

Testimony

2/99

“The most important thing in this life is a testimony of the truth,” (Ezra Taft Benson, Ensign, November 1984, pg. 48)

Testimony Defined

(Revelation 19:10)

01 – “You cannot describe a testimony to someone. No one can really know what a testimony is—the feeling and the joy and the rejoicing and the happiness that come into the heart of man when he gets one—except another person who was received a testimony. Some things can only be known only by revelation.” (Bruce R. McConkie, CES address, All are Alike unto God)

02 – **What is a testimony? It is the rock of the Church. It is the power that binds man and God together, while he sojourns here in this life. It requires the administration of the Holy Ghost to obtain it and requires conformity to gospel principles to keep it.**” (Alvin R. Dyer, *The Meaning of Truth*, pg. 198)

03 – “A testimony of the gospel is a convincing knowledge given by revelation to the individual who humbly seeks the truth. Its convincing power is so great that there can be no doubt left in the mind when the Spirit has spoken. It is the only way that a person can truly know that Jesus is the Christ and that his gospel is true. There are millions of people on the earth who believe that Jesus lived and died and that his work was for the salvation of souls; but unless they have complied with his commandments and have accepted his truth as it has been restored, they do not know and cannot know the full significance of his mission and its benefits to mankind. Only through humble repentance and submission to the plan of salvation can this be made known. The way is open to all if they will receive his truth and accept his ordinances and abide faithfully in them.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:31)

04 – **“WHAT IS A TESTIMONY?** To have a testimony of Jesus is to possess knowledge through the Holy Ghost of the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

A testimony of Jesus is to know the divine nature of our Lord’s birth—that He is indeed the Only Begotten Son in the flesh.

A testimony of Jesus is to know that He was the promised Messiah and that while He sojourned among men He accomplished many mighty miracles.

A testimony of Jesus is to know that the laws which He prescribed as His doctrine are true and then to abide by these laws and ordinances.

To possess a testimony of Jesus is to know that He voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of all mankind in the Garden of Gethsemane, which caused Him to suffer in both body and spirit and to bleed from every pore. All this He did so that we would not have to suffer if we would repent. (D&C 19:16, 18)

To possess a testimony of Jesus is to know that He came forth triumphantly from the grave with a physical, resurrected body. And because He lives, so shall all mankind.

To possess a testimony of Jesus is to know that God the Father and Jesus Christ did indeed appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith to establish a new dispensation of His gospel so that salvation may be preached to all nations before He comes.

To possess a testimony of Jesus is to know that the Church, which He established in the meridian of time and restored in modern times is, as the Lord has declared, ‘the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth.’ (D&C 1:30)

Having such a testimony is vital. But of even greater importance is being valiant in our testimony.

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A testimony of Jesus means that we accept the divine mission of Jesus Christ, embrace His gospel, and do His works. It also means we accept the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and his successors and follow their counsel.” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, *Valiant in the Testimony of Jesus*, February 1987, pg. 2)

05 – “‘Come unto me’ and receive my Spirit, and then shall ye have power to learn of me. This is the great and grand secret. This is the course that is provided for us and for all men, and it is provided in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. This is the sole and only way to learn of Christ within the full sense and meaning of his tender and solicitous invitation. ‘No man can know that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost’. Little slivers of truth come to all who seek to know; occasional flashes of lightning give glimpses of the eternal realities that are hidden by the gloom and darkness of unbelief. But to learn and know those truths which reveal the Son of Man in his majesty and beauty and that prepare the truth seeker to be one with his Lord, such rays of the noonday sun shine forth only upon those who gain the enlightening companionship of the Holy Spirit.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:17)

Necessity of a Testimony

06 – “President Heber C. Kimball, shortly after the Saints had arrived here in the mountains—and some, I suppose, were somewhat gloating over the fact that they had triumphed for a temporary period over their enemies—had this to say...we think we are secure here in the chambers of the everlasting hills where we can close those few doors of the canyons against mobs and persecutors, the wicked and the vile, who have always beset us with violence and robbery, but I want to say to you, my brethren, the time is coming when we will be mixed up in these now peaceful valleys to that extent that it will be difficult to tell the face of a Saint from the face of an enemy to the people of God. Then, brethren, look out for the great sieve, for there will be a great sifting time, and many will fall—**for I say unto you there is a test, a TEST, a TEST coming**, and who will be able to stand?... You imagine, said he, that you would have stood by [the Prophet Joseph Smith] when persecution raged and he was assailed by foes within and without. You would have defended him and been true to him in the midst of every trial. You think you would have been delighted to have shown your integrity in the days of mobs and traitors.

Let me say to you, that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand, and plenty of opportunities to show that you are true to God and his work. **This Church has before it many close places through which it will have to pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not till you obtain it. If you do not you will not stand.**

Remember these sayings, for many of you will live to see them fulfilled. The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand? (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pg. 446, 449-50)” (Harold B. Lee, *CR*, October 1965, pg. 128)

The Promise of a Testimony

(Revelation 12:11; Alma 13:3-5)

07 – “Every human being is born with the light of faith kindled in his heart as on an altar, and that light burns and the Lord sees that it burns, during the period before we are accountable. When accountability comes then each of us determines how we shall feed and care for that light. If we shall live righteously that light will glow until it suffuses the whole body, giving to it health and strength and spiritual light as well as bodily health. If we shall live unrighteously that light will dwindle and finally almost flicker out. Yet it is my hope and my belief that the Lord never permits the light of faith wholly to be extinguished in any human heart, however faint the light may glow. The Lord has provided that there shall still be there a spark which, with teaching, with the spirit of righteousness, with love, with tenderness, with example, with living the Gospel, shall brighten and glow again, however darkened the mind may have been. And if we shall fail so to reach those among us of our own whose faith has dwindled low, we shall fail in one of the main things which the Lord expects at our hands.” (J. Reuben Clark, *CR, October 1936*, pg. 112)

08 – “What is it that convinces man? It is the influence of the Almighty, enlightening his mind, giving instruction to the

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understanding. When that which inhabits this body, that which came from the regions of glory, is enlightened by the influence, power, and Spirit of the Father of light, it swallows up the organization which pertains to this world....Anything besides that influence, will fail to convince any person of the truth of the Gospel of salvation. This is the reason why I love to hear men testify to the various operations of the Holy Spirit upon them..." (Brigham Young, *JD* 1:90)

09 – “Few of all the man-creation had ever glimpsed such a vision-Peter, James, and John, yes, and Moses, Abraham, and Adam, but few others. Joseph now belonged to an **elite group-the tried and trusted, and true**. He was in a select society of persons whom Abraham describes as "noble and great ones" that were ‘good’ and that were to become the Lord’s rulers. (Abraham 3:22-23)” (Spencer W. Kimball, *TSWK*, pg. 430)

The Promise of a Testimony Renewed

(Moroni 10:3-5; D&C 18:33-36)

10 – “The Lord will place within the reach of every honest soul who is willing to seek the truth a testimony of His divine truth.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *CES address, The Twelve Apostles*, 1958)

11 – “If there be doubts or misgivings in the hearts of any of the Latter-day Saints, in regard to the truth of the Gospel as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, I would like to say that it is our own fault. That would be evidence that we had not quite done the will of the Lord, for all who do the will of the Lord, we understand, will know of the doctrine. They will not only know of the doctrine, but they will know of the divinity of the Church; they will know of its authority. They will know of the Father; they will have a witness, for the Son will bear witness to them of the Father, and the Father will bear witness to them of the Son; and the Holy Ghost will bear witness, to all Saints, of the Father and the Son. **So, no Latter-day Saint ever need to be without a testimony**. It has occurred at times that Elders, over conscientious, have been afraid to bear testimony that they knew the Gospel was true, that they knew the Prophet Joseph was sent of God. They have been fearful lest they might bear testimony to something that they did not know to be true. Now, all Latter-day Saints are entitled to a witness and to know, and I thought, just in connection with this, I would read one or two verses from the ninety-third section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

‘Verily, thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh their sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and **know that I am**,

‘And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;

‘And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.’

Every Latter-day Saint is entitled to this witness and testimony. If we have not received this witness and testimony, my brethren and my sisters, I want you all to remember that the fault is ours, and not the Lord’s...” (Francis M. Lyman, *CR*, April 1910, pg. 30)

12 – “You may know. You need not be in doubt. **Follow the prescribed procedures, and you may have an absolute knowledge that these things are absolute truths. The necessary procedure is: study, think, pray, and do. Revelation is the key**. God will make it known to you once you have capitulated and have become humble and receptive. Having dropped all pride of your mental stature, having acknowledged before God your confusion, having subjected your egotism, and having surrendered yourself to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you are ready to begin to learn. With preconceived religious notions stubbornly held, one is not teachable. The Lord has promised repeatedly that he will give you a knowledge of spiritual things when you have placed yourself in a proper frame of mind. He has counseled us to seek, ask, and search diligently.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *TSWK*, p. 63)

13 – “Unless every member of this Church gains for himself an unshakable testimony of the divinity of the Church, he will be among those who will be deceived in this day when the ‘elect according to the covenant’ are going to be **tried and tested**. Only those will survive who have gained for themselves that testimony.” (Harold B. Lee, *CR*, October 1950, pg. 129)

Underlying Principles in Receiving a Testimony

(JS-H 1-20; D&C 93:1; Alma 32:28-42)

14 – “**The principles he followed in going to the grove should be the basis for all the decisions we all face.**” (Gerald E. Melchin, *Ensign*, May 1994, pg. 81)

15 – “**If a Person will read JS-H every month of their life, they will never fall away from the Church.**” (David O. McKay, *Mission Tour*, 1958)

A. Testimony is a 3-Fold Testament

16 – “We have the testimony of the Lord Jesus. We are a testimony-bearing people. **When we say we have a testimony of this work, we mean three things in particular: we mean, number one;** that we know by the revelations of the Holy Spirit to our souls that Jesus is the Lord, that he was born into the world as the literal Son of God, that he came with the power of immortality because God was his father and he was thereby able to work out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice. **The atonement of the Lord Jesus is the most important single thing in all revealed religion. The second point in our testimony is** that God has in these last days, through the instrumentality primarily of Joseph Smith, restored anew the knowledge of Christ and the knowledge of salvation and given again every key and power and right and prerogative that enables us men to do the things that will save and exalt us in the highest heaven of the celestial world. **And the third great truth in a testimony is** to know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as now constituted with President Spencer W. Kimball as its presiding officer is, in the most literal and real and full sense of the word, the kingdom of God on earth, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, and the one place where salvation is found.

Now when we say that we have a testimony of the divinity of the work, we mean those three things. We mean that the Holy Spirit of God has spoken to the spirit within us so that we know by revelation—not simply by mental analysis or by reason but by personal revelation born of the Holy Spirit—that those three great verities are precisely that.” (Bruce R. McConkie, Rulon T. Burton, *We Believe*, ‘Testimony’, ACR(Sydney)1976, pg. 17)

B. Doctrine of the Same Spirit (D&C 34:32-34)

17 – “Will you join with me in considering these questions:

If you had lived in Jerusalem in the days of Jesus, would you have accepted him as the Son of God as did Peter and the Apostles? Or would you have said he had a devil and wrought miracles by the power of Beelzebub, as Annas and Caiaphas claimed?

If you had lived in Nazareth or Cana or Capernaum, would you have believed the new religion preached by a few simple fishermen? Or would you have followed the traditions of your fathers in which there was no salvation?

If you had lived in Corinth or Ephesus or Rome, would you have believed the strange new gospel preached by Paul? Or would you have put your trust in the vagaries and traditions and forms of worship that then prevailed?

If you now live in New York or London or Paris, if you live in Chicago, Los Angeles, or Salt Lake—will you accept the new yet old religion, the new yet old gospel, the new yet old way of life that God has revealed anew for our day? Or will you sustain and support churches that no longer have any real resemblance to the one set up among the primitive Saints?

If you hear a prophetic voice, if an apostolic witness is borne in your presence, if the servants of the Lord give you a message from their Master—what is your reaction? Do you believe or disbelieve?

If you are told in words of soberness that Joseph Smith was called of God, that through him the fulness of the everlasting gospel has been restored, and that the Lord has established his church once again among men—do you believe the heaven-sent word? Or, like Annas and Caiaphas, do you stay with the status quo and trust your eternal salvation to the varying forms of man-made worship that abound on every hand?” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Ensign*, November 1981, pg. 46)

C. Here Today Gone Tomorrow (Alma 5:26)

18 – “I do not believe that a member of the Church can have an active, vibrant testimony of the gospel without keeping the commandments. **A testimony is to have current inspiration to know the work is true, not something we receive only once.**” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1983, pg. 54)

19 – “**Testimony isn’t something you have today, and you are going to have always.** A testimony is fragile. It is as hard to hold as a moonbeam. It is something you have to recapture every day of your life.” (Harold B. Lee, *Church News*, July 15 1972)

20 – “**A testimony isn’t something you gain today and you have always; your testimony will change. It will grow brighter and stronger, even to a perfect knowledge, or it will diminish to nothing depending on what you do about it.**” (Harold B. Lee, *CES address, Objectives in Church Education*)

D. Small and Simply Things (Alma 37:5-6)

21 – “When I as a boy first started out in the ministry, **I would frequently go out and ask the Lord to show me some marvelous thing, in order that I might receive a testimony. But the Lord withheld marvels from me, and showed me the truth, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, until he made me to know the truth from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and until doubt and fear had been absolutely purged from me. He did not have to send an angel from the heavens to do this, nor did he have to speak with the trump of an archangel. By the whisperings of the still small voice of the Spirit of the living God, he gave to me the testimony I possess. And by this principle and power he will give to all the children of men a knowledge of the truth that will stay with them,** and it will make them to know the truth, as God knows it, and to do the will of the Father as Christ does it. And no amount of marvelous manifestations will ever accomplish this. It is obedience, humility, and submission to the requirements of heaven and to the order established in the kingdom of God upon the earth, that will establish men in the truth (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pg. 7)

22 – “**When the Spirit speaks to spirit, the imprint upon the soul is far more difficult to erase. Every member of the Church should have impressions that Jesus is the Son of God indelibly pictured on his soul through the witness of the Holy Ghost.**” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Improvement Era, November 1966)

E. By Study and By Faith (D&C 88:118-119)

23 – “That is no casual promise. It is a positive one, and every soul in this world may have a revelation, the same one that Peter had. That revelation will be a testimony, a knowledge that Christ lives, that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of this world. Every soul may have this assurance, and when he gets this testimony, it will have come from God and not from study alone. Study is an important element, of course, but there must be associated with study much prayer and reaching, and then this revelation comes....

Mere passive acceptance of the doctrines will not give the testimony; no casual half-compliance with the program will bring that assurance, but an all-out effort to live his commandments.

It should also be kept in mind that God cannot be found through research alone, nor his gospel understood and appreciated by study only, for no one may know the Father or the Son but ‘he to whom the Son will reveal him’ (Luke 10:22). The skeptic will some day either in time or eternity learn to his sorrow that his egotism has robbed him of much joy and growth, and that as has been decreed by the Lord: The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of man; that man cannot by himself find out God or his program; that no amount of scientific or philosophical research nor rationalizing will bring a testimony, but it must come through the heart when compliance with the program has made the person eligible to receive that reward.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *New Era*, August 1981, pg. 4, 6-7)

24 – “I fear that among many of our people there is a certain type of sectarianism with respect to ‘I know that my Redeemer lives.’ I refer to a mental and intellectual acceptance of Jesus as the Christ. Too many of us have that kind of testimony, which is not really a testimony at all. I do not think an intellectual acceptance of Jesus as the Christ is a testimony at all, and unfortunately many of our people have only that kind of an acceptance — intellectual.” (Mark E.

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Petersen , *CES address, The Power of Testimony*, July 11, 1956)

F. Pray and Be Believing (D&C 90:24)

25 – “I thought this morning that I would refer to the question of prayer, for it is so vital to a man and woman, no matter what position they hold, in order that they may maintain a testimony, if they have one, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and if they haven't yet that testimony, I know of no better way in all the world to receive it than to plead with our Heavenly Father that it may be granted unto them. I know whereof I speak, because it was only through the humiliation of my soul and the prayers ascending to my God, at the request of the mother who gave me birth, that I received a testimony that this is God's work; and every prediction made by the servants of God in any age since it was established upon this earth, shall be fulfilled.” (Reed Smoot, *CR*, October 1932, pg. 85)

G. Obedience to that Law (D&C 130:20-21, John 7:17)

26 – “That test is most sound. It is most philosophical. It is the most simple test to give knowledge to an individual of which the human mind can conceive. Doing a thing, introducing it into your very being will convince you whether it is good or whether it is bad. You may not be able to convince me of that which you know, but you know it because you have lived it. That is the test which the Savior gave to those men when they asked him how they should know whether the doctrine was of God or whether it was of man.” (David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, pg. 7)

27 – “I was brought up in scientific laboratories, where I was taught to test things, never to be satisfied unless a thing was tested. We have the right to test the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. By testing it I mean living it, trying it out. Do you question the Word of Wisdom? Try it. Do you question the law of tithing? Practice it. Do you doubt the virtue of attending meetings? Attend them. Only then shall we be able to speak of these things intelligently and in such a way as to be respected by those who listen to us. Those who live the Gospel of Jesus Christ gain this higher knowledge, this greater testimony, this ultimate assurance that this is the truth. It is the way to truth. All the while... we must seek help from the great unseen world about us, from God and his messengers. We call that prayer. A man never finds perfect peace, never reaches afar unless he penetrates to some degree the unseen world, and reaches out to touch the hands, as it were, of those who live in that unseen world, the world out of which we came, the world into which we shall go.” (John A. Widtsoe, *CR*, October 1938, pg. 129)

H. Principle of ‘I Know’ (JS-H 1:20, 25)

28 – “The essential thought must ever be that a man does not, except in his spiritual infancy, accept a statement merely because the Church or someone in authority declares it correct, but because, under mature examination, it is found to be true and right and worthwhile. Conversion must come from within.” (John A. Widtsoe, *Program of the Church*, pg. 24)

29 – “The individual testimony is a personal possession. One cannot give his testimony to another, yet he is able to aid his earnest brother in gaining a true testimony for himself.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Juvenile Instructor*, August 1, 1906, pg. 465)

30 – “There are no words like ‘I know.’ I know it is true. Because that word, those few words have been said a billion times by millions of people does not make it trite. It will never be worn out. I feel sorry for people who try to couch it in other words because there are no words like ‘I know.’ There are no words which express the deep feelings which can come from the human heart like ‘I know.’” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Unpublished Address Church Historical Department-Berlin, Germany*, January 15, 1962, pg. 5)

31 – “May I witness to you in closing that perhaps my experience is like many of yours in that my testimony has come sequentially in three different ways: First, I knew through the witness of the Spirit early in life that the gospel is true, through seeing the power of the priesthood operate in my home in unusual and remarkable circumstances. Through the good life of my father and those associated with him, I knew it was true because I saw it happen. I had that fresh kind of experience and witness of the Spirit that it was true. Next came the intellectual testimony, but only after I did what you have to do to have your mind join your heart: I read and devoured all that I could about the gospel so that my mind and heart could join in saying that it is true. Subsequently and concurrently came the witness of experience that with the passage of time freshly affirms the validity of the gospel

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as the only answer to human problems, the only way. I do not say that condescendingly nor with any sense of cultural arrogance of belonging to a group that has all the answers, but in a sense with a special kind of humility, realizing that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only answer to human problems...But for me these three witnesses—the spirit, the mind, and experience—flow together, singing and shouting in according that the gospel is true.” (Neal A. Maxwell, *CES address*, The Gospel Gives Answers to Life’s Problems)

Rewards of a Testimony

(D&C 62:3; D&C 84:61)

32 – “It’s impossible to stand up and express your love for the Lord and how your really feel in your heart about him and not have the spirit of the Lord come upon you.” (Gene R. Cook, *CES address*, Teaching by the Spirit and Learning how to receive blessings from the Lord, June 30, 1989)

33 – “To point up the importance of such a testimony and knowledge, I shall discuss first its rewards— the rewards of a testimony and a knowledge of the gospel....First, the possessor of such a faith and knowledge has a sound understanding of the purpose of life....Second, the possessor of such a faith and knowledge has a sure test by which to distinguish truth and error....Third, the possessor of faith and knowledge is fortified in his courage to resist temptation, to live true to his convictions....Finally, as to the rewards of such a faith and knowledge, the possessor enjoys peace of mind in the days of trial.” (Marion G. Romney, *CES address*, The Value of a Well Informed Faith, April 10, 1975)

Steps to Strengthening the Receiving of a Testimony

(Alma 12:9-11)

34 – “First, to keep our testimony we must feed it, regularly and plentifully. The steps that lead to a testimony: desire, prayer, study, and practice, must be trodden continuously....

To keep his testimony, a person must increase in the use of gospel principles. There must be stricter conformity with the higher as well as the lesser laws of life—more activity in Church service; increasing charity and kindness; greater sacrifice for the common good; more readiness to help advance the plan of salvation; more truth in all we do. And as our knowledge of gospel law increases, our activity under gospel law must increase....

The dying testimony is easily recognized. The organizations and practices of the Church are ignored; the radio takes the place of the sacrament meeting; golf or motion pictures, the Sunday worship; the cup of coffee, instead of the Word of Wisdom; the cold, selfish hand instead of helpfulness, charity for the poor and the payment of tithing.

Soon, the testimony is gone, and the former possessor walks about, somewhat sour and discontented, and always in his heart, unhappy. He has lost his most precious possession, and has found nothing to replace it. He has lost inward freedom, the gift of obedience to law.” (John A. Widtsoe, *Gospel Interpretations*, pg. 37-39)

The Bearing of One’s Testimony

(Alma 5:44-48; Alma 30:39-40)

35 – “Korihor’s arguments sound very contemporary to the modern reader but Alma used a timeless and ultimately undeniable weapon in response—the power of personal testimony.” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, pg. 121)

1. Public Thanks

36 – Statements of public thanks. “Bearing testimony has to do with bearing witness to that which we know to be true. Much of what we call testimony bearing is not really testimony at all—it is a statement or expression of public thanks. It is good to be thankful, but public thanks is not testimony. Testimony comes from the Holy Ghost.” (Hartman Rector Jr., *Ensign*, May 1974, pg. 109)

2. Training of the Young

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37 – “Let the testimonies then of the young people include the training of their feelings by way of making them more appreciative and more thankful for the blessings they enjoy, and the children should be made to understand what these blessings are and how they come to them. It is an excellent way to make people helpful and thankful to others, by first making them thankful to God.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Juvenile Instructor*, April 15, 1903, pg. 245-246)

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3. Emotionalism

38 – Crying while bearing your testimony. “You don’t have to cry about the gospel to have a testimony! Many times we think that we don’t have a testimony unless a few tears flow. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is not necessary or needful for a person to have tears streaming down their face to have a testimony of the gospel.

I remember a missionary once who used to cry so badly when he bore his testimony that I finally just told him, “Elder, I think you are making a demonstration of yourself. Why don’t you try bearing your testimony without crying. You don’t have to shed tears.” I know that there are occasions when our hearts are close to the surface, and tears come. I’ve seen that in President McKay. But, I tell you, the serenity of the gospel of Jesus Christ does not depend upon emotionalism to bring forth a testimony. These things are firmly fixed under the power of the spirit. They don’t require a physical emotionalism to demonstrate testimony because they are born of a solid conviction by the power of truth! I found out with this missionary that as a young man he had born his testimony for the first time and it had caused him to cry and everyone had come up and told him what a wonderful testimony it was. That was the springboard. From then on he cried every time he bore his testimony, so people would come up and say what a wonderful testimony he had.

I went to a meeting with Spencer W. Kimball and a man got up and bore his testimony and he cried all the way through it. After the meeting, Brother Kimball called him over and said, “Brother, I wish you’d stop crying when you bear your testimony. You don’t have to do that to tell people that you love the Lord.”

I felt embarrassed for another missionary who bore his testimony and said, “If you’ll pardon me. I’m overcome” and he really wept, and when he got through, Brother Bennion really took him apart. He wasn’t trying to be unkind to the missionary, but sometimes you can be misled by over-emotionalism, which is merely a surging of the blood. It is not conviction! I think we ought to bear our testimonies without tears, and stand strong and honorably before our fellow men and tell them the truth, born of the spirit that comes to us. Now I know that isn’t always easy, and I know I have had to struggle many times to keep back the tears, and I don’t think we ought to fight that either. I hope you understand what I mean, but there are people who can bring tears pretty fast, and sometimes it is an indication of a lack of sincerity.” (Alvin R. Dyer, *Unpublished Address Church Historical Department-Berlin Germany*, March 25, 1961, pg. 12-13)

39 – “**Do you think that you can go three, and six, and nine, and twelve months without bearing your testimony and still keep its full value?... Every time you bear your testimony it becomes strengthened.**” (Spencer W. Kimball, *New Era*, August 1981, pg. 6, 7)

40 – “**Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be found in the bearing of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that “leap of faith,” as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two.**” (Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, January 1983, pg. 54)

41 – “**Advice on How to Obtain a Testimony.** I say to all Israel—to the youth of Israel particularly—join these associations, join them with a desire, and with a prayer in your hearts, if you do not have a knowledge of the divinity of this work, that God will give that knowledge to you. **I have heard President Young and other men say many times that more often have young people received a testimony, in their very souls, of the divinity of this work, while standing upon their feet than they ever received while kneeling and praying for that testimony;**” (Heber J. Grant, *Improvement Era*, August, 1921, No. 10)

BEARING One's Testimony

“TO BEAR” One's Testimony:

01 – to express, to speak, or to declare
[to bear witness]

Question: Do I declare my testimony, always?

02 – to suffer or to endure
[to bear pain]

Question: Do I endure the responsibilities my testimony brings me?

03 – to carry
[to bear a gift]

Question: Do I carry my testimony with me everywhere I go?

04 – to exhibit or to show
[to bear a resemblance]

Question: Does my testimony show in everything I do?

05 – to bring forth or to produce
[to bear fruit]

Question: Can I produce power with my testimony, that all may see and feel?

Classic Stories on Testimony

42 – “When I was a boy, I yearned...to know that Joseph Smith's vision was right and true and that this Church was really founded by revelation as Joseph Smith claimed, and when I was a boy I thought that the only way we could gain a testimony of the truth of this was by some revelation—some miraculous manifestation—just as came to the Prophet Joseph. One day, while I was riding my horse upon a hill, hunting some stock, I threw the reins over the horse's head and let him stand, and knelt down by a serviceberry bush and asked the Lord for a manifestation, some feeling that would testify in me that John the Baptist did appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, that God did appear himself as well as his Son to the Prophet Joseph. I believe I prayed just as earnestly as ever a boy did pray. I arose, put the reins over my horse's head, mounted in the saddle, and started again up the hill. This is what I said to myself: ‘Well, if I am honest, I am just the same boy that I was when I knelt down to pray; there is no change in me; there is no miraculous manifestation.’ On other occasions, I did the same when I crossed Spring Creek in the evening to milk cows.

Later, I was called to go on a mission. I responded, and was appointed to Glasgow, Scotland. By that time, I had learned that the best way to get a testimony is not by a manifestation, but by the Spirit which results in doing the will of our Father which is in heaven. ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself’” (David O. McKay, *Improvement Era*, 66:54-55)

43 – “I will tell you of an experience I had before I was a General Authority which affected me profoundly. I sat on a plane next to a professed atheist who pressed his disbelief in God so urgently that I bore my testimony to him. ‘You are wrong,’ I said, ‘there is a God. I know He lives!’

He protested, ‘You don't know. Nobody knows that! You can't know it!’ When I would not yield, the atheist, who was an attorney, asked perhaps the ultimate question on the subject of testimony. ‘All right,’ he said in a sneering, condescending way, ‘you say you know. Tell me how you know.’

When I attempted to answer, even though I held advanced academic degrees, I was helpless to communicate.

Sometimes in your youth, you young missionaries are embarrassed when the cynic, the skeptic, treat you with contempt because you do not have ready answers for everything. Before such ridicule, some turn away in shame. (Remember the iron rod, the spacious building, and the mocking? (1 Nephi 8:28)

When I used the words Spirit and witness, the atheist responded, ‘I don't know what you are talking about.’ The words prayer, discernment, and faith, were equally meaningless to him. ‘You see,’ he said, ‘you don't really know. If you did, you would be able to tell me how you know.’

I felt, perhaps, that I had borne my testimony to him unwisely and was at a loss as to what to do. Then came the experience! Something came into my mind. And I mention here a statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith: ‘A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas ... and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.’ (TPJS, pg. 151)

Such an idea came into my mind and I said to the atheist, ‘Let me ask if you know what salt tastes like.’

‘Of course I do,’ was his reply.

‘When did you taste salt last?’

‘I just had dinner on the plane.’

‘You just think you know what salt tastes like,’ I said.

He insisted, ‘I know what salt tastes like as well as I know anything.’

‘If I gave you a cup of salt and a cup of sugar and let you taste them both, could you tell the salt from the sugar?’

‘Now you are getting juvenile,’ was his reply. ‘Of course I could tell the difference. I know what salt tastes like. It is an everyday experience—I know it as well as I know anything.’

‘Then,’ I said, ‘assuming that I have never tasted salt, explain to me just what it tastes like.’

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After some thought, he ventured, 'Well-I-uh, it is not sweet and it is not sour.'

'You've told me what it isn't, not what it is.'

After several attempts, of course, he could not do it. He could not convey, in words alone, so ordinary an experience as tasting salt. I bore testimony to him once again and said, 'I know there is a God. You ridiculed that testimony and said that if I did know, I would be able to tell you exactly how I know. My friend, spiritually speaking, I have tasted salt. I am no more able to convey to you in words how this knowledge has come than you are to tell me what salt tastes like. But I say to you again, there is a God! He does live! And just because you don't know, don't try to tell me that I don't know, for I do!'

As we parted, I heard him mutter, 'I don't need your religion for a crutch! I don't need it.'

From that experience forward, I have never been embarrassed or ashamed that I could not explain in words alone everything I know spiritually. The Apostle Paul said it this way:

'We speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.'

'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Corinthians 2:13-14)." (Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, January 1983, pg. 51-52)