

Conversion Is Our Goal

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For just over three years now, we have been on a journey together as members of the Lord's Church. It was October 2018 when the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited us to learn of Jesus Christ by studying the scriptures in a new and inspiring fashion, with the *Come, Follow Me* resource as our guide.

On any journey, it's good to pause occasionally to assess our progress and to make sure we are still moving toward our goal.

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Consider this profound statement from the introduction to *Come, Follow Me*:

“The aim of all gospel learning and teaching is to deepen our conversion to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. ...

“... The kind of gospel learning that strengthens our faith and leads to the miracle of conversion doesn't happen all at once. It extends beyond a classroom into our hearts and homes. It requires consistent, daily efforts to understand and live the gospel. Gospel learning that leads to true conversion requires the influence of the Holy Ghost.”¹

That is the miracle we seek—when one person has an experience in the scriptures² and that experience is blessed by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Such experiences are precious foundation stones for our conversion to the Savior. And as President Russell M. Nelson recently reminded us, spiritual foundations must be constantly reinforced.³ Long-lasting conversion is a lifelong process.⁴ Conversion is our goal.

To be most effective, your experiences with the scriptures must be your own.⁵ Reading or hearing about another person's experiences and insights can be helpful, but that won't bring the same converting power. There is no substitute for the time *you* spend in the scriptures, hearing the Holy Ghost speak directly to *you*.

What Is the Holy Ghost Teaching Me?

Each week when I open my *Come, Follow Me* manual, I write this question at the top of the page: “What is the Holy Ghost teaching me this week as I read these chapters?”

As I study the scriptures, I ponder that question over and over again. And without fail, spiritual impressions come, and I make note of them in my manual.

Now, how do I know when the Holy Ghost is teaching me? Well, it usually happens in small and simple ways. Sometimes a passage of scripture will seem to jump off the page to my attention. At other times, I feel like my mind is enlightened with a broader understanding of a gospel principle. I also feel the influence of the Holy Ghost when my wife, Anne Marie, and I talk about what we are reading. Her perspectives always invite the Spirit.

The Prophet and the Passover

This year we are studying the Old Testament—sacred scripture that fills our souls with light. While reading the Old Testament, I feel like I am spending time with trusted guides: Adam, Eve, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and so many others.

This week, while studying Exodus chapters 7–13, we learn how the Lord freed the children of Israel from centuries of captivity in Egypt. We read about nine plagues—nine impressive manifestations of God’s power—that Pharaoh witnessed without softening his heart.

Then the Lord told His prophet, Moses, about a tenth plague—and how each family in Israel could prepare for it. As part of a ritual they would call the Passover, the Israelites were to sacrifice a male lamb, one without blemish. Then they were to mark the doorframes of their homes with the blood of the lamb. The Lord promised that all the homes that were marked with the blood would be protected from the terrible plague that was about to come.

The scriptures say, “And the children of Israel ... did as the Lord ... commanded Moses” (Exodus 12:28). There is something very powerful in that simple statement of obedience.

Because the children of Israel followed the counsel of Moses and acted in faith, they were saved from the plague and, in time, freed from their captivity.

So what did the Holy Ghost teach me in these chapters this week?

Here are a few thoughts that have rested on my mind:

- The Lord works through His prophet to protect and save His people.
- The faith and humility to follow the prophet preceded the miracle of protection and deliverance.

- The blood on the doorframe was an outward sign of inward faith in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

The Prophet and the Lord's Promises

I am impressed with the parallel between the way the Lord blessed His people in this Old Testament account and the way He is also blessing His people today.

When the Lord's living prophet, President Nelson, introduced us to *Come, Follow Me* as a means of studying the scriptures, he invited us to transform our homes into sanctuaries of faith and centers of gospel learning.

Then he promised four specific blessings:

1. *your* Sabbath days will be a delight,
2. *your* children will be excited to learn and live the Savior's teachings,
3. the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in *your* home will decrease, and
4. these changes in *your* family will be dramatic and sustaining.⁶

Now, we don't have any journal entries from those who experienced the Passover with Moses in Egypt. However, we do have many testimonials from Saints who, with equal faith, are following President Nelson's counsel today and receiving the promised blessings.

Here are a few such testimonials:

A mother of a young family said: "We talk of Christ and rejoice in Christ in our home. To me that is the greatest blessing—that my children can grow up with these gospel conversations in the home that bring them closer to the Savior."⁷

A senior brother called his study of the scriptures through *Come, Follow Me* "a conduit filled with divine light that helps us see gospel doctrine that is necessary for our spiritual well-being."⁸

A young wife described the blessings in her marriage: "I have been able to know my husband's heart more deeply, and I have been able to open my heart more to him as we study together."⁹

A mother of a large family noticed how her efforts to teach her family changed. She mentioned: "Looking back, it was like I was playing the piano with snow gloves on. I was going through the motions, but the music wasn't quite right. Now the gloves are off, and while my music still isn't perfect, I hear the difference. *Come, Follow Me* has given me vision, ability, focus, and purpose."¹⁰

A young husband said: "My most important priorities at home have become more clear since I've made *Come, Follow Me* a regular part of my mornings. Studying leads me to think more about the things that matter most to me, like the temple, my

relationship with my wife, and my calling. I'm grateful that my home is a sanctuary where God comes first."¹¹

A sister shared: "My daily experiences with *Come, Follow Me* are rarely noteworthy, but over time I can see how I am being changed by such a constant, focused study of the scriptures. That kind of study humbles me, teaches me, and changes me a little at a time."¹²

A returned missionary reported: "The *Come, Follow Me* program has gotten me closer to the level of scripture study that I did on my mission, and I have been able to move from a checklist mentality of scripture study to truly enriching sessions of getting to know God."¹³

A brother said: "I feel the Holy Ghost welcomed more into my life and feel God's revelatory guidance in making decisions. I have more profound conversations regarding the beauty in the simple doctrine of Christ and His Atonement."¹⁴

A seven-year-old child shared: "I'm getting baptized soon, and *Come, Follow Me* is getting me ready. My family and I talk about baptism, and I don't feel nervous about getting baptized now. *Come, Follow Me* helps the Holy Ghost come into my heart, and I feel warm when I read the scriptures."¹⁵

And then finally, from a mother of several children: "As we study the word of God, He has helped our family move from concern to power; from trial and challenge to deliverance; from contention and criticism to love and peace; and from the adversary's influence to God's influence."¹⁶

These and many other faithful followers of Christ have symbolically placed the blood of the Lamb of God on the entrance to their homes. They are demonstrating their inward commitment to follow the Savior. Their faith precedes the miracle. It is the miracle of one person having an experience in the scriptures and that experience being blessed by the influence of the Holy Ghost.

When we study the scriptures, there is no spiritual famine in the land. As Nephi said, "Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction" (1 Nephi 15:24).

In ancient times, as the children of Israel followed the Lord's direction given through the prophet Moses, they were blessed with safety and freedom. Today, as we follow the Lord's direction given through our living prophet, President Nelson, we are equally blessed with conversion in our hearts and protection in our homes.

I testify that Jesus Christ lives. This is His Church, restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord's prophet today. I love and sustain him. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families: Old Testament 2022*, vii.
2. “We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth” (Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 8).
3. See Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 93–96.
4. This is an important reason why President Nelson has pleaded with us to “make time for the Lord! Make your own spiritual foundation firm and able to stand the test of time by doing those things that allow the Holy Ghost to be with you *always*” (“Make Time for the Lord,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 120).
5. “Regardless of what others may say or do, no one can ever take away a witness borne to your heart and mind about what is true” (Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95).
6. See Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113–14. President Nelson repeated this invitation last April: “Your commitment to make your home your *primary* sanctuary of faith should *never* end. As faith and holiness decrease in this fallen world, your need for holy places will increase. I urge you to continue to make your home a truly holy place ‘and *be not moved*’ [Doctrine and Covenants 87:8; emphasis added] from that essential goal” (“What We Are Learning and Will Never Forget,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 79).
7. Personal correspondence; see also 2 Nephi 25:26.
8. Personal correspondence.
9. Personal correspondence.
10. Personal correspondence.
11. Personal correspondence.
12. Personal correspondence.
13. Personal correspondence.
14. Personal correspondence.
15. Personal correspondence.
16. Personal correspondence.