

Nourishing and Bearing Your Testimony

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I invite you to seek opportunities to bear your testimony in word and in deed.

Introduction

Defining moments in life come often and unexpectedly, even when you are still young. Allow me to share a story about a high school student, Kevin, chosen to travel out of state for a student leader event, as told in his own words.

“My turn in line came, and the official-looking registration clerk asked for my name. She looked at her list and said, ‘So you’re the young man from Utah.’

“‘You mean I’m the only one?’ I asked.

“‘Yes, the only one.’ She handed me my name tag with ‘Utah’ printed below my name. As I clipped it on, I felt like I was being branded.

“I crowded into the hotel elevator with five other high school students with name tags like mine. ‘Hey, you’re from Utah. Are you a Mormon?’ asked one student.

“I felt out of place with all these student leaders from all over the country. ‘Yes,’ I hesitantly admitted.

“‘You’re the guys who believe in Joseph Smith, who said he saw angels. You don’t actually believe that, do you?’

“I didn’t know what to say. The students in the elevator were all staring at me. I had just arrived, and already everyone thought I was different. I became a little defensive but then said, ‘I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.’

“‘Where had that come from?’ I wondered. I didn’t know I had it in me. But the words felt true.

“‘Yeah, I was told that you were all just religious nuts,’ he said.

“With that, there was an uncomfortable pause as the elevator door opened. As we gathered our luggage, he walked down the hall laughing.

“Then, a voice behind me asked, ‘Hey, don’t Mormons have some sort of another Bible?’

“Oh no. Not again. I turned to see another student who had been in the elevator with me, Christopher.

“It’s called the Book of Mormon,’ I said, wanting to drop the subject. I picked up my bags and started walking down the hall.

“‘Is that the book Joseph Smith translated?’ he asked.

“‘Yeah, it is,’ I answered. I kept on walking, hoping to avoid embarrassment.

“‘Well, do you know how I could get one?’

“A scripture I learned in seminary suddenly came to me. ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.’¹ As this entered my mind, I felt ashamed I had been so embarrassed.

“For the rest of the week that scripture wouldn’t leave me. I answered as many questions about the Church as I could, and I made many friends.

“I discovered I was proud of my religion.

“I gave Christopher a Book of Mormon. He later wrote me, telling me he had invited the missionaries to his home.

“I learned not to be embarrassed to share my testimony.”²

I am inspired by Kevin’s courage in sharing his testimony. It is a courage repeated every day by faithful members of the Church throughout the world. As I share my thoughts, I invite you to reflect upon these four questions:

1. Do I know and understand what a testimony is?
2. Do I know how to bear my testimony?
3. What are the obstacles in sharing my testimony?
4. How do I keep my testimony?

Do I Know and Understand What a Testimony Is?

Your testimony is a most precious possession, often associated with deep spiritual feelings. These feelings are usually communicated quietly

and described as a “still small voice.”³ It is your belief or knowledge of truth given as a spiritual witness through the influence of the Holy Ghost. Acquiring this witness will change what you say and how you act. Key elements of your testimony, confirmed by the Holy Ghost, include:

- God is your Heavenly Father; you are His child. He loves you.
- Jesus Christ lives. He is the Son of the living God and your Savior and Redeemer.
- Joseph Smith is a prophet of God called to restore the Church of Jesus Christ.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s restored Church on the earth.
- The restored Church of Jesus Christ is led by a living prophet today.

Do I Know How to Bear My Testimony?

You bear your testimony when you share spiritual feelings with others. As a member of the Church, you have opportunities to bear your spoken testimony in formal Church meetings or in less formal, one-on-one conversations with family, friends, and others.

Another way you share your testimony is through righteous behavior. Your testimony in Jesus Christ isn’t just what you say—it’s who you are.

Each time you bear vocal witness or demonstrate through your actions your commitment to follow Jesus Christ, you invite others to “come unto Christ.”⁴

Members of the Church stand as witnesses of God at all times, in all things, and in all places.⁵ Opportunities to do this in the digital universe using inspiring content of our own or sharing uplifting content prepared by others are endless. We testify when we love, share, and invite, even online. Your tweets, direct messages, and posts will take on a higher, holier purpose when you also use social media to show how the gospel of Jesus Christ shapes your life.

What Are the Obstacles in Sharing My Testimony?

Obstacles to sharing your testimony may include uncertainty about what to say. Matthew Cowley, an early Apostle, shared this experience as he departed on a five-year mission at age 17 to New Zealand:

“I will never forget the prayers of my father the day that I left. I have never heard a more beautiful blessing in all my life. Then his last words to me at the railroad station, ‘My boy, you will go out on that mission; you will study; you will try to prepare your sermons; and sometimes when you are called upon, you will think you are wonderfully prepared, but when you stand up, your mind will go completely blank.’ I have had that experience more than once.

“I said, ‘What do you do when your mind goes blank?’

“He said, ‘You stand up there and with all the fervor of your soul, you bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God, and thoughts will flood into your mind and words to your mouth ... to the heart of everyone who listens.’ And so my mind, being mostly blank during my ... mission ... , gave me the opportunity to bear testimony to the greatest event in the history of the world since the crucifixion of the Master. Try it sometime, fellows and girls. If you don’t have anything else to say, testify that Joseph Smith was the prophet of God, and the whole history of the Church will flood into your mind.”⁶

Likewise, President Dallin H. Oaks shared, “Some testimonies are better gained on the feet bearing them than on the knees praying for them.”⁷ The Spirit bears witness to the speaker and listener alike.

Another obstacle, as Kevin’s story emphasized, is fear. As Paul wrote to Timothy:

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love. ...

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.”⁸

Feelings of fear don’t come from the Lord but most often from the adversary. Having faith, as Kevin did, will allow you to overcome these feelings and freely share what is in your heart.

How Do I Keep My Testimony?

I believe a testimony is innate within us, yet, in order to keep it and more fully develop it, Alma taught that we must nourish our testimony with much care.⁹ As we do so, “it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.”¹⁰ Without this, “it withers away.”¹¹

Each beloved member of the First Presidency has provided us with direction on how to keep a testimony.

President Henry B. Eyring lovingly taught us that “feasting on the word of God, heartfelt prayer, and obedience to the Lord’s commandments must be applied evenly and continually for your testimony to grow and prosper.”¹²

President Dallin H. Oaks reminded us that to retain our testimony, “we need to partake of the sacrament each week (see D&C 59:9) to qualify for the precious promise that we will ‘always have his Spirit to be with [us]’ (D&C 20:77).”¹³

And President Russell M. Nelson kindly counseled recently:

“Feed [your testimony] truth. ...

“... Nourish yourself in the words of ancient and modern prophets. Ask the Lord to teach you how to hear Him better. Spend more time in the temple and in family history work.

“... Make your testimony your highest priority.”¹⁴

Conclusion

My beloved brothers and sisters, I promise that as you more fully understand what a testimony is, and as you share it, you will overcome obstacles of uncertainty and fear, enabling you to nurture and keep this most precious possession, your testimony.

We are blessed to have countless examples of ancient and modern-day prophets who have boldly borne their testimonies.

Following Christ’s death, Peter stood and testified:

“Be it known unto you all ... that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, ... doth this man stand here before you. ...

“... For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”¹⁵

Amulek, following Alma’s sermon on faith, stated powerfully: “I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true. Behold, I say unto you, that I do know that Christ shall come among the children of men, ... and that he shall atone for the sins of the world; for the Lord God hath spoken it.”¹⁶

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, upon witnessing a glorious vision of the resurrected Savior, testified:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father.”¹⁷

Brothers and sisters, I invite you to seek opportunities to bear your testimony in word and in deed. Such an opportunity came to me recently, at the end of a meeting with the mayor of a capital city in South America, in his chambers with a number of his cabinet officials. As we concluded with very cordial feelings, I hesitantly thought I should share my testimony. Following the prompting, I offered a witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and the Savior of the world. Everything changed at that moment. The Spirit in the room was undeniable. It seemed everyone was touched. “The Comforter ... beareth record of the Father and of the Son.”¹⁸ I am so grateful I summoned the courage to bear my testimony.

When a moment like this comes, grab it and embrace it. You will feel the warmth of the Comforter inside you when you do.

I offer my testimony and witness to you—God is our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ lives, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God’s Church on the earth today led by our dear prophet, President Russell M. Nelson. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Romans 1:16.
2. Personal conversation and correspondence with Kevin Mumford, Sept. 2022; see also Kevin Mumford, “How I Know: I’m Not Ashamed,” *New Era*, Jan. 1999, 26–27.
3. 1 Kings 19:12.
4. Moroni 10:32.
5. See Mosiah 18:9.
6. Matthew Cowley, in Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Here We Stand* (1995), 189.
7. Dallin H. Oaks, “Testimony,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2008, 27.
8. 2 Timothy 1:7–8.
9. See Alma 32:37.
10. Alma 32:37.
11. Alma 32:38.
12. Henry B. Eyring, “A Living Testimony,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 126.
13. Dallin H. Oaks, “Testimony,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2008, 27.
14. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
15. Acts 4:10, 12.
16. Alma 34:8.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–23.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 42:17.