

## Elder Carlos A. Godoy

### Testimony as a process

A few years ago, when I was serving as an Area Seventy in Brazil, my family and I were on vacation in the beautiful city of Florianópolis. On Sunday, as usual, we went to the closest church that we could find. My wife and I and our oldest daughter attended a Sunday School class where they were discussing our personal testimony of the gospel.

At some point in the lesson, the teacher asked the class members if they would share a powerful spiritual experience they had while developing their testimony of the Church. While some brothers and sisters were sharing their stories, I mentally reviewed my own experiences as a convert for something I could share with them, but I could not think of anything very remarkable in my process of gaining a testimony.

While I was thinking and listening to the others' experiences, I realized that the teacher expected me to participate. She was listening to the other members, and she let me know that she was waiting for my great experience to be shared. After all, I was an Area Seventy, and I should have something impressive to share. Feeling that the time was passing and she was waiting for me, I tried harder to find something that would fit in this category of a powerful event, but I was not able to think of anything, to the disappointment of the teacher. For all I wanted to help, I could not meet her expectation.

Fortunately that was a fast Sunday, and during sacrament meeting, I took the opportunity to express my testimony to the congregation and especially to that sister and her Sunday School class. It was not a remarkable experience that I had to share but a sincere testimony that I have about the truths of the restored gospel.

### The Spirit whispers rather than shouts

Sometimes we think that to have a testimony of the Church, we need some great, powerful experience, or a single event which would erase any doubts that we have received an answer or a confirmation. President Boyd K. Packer taught:

“The voice of the Spirit is described in the scripture as being neither ‘loud’ nor ‘harsh.’ It is ‘not a voice of thunder, neither [a] voice of a great tumultuous noise.’ But rather, ‘a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper,’ and it can ‘pierce even to the very soul’ and ‘cause [the heart] to burn.’ (3 Ne. 11:3; Hel. 5:30; D&C 85:6–7.) Remember, Elijah found the voice of the Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but was a ‘still small voice.’ (1 Kgs. 19:12.)”

President Packer continues:

“The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. . . .

“Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening and say in our manner and expression, like Samuel of ancient times, ‘Speak [Lord], for thy servant heareth.’ (1 Sam. 3:10.)” (“The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

### Danger of looking for something great

Great events are not a guarantee that our testimony will be strong. Laman and Lemuel are good examples of this. They were visited by angels, and even then, almost in the very next minute, they were questioning the will of the Lord. Some great leaders of these latter days can also

teach us about this principle. They were taught from on high during the early days of the Restoration and still were not strong enough to endure to the end. These experiences show us that to receive the witness of the “still small voice” sometimes can have a stronger impact on our testimonies than the visit of an angel.

As a young man in Porto Alegre, Brazil, learning about the Church from two sister missionaries, I remember looking for an answer to my prayers—something big and unquestionable. It never happened. That does not mean that I did not develop enough certainty to join the restored Church.

Alma teaches this process of nurturing a testimony: “But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe [and I think that was my case as an investigator], let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27).

Since those days, for me as an investigator of the Church, and later as a missionary, and then as a father and a leader, all of these experiences together formed a set of experiences and feelings, most often small, that leave no doubt that the seed “is a good seed” (Alma 32:30).

Alma continues his teaching about testimony:

“Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it . . . beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea,

it beginneth to be delicious to me” (Alma 32:28).

A testimony, then, for some people, may come through a single and irrefutable event. But for others, it may come through a process of experiences that, perhaps not as remarkable but when combined, testify in an indisputable way that what we have learned and lived is true.

### **A testimony of absolute certainty**

Today, after many years as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I might not be able to remember most of the experiences that have shaped my testimony. Still, all of these experiences have left their mark and contributed to my testimony of the restored Church. Today I have an absolute certainty of the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would like to finish expressing this testimony, not only for that sister who taught the Sunday School class but also for all of you. I know that our Heavenly Father lives. I know He loves us. We are His children. He listens to our prayers. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. He died, was resurrected, and atoned for our sins. His Atonement has blessed me every day of my life.

I testify that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored in these latter days by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was a prophet of God. I know that we are led today by a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. I know he is a prophet for our days, just as Moses, Abraham, and Isaiah were in their days.

The Book of Mormon is the word of God, as well as the Bible, and it is another testimony of the Savior. I know that the power of the priesthood was restored and has been blessing many Saints throughout the world. And I testify of this in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.