

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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Stoker, H. Steven, and Joseph C. Muren, comps. *Into Your Heart Like Fire*. Ogden, Utah, 1975.

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TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

For Latter-day Saints, the FIRST PRINCIPLE OF THE GOSPEL is FAITH in Jesus Christ. This faith is intertwined with “the testimony of Jesus,” which is received from God, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). Joseph Smith said, “No man can *know* that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (TPJS, p. 223; 1 Cor. 12:3). The essence of a TESTIMONY is a personal inward assurance of Jesus Christ’s divinity, and it provides the fundamental basis for a Christian life. One becomes a disciple of Christ in the fullest spiritual sense only when a personal testimony of Jesus is received.

To have such a testimony is to be conscious that God has borne witness within one’s soul by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ (D&C 46:13). How is this witness obtained? As Paul wrote, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The testimony of Jesus Christ comes to those who hear of him. But to hear the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST preached is not yet to have a testimony of him. Divine confirmation must also be received, usually in answer to sincere prayer. These three elements usually occur in a sequence: hearing, praying, receiving the divine witness by the Spirit. They can also occur simultaneously. Following Peter’s earnest declaration, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus replied, “Blessed art thou . . . for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:16–17). Like Peter, PROPHETS and APOSTLES of all ages have testified of Jesus Christ (see John 20:31).

Praying for a testimony of Jesus Christ or for any other truth of the gospel does not assume the presence of the faith being sought. The common phrase, “acting in good faith,” may offer insight here. It suggests a willingness to approach a matter not with suspicion but with trust. The Book of Mormon prophet ALMA₂ asks his listeners to “awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words . . . even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words” (Alma 32:27). To those willing to open their hearts at least this much, a testimony may come,

but hardly to those without a fervent desire to obtain it. Most Latter-day Saints treasure the spiritual experiences that awaken and confirm testimony.

The gaining of a testimony is best viewed not as a single event but as a continuing process. Just as spiritual indolence and disobedience to the commandments of Christ constantly weaken a testimony, so close communion with God and selfless Christian service progressively strengthen it. Because Latter-day Saints view religion as an active as well as a contemplative way of life, they stress the unity of these two ends. Drawing close to God and serving others are aspects of a single purpose, following Christ. Only those who seek to do this may come to truly know him. “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13). But to all who follow him, the testimony of Jesus Christ gives an assurance of his presence, his all-enveloping care, and his love.

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THANKFULNESS

From time immemorial those who believe in God have expressed their thankfulness to him. Giving humble thanks is also among the most basic religious expressions of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as with religious people everywhere. It is also a prescribed element of prayer (D&C 46:32).

In ancient times MOSES offered sacrifices of thanksgiving (Lev. 7:11–13) and King Hezekiah gave “thank offerings” (2 Chr. 29:30–31). Ascribed to David are the Talmud’s One Hundred Daily Benedictions that begin with “Blessed are thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe!” and express gratitude for common as well as exceptional activities, enjoyments, natural phenomena, and encounters with remarkable persons. Upon receiving good news or blessings, the Hebrews uttered appreciation for God’s munificence; when experiencing trials they thanked God because he is just.

Jesus memorably taught the appropriateness of gratitude after he healed ten lepers on his way to Jerusalem. When only one of the ten, a Samaritan,