our privileges."²

In the Pearl of Great Price, Moses recorded that Adam, having been bap-

tized and having received the Holy Ghost, "became quickened in the inner man."³

When we invite the Holy Ghost to fill our minds with light and knowledge, He "quickens" us—that is to say, enlightens and enlivens the inner man or woman.⁴ As a result we notice a measurable difference in our soul. We feel strengthened, filled with peace and joy. We possess spiritual energy and enthusiasm, both of which enhance our natural abilities. We can accomplish more than we otherwise could do on our own. We yearn to become a holier person.

How to have an abundance of the Spirit

Do you wish to know the price to be paid for the privileges that are offered after we have received the Holy Ghost? The price is not a predetermined or fixed amount; rather, it is determined by each of us individually.

If you set your payment, which is your personal effort, very low, you may not be able to avail yourself of *all* the Spirit has to offer. You may even quench the Spirit! However, if you set your personal contribution high, you will reap an abundant harvest from the Spirit. The payment I reference is, of course, not money; rather, it is a greater commitment to and involvement in personal spiritual endeavors and behaviors.

We determine the level of our current personal contribution by examining our present choices and priorities against questions such as these:

1. Do I spend more time with sports than Church attendance or callings?
2. If I have a free day, do I choose to attend the temple or to visit the mall?
3. Do I resort to computer games or surfing the Internet rather than offering meaningful service to others in my home and community?
4. Do I read the newspaper religiously but find it difficult to read the scriptures daily?

There are other questions you might formulate which will reveal the appropriateness of your current choices and priorities.

Make more time for the things of eternity

Whatever level of spiritual development each of us presently has, there always exists a higher level within our reach. Time is a most precious asset. Would you consider investing more of your time in the things of eternity in order to merit the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and to benefit more fully from His influence?

If your answer is yes, the initial offering in this pursuit of deeper spirituality is an intensified desire to receive greater inspiration and to become more holy. When these desires fill our hearts, we will eagerly increase the price we pay for heaven's help.

Our next contribution to this effort will be to immerse ourselves more consistently in the words of Christ and of the prophets. When our study efforts expand, so will the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives increase. Let us search the scriptures with pen in hand, making note of new insights and recording spiritual promptings. Thereafter, let us strive to *apply* what has been learned to our personal lives. The Spirit will quicken our inner selves; new understanding will come precept upon precept.

To ensure we quench not the Spirit, but rather invite His presence, there is another step to take. Let us pray frequently and fervently. The Savior's tender and comprehensive promise is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

- "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you."
- "Seek me diligently and ye shall find me."
- "Ask, and ye shall receive."
- "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

- "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you."⁵

Note that sequence, brothers and sisters. We draw nearer to the Savior as we keep His commandments with exactness. We earnestly petition the Father in the name of Christ. Then, through the promptings of the Holy Ghost, we receive divine direction and clear understanding.

As we fast, renew our covenants during the sacrament, and attend the temple, we further access the Spirit. In these settings the Holy Ghost may manifest His influence with great impact.

The temple is a marvelous environment for us to seek personal revelation. When we attend as often as we can and listen thoughtfully, pondering the glorious promises and expectations pertaining to eternity, we depart with heightened understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan for us. The Holy Ghost extends our vision and allows that eternal perspective to influence the decisions we make in our daily lives.

Let us live in the Spirit

If we undertake this effort and quench not the Spirit, our inner being is quickened. As we persevere, eternal life awaits us. Thus, we dare not quench the Spirit through disobedience or neglect. Rather, let us "live in the Spirit,"⁶ enhancing the sacred and essential role of the Holy Ghost in our individual lives. I testify that as we truly seek the Spirit, we shall benefit more fully from the quiet, but essential, workings of the Holy Ghost. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jacob 6:8.
2. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 32.
3. Moses 6:65.
4. See Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 9th ed. (1965), 101: "The gift of

the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions

and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use.”

5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:63–64.

6. Galatians 5:25.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Declaring our Christianity

As Elder Ballard noted earlier in this session, various cross-currents of our times have brought increasing public attention to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Lord told the ancients this latter-day work would be “a marvellous work and a wonder,”¹ and it is. But even as we invite one and all to examine closely the *marvel* of it, there is one thing we would not like anyone to *wonder* about—that is whether or not we are “Christians.”

By and large any controversy in this matter has swirled around two doctrinal issues—our view of the Godhead and our belief in the principle of continuing revelation leading to an open scriptural canon. In addressing this we do not need to be apologists for our faith, but we would like not to be misunderstood. So with a desire to increase understanding and unequivocally declare our Christianity, I speak today on the first of those two doctrinal issues just mentioned.

The doctrine of the Godhead

Our first and foremost article of faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”² We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to

say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true.

Indeed no less a source than the stalwart *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* records that “the formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is *not* to be found in the [New Testament].”³

So any criticism that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not hold the contemporary Christian view of God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost is *not* a comment about our commitment to Christ but rather a recognition (accurate, I might add) that our view of the Godhead breaks with post–New Testament Christian history and returns to the doctrine taught by Jesus Himself. Now, a word about that post–New Testament history might be helpful.

Post–New Testament creeds

In the year A.D. 325 the Roman emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicaea to address—among other things—the growing issue of God’s alleged “trinity in unity.” What emerged from the heated contentions of churchmen, philosophers, and ecclesiastical dignitaries came to be known (after another 125 years and three more major councils)⁴ as the Nicene Creed, with later reformulations such as the Athanasian Creed. These various evolutions and iterations of creeds—and others to come