

“Stages of Faith” by Evan Sharley

[Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference](#)

1. Introduction

[On December 2, 1855, Amasa Lyman said:](#)

When I was a child I thought as a child, I believed the Gospel as a child, I speculated about it as a child, and I talked about it as a child would; but since I became a man I have learned different things; I have learned that there is a vast difference between receiving and endorsing a belief in the existence of a fact, and the full and perfect comprehension of it.

When I reflect on my own spiritual development, I can see myself in Brother Lyman’s teaching. My faith is not what it was when I was a child. It has become more examined, more expansive, and more mature.

About 8 years ago I discovered the work of James Fowler, who worked to articulate how people spiritually develop and mature. It gave me a framework for understanding not only my own development, but the spiritual development of many people around me. I’d like to give a brief biography of Dr. Fowler, and then explore his Stages of Faith.

2. Biography

James W. Fowler III grew up in North Carolina in a Methodist minister's family. He was deeply affected by his father’s preaching from an early age and came to see his life as dedicated to God.

Fowler felt called to gain an education to come closer to God. He first studied history at Duke, then earned a Bachelor of Divinity in theology and ethics at Drew University, and finally completed a PhD in religion and society at Harvard. After that, he was a professor of theology and human development at Emory University, where he served as director of both the Center for Research on Faith and Moral Development and the Center for Ethics until he retired in 2005.

In the late 1970s, he and his graduate-student collaborators began to piece together a spiritual developmental model. They conducted 359 interviews - most with Protestant and Catholic but some were Jewish - and they asked people from the ages of 4 into their early 80s about their life, their relationships, their values and commitments, and their religion. These interviews took roughly 2 hours to conduct, and produced 30-50 pages of transcripts.

In 1981, Fowler published his book “Stages of Faith”. In this, he treated faith as a generic human phenomenon: “a way of leaning into or meeting life,” not simply adherence to a religion. It is about the deeper pattern by which a person builds meaning, trusts something as ultimate,

and organizes life around it. Thus, Fowler's "faith" is closer to a meaning system than a checklist of doctrines.

3. Stages of Faith

When I first encountered Fowler's Stages of Faith, it was like he had written about me personally. I was struck by how closely my own spiritual life had followed this model. Because of how influential it was to me, I would like to share what each of the stages are called, what ages people may reach them at, what it involves, and how it is applicable to us as Mormons.

Stage 0: Primal Faith

This stage begins at birth, and usually lasts until you're 2 or 3.

Obviously, an infant does not possess a testimony, a concept of Heavenly Parents, or an understanding of exaltation. What is formed at this time in life is the earliest groundwork of trust. A child begins to learn whether the world is safe or frightening, loving or antagonistic, dependable or unstable, communal or solitary, and whether those entrusted with their care can be relied upon. Later in life, this groundwork helps determine if people will have ease or difficulty in trusting other people or more abstract concepts like God.

Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith

This stage usually begins around 2 or 3, and can last until you're around 6 or 7.

At this age, children do not approach religion in a careful, analytical, or systematic way. They experience it through story, image, symbol, feeling, and imagination. For Mormon children, this often means vivid mental worlds filled with Nephi building a ship, angels appearing to prophets, Moses parting the Red Sea, and Satan trying to lead their souls astray.

Because children at this stage cannot yet clearly separate symbolism from literal reality, these religious images can feel especially powerful. They may seem wondrous, holy, beautiful, or frightening in ways that leave a deep impression that shapes their sense of reality for years to come.

At this stage, we still rely almost entirely upon the adults around us. Our sense of what is real remains fluid, and we are constantly encountering new experiences that reshape our understanding of the world. As a result, we usually do not yet understand that there are many people who do not share our family's beliefs, or that there are other possible ways of approaching spirituality.

Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith

This stage usually begins around age 7 and ideally lasts until around 11 or 12, but some adults never grow out of this stage.

At this age, children become better at following stories, understanding rules, and thinking in concrete ways. Faith begins to feel more orderly and literal: scriptural accounts are taken as

straightforward history, moral teachings seem clear, and the universe is expected to operate by a simple logic of righteousness and reward. If you keep the commandments, you are blessed; if you do wrong, you lose blessings.

For Mormons, this is often the stage when baptism and confirmation take on real significance. A child begins to think more seriously about accountability, repentance, obedience, the sacrament, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. They still rely heavily on parents, teachers, and leaders to interpret reality, but now with a stronger sense that those authorities are giving them a reliable map of how God's world works.

Because of this, children in this stage often develop a strong expectation of divine fairness. They may feel confused or shaken when life does not unfold in the neat moral order they expected—when good people suffer, prayers seem unanswered, or righteousness does not immediately bring the blessings they were taught to anticipate.

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith

This stage often begins around age 12 and can continue well into adulthood.

At this stage, faith becomes deeply intertwined with identity, belonging, and community. Rather than merely accepting stories and commandments in a literal sense, a person begins to assemble a broader worldview shaped by the people, institutions, and communities that matter most to them. Faith becomes synthetic because it gathers many beliefs and values into a unified whole, and conventional because that whole is still largely inherited from and reinforced by one's religious world.

For many Mormons, this is the stage in which a testimony becomes bound up with seminary, EFY, mission culture, temple worthiness, callings, BYU culture, family expectation, and community belonging. A person may sincerely feel, "I know the Gospel is true," and that testimony may be completely heartfelt and real to them, but is still largely received through the body of the Saints rather than forged in the wilderness of direct confrontation with uncertainty.

At this stage, we often rely heavily on the perspectives and approval of others, especially those we honor, sustain, or feel accountable to. This stage often brings a strong sense of meaning, identity, and spiritual confidence, but also a tendency to avoid doubt, tension, ambiguity, or voices that might disturb the harmony of the world we have built.

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith

This stage often begins in young adulthood, though many people enter it later or never fully do.

At this stage, a person begins to step back from inherited belief and examine it for themselves. This can be one of the most painful and transformative stages of all. It may involve rethinking one's assumptions about prophetic authority, scripture, church history, revelation, priesthood, temple worship, gender, sexuality, or even the nature of God. A person begins to ask not only what they believe, but why they believe it, and whether those beliefs can still stand when examined in the full light of experience, history, and reason.

This is often the stage where people begin to distinguish between testimony and social conditioning and between revelation and institutional expectation. Teachings once received as obvious may now be searched out, wrestled with, and reconsidered. Historical complexities, doctrinal tensions, unanswered prayers, exclusion, grief, disillusionment, or encounters with perspectives outside one's upbringing may all become catalysts.

At this stage, a person relies less upon borrowed certainty and more upon personal responsibility for understanding. This can bring greater honesty, depth, and integrity, but also disorientation. For many, this is the stage where the "The Shelf Breaks", and some leave religion altogether, others find comfort in other religions, and some remain in the Restoration, but in a more chastened, nuanced, and self-aware form. Faith begins to be rebuilt in a way that is less defensive, less performative, and less dependent on external validation.

This stage is often profoundly lonely. One can no longer rest easily in inherited answers, yet has not fully arrived at a settled reconstruction. It is a wilderness stage. But for many, it is also the place where faith ceases to be merely received and begins, at last, to become truly their own.

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith

This stage usually appears in midlife or later, though not everyone reaches it.

At this stage, a person becomes more able to live with paradox, ambiguity, and mystery. For Mormons, this often means remaining rooted in the Restoration without requiring every truth claim to be simple, flattened, historically tidy, or immune from complexity. A person may still love scripture, prayer, temple worship, prophetic teachings, and sacred community, while also recognizing human limitation, contradiction, and development within the tradition.

This is the stage in which many begin to understand more deeply what it means to receive things line upon line, precept upon precept and to move from milk before meat into a more mature spiritual diet. Rather than needing religion to function like a clean system of solved equations, they become more willing to dwell reverently among symbols, unresolved questions, layered meanings, and holy tensions.

At this stage, a person may come to see prophets as both inspired and deeply flawed, scripture as both revelatory and culturally situated, and ordinances as both symbolic and transformative. Such a person often becomes more open to learning from other faiths, other Christian traditions, other Mormon movements, scholarship, mysticism, history, and marginalized voices, without feeling that such openness threatens their devotion to God.

This stage can make possible a broader and deeper Mormonism: one that treasures continuing revelation, eternal progression, symbolic richness, and divine mystery without requiring brittle certainty at every turn. It often produces greater compassion, greater patience, and a more expansive charity. Yet it can also leave a person feeling out of place among communities that prefer simpler formulas, sharper boundaries, and more anxious forms of certainty.

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith

This stage is very rare and is usually associated with only a small number of extraordinary people.

At this stage, a person becomes so deeply grounded in divine love, justice, mercy, courage, and holiness that their entire life begins to radiate those realities with unusual consistency. They are no longer governed chiefly by social approval, denominational loyalty, or the need to preserve their own social standing. This looks more like the embodiment of Zion itself: a life wholly consecrated to the uplifting of others and the defense of the vulnerable. Their faith may still be thoroughly Mormon, but it is Mormon in a prophetic way rather than a merely conventional sense.

These are the kinds of people who often appear unsettling to established systems, because they are more loyal to truth, love, and people than to comfort, reputation, or institutional preservation. They are the sort of people who begin to make Zion visible wherever they walk.

4. Conclusion

In the end, Fowler's stages help us name something many of us have already experienced: faith is not static. It grows, deepens, breaks, reforms, and matures. What we believed as children may have been sincere, but sincerity is not the same thing as fullness, and spiritual maturity requires us to move beyond inherited simplicity into greater reflection, humility, and depth.

For me, that is why Amasa Lyman's words remain so powerful. There truly is "a vast difference" between merely receiving a belief and coming to comprehend it more fully. If our faith is alive, it should not remain frozen in childhood; it should grow as we do.

I believe that this is what Mormonism teaches me to expect. We are meant to go from a small capacity to a great capacity, from a small degree to another, from grace-to-grace, from exaltation-to-exaltation, and from milk to meat till we are able to sit amongst the Heavenly Parents as an equal.

“Putting Away Childish Things” by Istvan Jamrik

[Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference](#)

Hello and welcome again to everyone who decided to attend our conference. My name is Istvan, and I'm happy to be here today. The title of my talk today is "Putting Away Childish Things", and while exploring this topic more in depth, I would like to touch on many different topics connected to it.

Evan, the organizer of this conference, suggested that the theme for our conference be "From Milk to Meat", centered around spiritual growth and maturity. As someone who used to be an active member of the largest Mormon denomination many years ago, I must admit that I had a visceral reaction to the phrase "milk before meat", as I feel like the most common usage of the term is to justify the lack of informed consent. I believe that many people who feel like they were hurt by Mormonism - very often never wanting to have anything to do with it ever again - heard this phrase before, usually in the context of justifying why their negative experiences were actually not a big deal. "We didn't mislead you. We just gave you the milk first and then after you accepted it, we switched it out with the meat." I don't intend to spend too much time on why this practice is so damaging. Instead, I will attempt to focus on healthier interpretations of the same phrase.

I would like to point out that the concept of "Milk before Meat" is not inherently dishonest, nor is it unique to Mormonism or even Christianity. Paul in First Corinthians uses the metaphor to point out that the congregants in Corinth were not mature enough in their faith as they were engaging in quarreling and factionalism. Paul argues that he still needs to teach them the basics - feed them milk - before they can progress from worldly to spiritual.

It's a simple concept that is also used in teaching most things that have nothing to do with religion. Children are often taught simplified concepts on their level of understanding before more complicated concepts are discussed. For example, in a geometry class, we learn that parallel lines never meet. But we might learn later that they indeed meet in non-euclidean systems of geometry. Of course, it would not be useful to confuse students with this fact when they are taking their first steps into understanding how geometry works.

Similar practices are known in other religious traditions as well. In Buddhism, "upaya" (often translated as "skillful or expedient means"), refers to the use of methods or teachings tailored to the needs, capacities, and circumstances of individuals to help them progress on the path to enlightenment. In the Lotus Sutra, a key Mahayana Buddhist text, the parable of the burning house is an example of this concept. In the parable, a wealthy man owns a large, beautiful house that catches fire. His children are playing inside, unaware of the danger. The father calls out to them, but they do not respond. In a desperate attempt to save them, he promises them different toys to entice them out of the house. The children, excited by the prospect of these toys, leave the house, escaping the flames and disaster. In the parable, the father symbolizes the Buddha who uses skillful means to guide beings towards liberation.

Although the parable in the Lotus Sutra makes sense - after all, the important thing was that the children's lives were saved - whether or not the father's promise was true, the way skillful means are used can still lead to harmful consequences.

In the parable, the father was facing something provable and unfalsifiable: a burning house. Telling a harmless lie to save lives is easily forgivable. I am less inclined to be so permissive when I am facing religious dogma. When a priest or religious leader makes a claim that they themselves do not believe to be true, but they hope that it will result in me preemptively accepting things that they do believe to be true. On what basis do they claim to be the arbiters of what is truth and what isn't? Where is the proof that this teacher or leader isn't simply wrong or self-serving? Moreover, who authorized these people to be gatekeepers of these supposed truths? To quote a fellow reformed Mormon, Brother John Crane, "People who really have keys will share those keys with you. People who use keys to keep you out of the kingdom of heaven don't have keys; they have locks. I wholeheartedly agree with brother Crane. I cannot abide self-appointed arbiters of final and universal religious or spiritual truths as I cannot force myself to believe something that I do not believe simply because someone claiming authority tells me to do so.

I say this as someone who knows what he's talking about. I used to be a dogmatist of the highest order even before I encountered Mormonism. My desire to belong and my willingness to conform were so strong, I learned to manipulate myself into believing things that I did not earnestly believe. When Mormonism first found me, I continued this practice. Every time I encountered something that didn't seem right or went against my previous understanding, I told myself that if the people telling me these things are the ultimate authorities on what is and what isn't truth, then I must be wrong and I need to change my beliefs to conform to authority.

However, it turned out that to profess or declare a belief is not the same as actually believing it. Religious groups centered around authority are excellent at standardizing the declared beliefs - the testimonies, if you will - of their followers, but they are much less successful at eliminating the diversity of their followers actual beliefs, even if they can make openly discussing or declaring them incur a social cost.

So what can "milk" and "meat" meaningfully symbolize for me then if I reject the idea of human beings gatekeeping the ability of others to comprehend truth? The metaphor of the milk and meat in First Corinthians led me to consider another verse from the same epistle of Paul 13:11: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways." In this verse, Paul continues to expand on the dichotomy of a child and an adult. In a way, I think this is really funny because Paul tells his fellow Christians something that we could say to many people today: essentially to grow up! But in a more specific way, this verse reminded me of my personal journey and by extension the journeys of many other people I have encountered who had similar experiences as I had.

How childish it was of me to let others think for me, to blindly follow authority and reject all other sources of truth. Oh, how childish it was of me to think that my beliefs alone amounted to some kind of absolute truth and everyone else on the planet was just simply lost and foolish. And

indeed, how childish it was of me to condemn the lives of people I didn't understand just because I considered my own religious dogmas to be universally applicable.

Of course, I would like to make it clear that I have no intention of generalizing all people within organized religious movements - such as the one I used to participate in - as childish or immature. Doing that would truly be no better than the behavior I'm criticizing. It would merely be an arrogant claim of superiority over people that think differently from me, which I also see as misguided and wrong. However, I do think that certain dogmas or behaviors are completely fair game to criticize and primarily it is the change of my own beliefs and behaviors that I would like to explore and dissect through this lens.

What I concluded after this personal examination of my own beliefs was that the "milk", for me, represented a simplistic view of the world in which there are noble absolute truths, organizations that have a monopoly over what is true and what isn't, and doctrines that come purely from some divine authority that cannot be questioned. The "meat" for me symbolizes the understanding that my experiences are not universal. My understanding is neither inherently better or worse than other points of view, and religion above all is a profoundly human experience. The milk is what I'm being fed by others. The meat is what I choose on my own. On one side, pushing my beliefs into a tightly sealed box, on the other exploring on my own with no expectations that others conform to my beliefs.

And let me tell you, trying to coexist with others within a religious or spiritual community where everyone has different beliefs is hard. Accepting total obedience and total conformity is what some would expect from a child. It's easy! "Just say the right things or sit down and shut up." Navigating a space where everyone is free to share their earnestly held beliefs is much harder, but it can also be so much more fruitful. Challenge, discussion, debate, contemplation. Those are the things that make us actually examine our beliefs and open up new perspectives and give us a chance to rethink our previous beliefs, synthesize, evolve, and progress.

A favorite Mormon expression of mine is "eternal progression", which I believe requires the ability to explore and engage with the beliefs and ideas of others and in some cases part with some of our previously deeply held convictions when our perspective changes or widens.

Community of Christ, the largest Josephite branch of Mormonism, has a concept they call "Faithful Disagreement." Although it is not identical to the anarcho-spirituality that is typical of Reform Mormonism, nevertheless, I strongly respect the concept. As they put it, this concept is all about how someone might have a different opinion on certain church policies, beliefs or directions, yet still deeply cares about and supports the overall mission and values of our community. When someone disagrees in this way, they are not only allowed, but encouraged to share their perspective. The goal isn't to point fingers or label anyone as unfaithful. It's about enriching our collective understanding and response to Divine guidance, making our community stronger and more united in our shared purpose.

While I am not an active member of any church that mandates policies or directions, I fully support the idea of focusing on the values and common goals of our community rather than theological or doctrinal purity. One of my favorite things about Mormonism is how flexible and

how teleological it can be. Although sadly this isn't always reflected in practice. By teleological I mean a type of ethics characterized by focusing on outcomes rather than deontological ethics meaning a strict adherence to specific rules or obligations.

Now this may come as a surprise to some people who might have had a completely different experience with Mormonism, and I agree. When churches become hierarchical and dogmatic, they tend to lean more deontological to keep group cohesion and minimize dissent. Still, I believe that Mormonism has many teleological elements at its core. Community of Christ's faithful disagreement policy is a good example of this, putting goals before doctrine. I believe the Brighamite idea of the Godhead is another great example. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost being three distinct separate beings, but united in purpose and love. Moreover, early Mormon history is often interpreted through the same lens - that it doesn't matter that Joseph Smith was a treasure digger who used sear stones and folk magic to find hidden things because ultimately these things helped him fulfill Divine purposes. As long as the outcome is deemed good, the ways to reach it may be diverse.

Now, I am not arguing that people who lean more towards deontological ethics or well-defined religious rules are wrong. As someone who struggles with executive function, God knows I appreciate a good and thorough checklist, but I'm also not very good at consistently checking the items off of them. Still in my personal journey, going from milk to meat meant leaving behind the preoccupation with whether scriptures contain historical truth or interpreting them as literal and univocal or belonging to any church organization that holds a hierarchical view of priesthood or revelation. I hold an agnostic view of Divinity. I do not see the Divine as something that is knowable through any one person's revelations or interpretations. I also identify with non-theism as I do not believe there are omnipotent beings out there who, for example, allow or even inflict major suffering on humanity. But I identify with pantheism as well, seeing all of us as part of some kind of cosmic oneness or unity. I do believe that ultimately my non-theism and pantheism are two sides of the same coin and I don't see it to be a meaningful endeavor to worry too much about any conflict between the two.

The part I did struggle with, however, was the openness to the many different interpretations those in our community have of the Divine. Once again, this was one of those areas for me where I required growth in order to be able to accept others. Stepping into a diverse religious space as a somewhat dogmatic non-theist, encountering people who were interpreting, worshiping, experiencing, or dealing with the Divine in so many different and often conflicting ways, it all seemed crazy and confusing. Deconstructing my previous religious dogmas were easier than breaking out of the confines of my own limited perspective. To use Paul's metaphor once again, my inability to understand other perspectives as valid was another childish thing I had to leave behind.

I do not believe that any pre-existence or afterlife is knowable in this life. But humans are obsessed with identifying meaning for our actions or even our mere existence. And many of us end up latching on to one myth or another that helps us find that meaning. Understanding religion as a profoundly human experience helped a lot with that. When we share these myths with each other, we may find that the ones meaningful to us helped another human on their

journey. Sometimes it's the myths of others that open our own eyes to something we haven't considered before.

At the end of the day, we all hold beliefs that are irrational and without proof. Even Atheists do. Is there proof that alleviating suffering is morally good? Many people like Elon Musk would call it a waste of time and a weakness. Is there proof that the equal worth of all souls is a morally good belief? Someone like Peter Thiel would consider it horrendous. I choose to believe that both of those things are morally good, but naturally I have no proof. Accepting that many of my core beliefs are not provably correct, yet I feel like I know them to be correct made me worry a lot less about how people come to certain conclusions. I choose to align myself with people who share goals with me rather than share all of the myths behind it with rigid uniformity.

This reminds me of a conversation I had with a fellow reformed Mormon, Sister Sarah Williams, about the conceptualization of the Divine being a mere set dressing to the play that ultimately our being is. Let's say if person one believes in Jehovah, person two believes in no God, and person three believes in an arcane polytheistic pantheon, but the beliefs of all three result in striving for peace, equality, and economic justice, then the differences in belief do not matter. The same way if person one believes in Jehovah and as a result wants peace, equality and justice while person two believes in Jehovah and as a result preaches hate, intolerance and hellfire for those with other beliefs, then the similarities in the myths they subscribe to do not matter at all. They are just two similar set dressings for two very different plays.

Therefore, I conclude that if we are unwilling to sometimes re-evaluate convictions we once believed with our whole being, we are hindering our eternal progression. Going from meat to milk or putting away childish things is not a one-time action, but a constant openness to be faithful and skeptical in the same time, while making sure we do not become so preoccupied with the myths we subscribe to that it interferes with our or other people's happiness and we fail to focus on doing good. Thank you.

“God is Love: Easter Musings on Merkavah Mysticism, Baptism, and the Disassociative Nature of Repentance and Transfiguration” by ZigZag Goose

[Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference](#)

I've been listening to a lot of Dr. Justin Sledge's lectures recently including his Merkavah Mysticism series which I highly suggest on his Esoterica youtube channel, and it's really opened my eyes to the larger context of how Christianity developed.

For example, I've always heard how the Enochian Scriptures were so valued by early Christians that they were even referenced and quoted in the New Testament, but I didn't ever really know why.

Apparently, Enochian Scriptures push for an idea that humans can enter the divine realm, eventually culminating with 3 Enoch in 500 AD where we have Enoch's transformation into Metatron, the mouthpiece of God, opening up a lot of important theological possibilities to ancient Jewish mystics.

While we take our ability to enter the heavens after this life for granted, God's domain was not always a place humans were allowed or able to enter. It was in fact a terrifying and dangerous place, guarded by otherworldly angels who did not like us and were ready to kill us if we were caught there.

Christianity developed out of a trend throughout the ancient world to find ways to ascend (or in some Merkavah texts, descend) into the Divine realm. A form of transformation sometimes called angelification would become necessary for this ascent or descent in the Merkavah tradition, specifically by temporarily (or in Enoch's case, eternally) transforming into an angel of fire.

And so for this Easter Sunday, as we celebrate our Savior's resurrection, I wish to turn to texts (canonical and apocryphal) detailing this ascension into heaven.

I will first, however, begin with a text from 3 Enoch where Metatron speaking to Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha describes his transformation from the man Enoch to the angelic mouthpiece of God, Metatron.

In 3 Enoch chapter 15 it states:

“Metatron, the angel, the Prince of the Presence, the Glory of all heavens, said to me :

(1) As soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, took me in (His) service to attend the Throne of Glory and the Wheels (Galgallim) of the Merkaba (Which, the Merkaba, for those who don't know is the throne of God, but its in a chariot - so its like a throne-chariot of God. Some people say its God's wheelchair, essentially. There are a lot of visions where people see this, and its a really big deal to see this) and the needs of Shekina, forthwith my flesh was changed into flames, my sinews into flaming fire, my bones into coals of burning juniper, the light of my eye-lids into splendour of lightnings, my eye-balls into fire-brands, the hair of my head into dot flames, all my limbs into wings of burning fire and the whole of my body into glowing fire.

(2) And on my right were divisions 6 of fiery flames, on my left fire-brands were burning, round about me stormwind and tempest were blowing and in front of me and behind me was roaring of thunder with earthquake.”

Rabbi Ishmael would call Metatron the Lesser Yahweh, promoting that terrible heresy of bitheism.

In chapter 16 Metratron says:

“At first I was sitting upon a great Throne at the door of the Seventh Hall ; and I was judging the children of heaven, the household on high by authority of the Holy One, blessed be He. And I divided Greatness, Kingship, Dignity, Rulership, Honour and Praise, and Diadem and Crown of Glory unto all the princes of kingdoms, while I was presiding (lit. sitting) in the Celestial Court (Yeshiba), and the princes of kingdoms were standing before me, on my right and on my left by authority of the Holy One, blessed be He.

(2) But when Acher (Rabbi Elisha ben Abuyah from 100 A.D.) came to behold the vision of the Merkaba (Throne Chariot/Wheel Chair) and fixed his eyes on me, he feared and trembled before me and his soul was affrighted even unto departing from him, because of fear, horror and dread of me, when he beheld me sitting upon a throne like a king with all the ministering angels standing by me as my servants and all the princes of kingdoms adorned with crowns surrounding me:

(3) in that moment he opened his mouth and said: "Indeed, there are two Divine Powers in heaven!"

Unfortunately, poor Metraton would be whipped with 60 fiery lashings by the angel Anapiel for confusing Rabbi Elisha ben Abuyah by sitting on God's throne, despite keeping the title of Lesser Yahweh.

I am so fascinated by this doctrine of bitheism that monotheism struggles with from time to time. There's of course a bitheism where two Gods, one of good and one of evil, like we find in Zoroastrianism, but there's something else going on here when we see both divine entities working together.

It seems to be a way for God's transcendence and Her imminence to remain intact. There's a transcendent God and an imminent God and they work together as one. The Yazidi people almost seem to practice this kind of bitheism with their "worship" of the Peacock Angel Melek Taus whose disobedience to a lower law at the expense of a higher one made him blessed above all archangels, and the Medieval proto-Qabalah group known as the Unique Cherub Circle entered some bitheism terrain with God's first angel being his body that the prophets interacted with and some even heretically argued was the recipient of our prayers.

What makes Metatron and Christ so special is their time as humans. They feel imminent because they have experienced our smallness and our fleshiness that the ancient Hebrew angels thought was impure and stinky.

These former humans or divine humans feel like they can love and understand us in a way that an otherworldly divine being may struggle with.

Those who have faith in Joseph Smith's restoration have a special place in their heart for Paul's ascension into the 3rd heaven. Dr Justin Sledge argues that Paul is the most influential Merkavah mystic the world has ever known, and while I once again highly suggest you watch his lecture series on Merkavah Mysticism, he has a whole lecture just on Paul's ascension, (a lecture which many people in the comments were left saying, "Oh wow, Paul reminds me of Joseph Smith...")

I'm not going to go into great detail on it just now, but instead I'm going to read 2 Corinthians 12 and invite you to meditate on this idea of ascension:

"1 No doubt it is not seemly for me to boast. Nevertheless, I will come to visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ, about fourteen years ago (whether he was in the body I cannot tell, or whether he was out of the body I cannot tell, God knows), who was taken up into the third heaven. 3 And I know the same man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows), 4 how he was taken up into Paradise and heard words not to be spoken, which no man can utter. 5 Of this man I will boast. Of myself I will not boast, unless it be of my infirmities. 6 And yet if I chose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. Nevertheless, I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me."

Note that Paul is struggling explaining the concept of what we might call transfiguration, because he doesn't want you to think he's currently divine but that he was made temporarily divine to enter God's realm. And so he adds this interesting little tidbit about an angel of Satan in heaven:

"7 And lest I should be unduly lifted up through the greatness of the revelations, there was given to me unquietness of the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me – because I should not be unduly lifted up. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord three times, to put it from me. 9 And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect through weakness. Very gladly therefore will I rest in my weakness, so that the strength of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am content in infirmities, in

reproach, in need, in persecutions, in anguish, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

This wasn't the first time Paul would see Jesus in vision, as we all know. In fact, as Acts 9 claims, the first time Paul saw Jesus on the road to Damascus he was made blind for three days and could not eat nor drink, but in that time God led him to Christ's disciple Ananias, who would teach him what he needed to know in order to begin his ministry.

The doctrine of Christ's resurrection is not just one of afterlife. It is one where Christ continues to have an intimate relationship with us in this life, it is one where Christ lives through us.

There is an ancient Christian tradition that Catholics still practice of baptizing adults on Easter Day, to recognize Christ's resurrection in our own rebirth.

As Romans 6 says:

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As somebody with Disassociative Identity Disorder, I struggle and wrestle with these concepts of death to sin. I worry I repress sin and then it comes out in strange and more surprising and dangerous ways.

Perhaps I relate with Paul, feeling like there's one version of him that ascended to heaven and another that stayed here on Earth, and he struggles knowing the difference between the two, and seeing the two makes him fear for his own pride, his own inability to see his wickedness clearly.

I don't have clear answers as I wrestle with my faith. I am not sure which parts of me are Divine and which parts are not.

I think the angels would smell my sin on me no matter how much I abstain, and my faith in Christ does not come easy to me.

I pray for his light to guide me, but I don't care if it guides me to the fires of heaven or to the fires of hell. For me, God is Love, and what I wish for most is to understand and practice Love more fully, not just for others who I was taught to lose myself in, but for myself, the holy, cracked, and stinky vessel of this Love.

And in the name of Love, a Love that is fully divine and fully human, a Love that I must believe will guide us to purpose and healthier communities through heavens and hells not yet imagined, I pray with all of you, my comrades in building Love's Kingdom on this Earth and allowing Love to transform us from time to time without losing sight of the multifaceted people we are.

That there is a transcendent God beyond understanding and another God that is imminent and approachable, so, too, do I think there is an element of each of us beyond understanding and we have to deal with these more approachable versions of our vastness.

But I think Love and Her angels will guide us into understanding and loving the vastness of each other more fully. I wish to take the blasphemous message of the Restoration one step further, that we are not only as God once was but that we are gods, that we each participate in the Creation.

And I think of how God's heaven went from shunning to welcoming, and I think each god walking around us today has their own domain, and I pray that Love guides us in being transfigured into the type of angels needed for every god's domain that we enter.

Or I don't know, maybe I'm entering unsafe territory, advocating shaping oneself around others once again without understanding our own shape. I'm still trying to figure out what Love is. Look, I don't think I've seen God's wheelchair and even if I did I don't think I would know what to make of it. I see through a glass darkly, and I have moments where I see Love leading somewhere better than here, and I just have to have faith in that.

“Community Amongst Different Kinds of Mormons” by David Ferriman

[Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference](#)

Shalom, brothers and sisters. This week I want to talk to you about community and about building community. And we'll start off by reading a scripture from the Book of Mormon. In the book of Moroni, chapter 6, we read,

"And the church did meet together often and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls."

Being an online ecumenical movement, we do meet together oft in the Fellowship. We used to meet Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, only having Friday and Saturday "off", if you will. But that's changed over time and now we're meeting on Tuesdays for business meetings. We're meeting on Thursday for the women's class and for the Kabbalah class. And then we've got a class on Sunday and we also have a praise and worship meeting on Sunday just after that. Now, if we need more classes, we obviously can have more classes. As you just look at our calendar, you see we in the Fellowship meet quite often. We have no problem coming together for various classes, for organizational meetings and also we have a weekly worship meeting. We do offer you these YouTube videos. We would like to do more, but in order to do more, we have to have more people.

One of the things about non-denominational Mormonism or being an independent Latter-day Saint is this idea that we are to be lonely. I guess we all come from the structure of church. Many of many of us come from a very structured church regardless of which church that was. And the question becomes, can we learn on our own in a vacuum? Can you just watch this YouTube video and is that enough for you to deepen your personal relationship with the Lord? I believe the answer to that is no. And the reason why is because all throughout the scriptures, we see things very similar to what I just read in the Book of Mormon about the church meeting together oft. Read Acts chapter 2; the very bottom of the chapter, it talks about the saints coming together and being one. Read Third Nephi, pretty much everything where Christ is teaching the people and how they then work together after he leaves. Read fourth Nephi about how things start falling apart when they stop being one, when they stop working together. We are not meant to be saved in isolation. We are not meant to serve the Lord alone. Being a Christian isn't a scholarly pursuit. We have to build Zion in our hearts, yes, but the reason why is so that we can then build Zion as a community. And we can't do that if we're not working together.

So I think that it's important that we understand that it isn't just that people met together in the days of scriptures because there was nothing else to do. There was no TV. There was no internet. There was no YouTube. They met together because that's how we grow as saints. And yes, when our family, when Kristine and I and our kids, we left the Utah based Latter-day Saint

church, yeah, we were on our own for quite some time. We did check out Community of Christ and we still do attend there even though we're not members somewhat frequently - at least once a month. But at the end of the day, we need other people. And I was called to be a prophet. I was called to start this movement. And yet I did not become successful at it, depending on how you define success in any way, shape or form, until other people got involved. Because until then, sure, I made videos. I wrote blog articles, but without other people, I was talking to myself or the occasional person that would call me. Now, don't get me wrong, there are people that are reaching out to me all the time, but because of the fact that we weren't working together, I was more like a spiritual guide. I was like someone stopping up at a gas station and asking for directions. And that doesn't really help me, and it doesn't really help them as much as it could if we, the two of us, the three of us, however many took the time to get to know one another and deepen our personal relationships with the Lord together.

And so I'm not saying this because I think the Fellowship needs to become a church. In fact, I think that's the anti-thesis of the Fellowship. I think that's why it's a "Fellowship of Christ" and not a "Church of Christ", because we can belong to whatever church or not belong to a church, but we still need to fellowship together. And if we don't fellowship together, are we a fellowship? No. How can we be a fellowship if we're not fellowshipping together? And that's why we are meeting. We're attempting to meet three times a year. We've done pretty well with meeting in October in Missouri. We're having our first meet up here in Ohio next month in April. And we're hoping we're not sure if we're going to be able to do this yet or not, but we're hoping we'll be able to meet in Michigan in the summer, probably late June, early July. We need these meetups in person. We need to be meeting the saints where they are. And as saints, we need to meet one another where we are. We need to have groups that meet online and that meet in person made up of a variety of different Latter-day Saints.

And so this message today comes with an ask and that is: what can you do to help build Zion where you are? I know that in the Latter Day Saint movement at first it was all about everybody gathering to one spot. "We're all going to go to Kirtland!" "We're all going to go to Missouri!" "We're all going to go to Nauvoo!" And then we broke up into separate things. "We're all going to go to Pennsylvania!" "We're all going to go to Voree or Beaver Island" or out to Utah to California to Texas depending on which branch you want to follow. I think this was actually wrong in the sense that they were all battling each other for people; they were all "sheep stealers", but I think it was right for them to move around and not be centralized. I think that the LDS church was correct when they said, "Hey, stop everybody trying to get to Utah and build the kingdom where you are."

And I think that we are trying to create gathering places with the Makers Haven and Sun Haven in Michigan and Missouri. And we want to build more. We want to build temples. But it's not because we want everyone to flock to these locations; it's because we want people to come and see and then go back and build. We have some really, really big long-term goals. We have some really, really big short-term goals, and we'd like for you to get involved. Kristine and I are going up to Michigan soon, and we're hoping to make a bunch of videos up there talking about the area and what we're doing and how you can get involved. But I want you to know, you don't

have to move to Michigan. You don't have to move to Missouri to get involved. You don't have to come to every single one of our meetings either.

But talk to us, reach out to us, and see how we can work with you to build where you are. We're not meant to be alone. And I can tell you that as someone who's called by the Lord, I understood my calling better, and I deepened my personal relationship with the Lord to a greater extent - to a much greater extent - once we as a Fellowship began working with people regularly. There was a certain level I was able to get to in building my relationship with the Lord trapped in a church where I had to put the needs of their organization before the needs of my relationship with God. When Kristine and I took our family out of that church and into the wilderness, it got deeper. I was able to receive revelation upon revelation without fear of being kicked out of something. I was able to follow the will of the Lord without people telling me, "Hey, why are you following God for? You got to stop that. You got to follow our prophet instead." When that prophet speaking generically to a whole church and not to any individual.

But once I started Kristine and I started working with people regularly, that relationship grew exponentially, because I wasn't merely looking at my perspective or my and Kristine's perspective - all of a sudden, I had all these other perspectives to help me understand my relationship with the Lord. And in turn, Kristine and I were able to help them with their relationship with the Lord. We cannot grow as saints - we cannot build Zion - if we trap everything inside. Just like we can't grow as saints or build Zion if everything has to be outside of ourselves.

So my message for you today is I want to meet with you oft bread with you. If you are in an area where you can travel to one of our in-person meetings, please come. If you have time to attend one of our classes, please, we'd love to see you there. And if not, and you'd like to attend some sort of class, please let us know so we can figure out how to accommodate you.

We want to help you grow and we want to grow with you. And we're not a Fellowship without you.

So that's my message and I leave it with you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

"The Gift of the Holy Ghost" by John Crane

Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference. This was given in 3 parts, and the video to each part will be linked in the header for that part.

Brothers and Sisters, I would like to talk to you today about the Gift of the Holy Ghost, what it is, what it does, why we need it, and how to receive it. I am using my own words, not LDS jargon, and speaking from my own experiences, and things that have been revealed to me, and things that I have practiced in my own life.

We can read about somebody else's revelations, but they don't really become our revelations until we experience them for ourselves and can put them in your own words, so I hope and pray you can take something from what I say, and experience it in your own life and make it real for you by being able to express it in your own words.

I am speaking directly from the transcript I have written in order to emphasize certain words. I found so much material that I had to greatly condense it. Even condensing it, I had to break the talk down into three parts.

[Part 1](#)

The Difference between the Latter-day Saints and the other churches of the world

[Elder LeGrand Richards, "The Gift of the Holy Ghost", General Conference, October 1979:](#)

"I humbly pray that the Spirit of the Lord will sustain me while I address you here this afternoon and discuss with you a statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he visited President [Martin] Van Buren, president of the United States. The President asked the Prophet what difference there was between the Prophet's church and the other churches of the world. The Prophet answered:

'We have the correct mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.' Then he said: **'We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost'**" (see History of the Church, 4:42).

In other words, if a church doesn't teach the true principles underlying this doctrine, and if the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Ghost are not evident, then that church is the same as any other church.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (Jas 1:17)

And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; **but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon**

my gospel. Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, **if it be in my name the Father will hear you; And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it.** But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return. (3 Nephi 27:8-11)

Both Faith and Works are Necessary

We hear so much about works, and almost nothing about the faith, desires, and intentions, which are gifts of the Spirit, and which must be the motivation for our works, so I am going to emphasize, and even over-emphasize the need for **faith, desires, and, intentions that harmonize with our actions.**

If any of you lack wisdom, let him **ask** of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But **let him ask in faith**, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. (Jas 1:5-6)

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would **ask** God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall **ask** with a **sincere heart**, with **real intent**, having **faith in Christ**, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4)

If any scriptures form the basis for our religion, it is the above two. But, you must not only ask; you must ask with a sincere heart, real intent, and have faith in Christ

We are judged not only by our works, but by our desires.

And it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be **judged according to their works**; and if their **works were good** in this life, and **the desires of their hearts were good**, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good. (Alma 41:3)

And by their **desires** and their **works** you shall know them. (D&C 18:38)

For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their **works**, according to the **desire** of their hearts. (D&C 137:9)

It is true that **“faith without works is dead”** (James 2:20), but it is also true that **works without faith are vain.**

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: **for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.** (2 Cor 3:6)

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: **but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith** in them that heard it. (Heb 4:2)

Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, **which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.** (Helaman 3:35)

As we will show, the Book of Mormon teaches that **intent is everything.**

And after ye have **obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good**--to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted. (Jacob 2:19)

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and **if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you,** that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. (Moroni 10:32)

Both faith and works are necessary, but if you are unable to perform the works, intent alone is sufficient. Having faith, with pure intent, but without the means to carry out works, is without condemnation. In other words, the right intentions are so important, the Lord will bless you, in this case, because of your intentions, alone.

And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give. **And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received.** (Mosiah 4:24- 25)

Testing the Heart

The Lord asked me to ponder over my baptism of fire experience and I received the following insight. I had every intention of getting re-baptized by water. I had the prompting and the confirmation to do it. I arranged for somebody to do it. Then, we had that really cold winter of 2020 and Covid began to spread, so we put off the baptism, but it was on the 29th of February, 2020 that I received my baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, despite not being re-baptized.

In the experiences leading up to that baptism, I met with a man who traveled all over the world teaching the Gospel and bringing people to Christ. He told me the reason he and his family went to Texas was that there were people there that the Lord wanted him to see. The Lord must have wanted him to meet me, because he told me something that lead to my baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which happened the very next day. What he told me was that I needed to pray and ask the Lord some questions that would be revealed to me. Next day I prayed, first, to be revealed the questions to ask, then to ask the questions. My object in going to pray in the first

place was to gain a testimony of what the man was teaching so that I could be his companion on his missionary journeys. I had every intention of joining him, but I never saw the man again, but because of that desire and intention, I was blessed with an incredible experience with the Lord.

The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: **but the LORD trieth the hearts.** (Prov 17:3)

Search me, O God, and know my **heart**: try me, and know my **thoughts**: (Ps 139:23)

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his **ways**, and according to the **fruit** of his doings. (Jer 17:10)

Sometimes the test is merely a test of our heart and mind -- of whether we fully intend to do. This could explain Abraham's test. The Lord just wanted to see where his heart was at.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matt 6:21)

Turning that around, you will know what a man treasures most, when you look into his heart.

More scriptures showing the need for a pure heart and real intent. (Moroni 6:8, 10:4)

Behold, **the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind**; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days. (D&C 64:34)

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)

Lip service and checklists are not enough. The affections of our heart should be centered on the Lord. We should obey the Lord's commandments because we love Him, not out of fear, a desire to appease Him, or to impress the world.

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their **lips** do honour me, but have removed their **heart** far from me, and their **fear** toward me is taught by the precept of men: (Isa 29:13)

For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.** (Isa 66:2)

To truly do good, you must also be good

There is a great discussion of this principle in Moroni 7:5-17, but to briefly summarize: **a good tree cannot produce evil fruit and an evil tree cannot produce good fruit.** The tree is you and the fruit is your works: what you do in life and how you treat other people. What makes you good or evil are your thoughts, intentions, and desires. In other words, what motivates you.

You might think you can fake good intentions, but if you do so, your true intentions are not good intentions, but intentions to deceive yourself and others. God knows and the universe knows whether your intentions are real or false, and if false, nothing you try: prayer, repentance, faith, miracles, revelation will work. The heavens will be closed to you.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** (Heb 4:12)

The Holy Ghost changes your heart

And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them. And they all cried with one voice, saying: **Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.** (Mosiah 5:1-2)

And **according to his faith there was a mighty change wrought in his heart.** Behold I say unto you that this is all true. I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? (Alma 5:12,19)

And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, **changed** from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; (Mosiah 27:25)

For, said he, I have **repented** of my sins, and have been **redeemed** of the Lord; behold I am **born** of the Spirit. And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, **changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; And thus they become new creatures;** and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 27:24-26)

Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the **purifying and the sanctification of their hearts,** which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God. (Helaman 3:35)

For the natural man is an **enemy** to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, **unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,** and putteth off the natural man and **becometh** a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to

all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

How do you treat your enemies? You hate them; you fear them; you avoid them. How does God treat His enemies? God **loves** His enemies.

Part 2

More Supporting Quotes from Scriptures

You need both faith and works, and the closer you become to the Lord, the more the Holy Spirit influences you, the more aligned your thoughts, desires, intentions, and understanding will be aligned with the Lord.

My son, forget not my **law**; but let thine **heart** keep my commandments: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Prov 3:1,5)

The natural impulse of mankind is to fear the Lord, to run and hide, and to cover their sins. We need to realize, instead, that the Lord's love is constant, not conditional, and if we turn to him and confess our sins, He will forgive us. The Lord doesn't hold grudges or play mind games.

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their **mouth**, and with their **lips** do honour me, but have removed their **heart** far from me, and their **fear** toward me is taught by the precept of men: (Isa 29:13)

When Samuel came to Jesse, searching which one of his sons would be the next king of Israel, Jesse introduced all of his sons, except David, who was out tending the sheep. This is a solid reminder of how the Lord sees and judges us.

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his **countenance**, or on the **height** of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the **heart**. (1 Sam 16:7)

From Shakespeare's Hamlet, we read:

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

In order to truly love God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as ourself, we need an endowment of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, none can fulfill these Two Great Commandments except an endowment is given unto them for the fulfillment of such; for, herein are the principles which reach unto eternity! Behold, I say unto you collectively that ye must **individually** seek after this endowment; yea, ye must all seek **individually** so that the body may be endowed collectively with the endowment of charity. For, this is even as my Servant Enoch taught his people diligently so to do! (HTP 9:7)

The Lord's Invitation to Come to Him is Universal

The Lord invites all to come to Him, regardless of their station in life, and without regard to worldly church affiliation. He sees things from a higher perspective which transcends all terrestrial church affiliations. This is a mystery and a harsh lesson that we need to learn.

And he said unto me: Behold **there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil**; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth. (1 Nephi 14:10)

Therefore, I will unfold unto them this great **mystery**; For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts; **Yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely. Behold, this is my doctrine--whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church.** And now, behold, whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. (D&C 10:64-69)

For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and **he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him**, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. (2 Nephi 26:33)

No mortal man can claim to possess the power of God, while denying that power to others. God lends it to us to use as stewards, but it remains God's power, channeled through us. Not even Peter, considered by many to be the greatest of the apostles, had the power or the authority to deny the Gift of the Holy Ghost when the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the righteous Gentiles. (Acts 10)

And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; **for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men**; (2 Nephi 28:5)

Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? (Moroni 7:36)

These are the words of Jesus Christ, which He uttered from the heavens, before He descended to the earth. He appeared to the Nephites, but His message is universal, and it echoes down to

this day. May these words burn in your heart and mind, and may you have a deep and burning desire to join the Lord in His work, and extend these promises and blessings to all the world.

Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. ...

And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the **world** from sin.

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved. (3 Nephi 9:14-22)

Learning and exercising personal revelation

The laying on of hands is only an invitation and a command to **receive** the Holy Ghost. As we have established, what **changes** your heart, mind, desires, and intentions is the Holy Spirit, which gift you do **receive** when you actually receive the unspeakable Gift of the Holy Ghost

God shall give unto you knowledge by his **Holy Spirit**, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the **Holy Ghost**, that has not been revealed since the world was until now; (D&C 121:26)

There is a mystery revealed in this verse. Did you catch it? The Holy Spirit is the **Gift**, and the Holy Ghost is the **Giver** of that gift.

How do you receive that knowledge?

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. **Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.** Wherefore, now after I

have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye **ask** not, neither do ye **knock**; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you that **if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.** (2 Nephi 32:1-5)

The gift of the Holy Ghost changes your heart, mind, desires, and intentions in order to put you in a position to **receive revelation for yourself** and show you how to draw even closer to the Lord and more fully partake of His salvation. Salvation isn't just for the world to come. It's for the here and now.

Joseph Smith tried to teach the principle of revelation. It is both a **doctrine** that we must **understand** and a **skill** that we need to **learn**. The Holy Ghost manifests sometimes in words, or in intelligence, which we can express in words. It is not a feeling or an emotion, though we may experience feelings and emotions in connection with the intelligence we receive. We may also experience a burning in our hearts, or throughout our entire bodies. The Holy Spirit touches every aspect of us: spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical, beginning with the spiritual, and working its way down.

The Spirit of Revelation is in connection with these blessings. 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, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.,) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; 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 p.151)

[Part 3](#)

The Three Voices of Personal Revelation

A common problem with experiencing the gifts of the Spirit is we don't have the faith to **look** for them, or **notice** them. Another problem is we assume it's our own voice, or the voice of evil, instead of the voice of the Lord. Some people are **afraid** to even try to listen because they assume, it's always going to be their own voice or the voice of evil.

This is a **faithless** and a **fearful and lazy approach**. Take the approach of **faith**. Assume it is the voice of the Lord and ask for a confirmation. If you are wrong, have faith that the Lord will correct you and coach you. I highly recommend that you check with the many sources on the Internet, written by people who have already learned or are learning the "principle of revelation". Google "the three voices of personal revelation". Here is a brief summary of each of the voices.

- **Our own voice:** Fearful, tentative, uncertain, wavering, changing.
- **The voice of the Adversary:** Subtle, persistent, fear-based, Invitations to cover your sins, satisfy your pride or vain ambition, compare yourself to somebody else, think more of yourself, think less of yourself, dig a pit for your neighbor.

- **The voice of God:** Subtle, sure, stable. Invitations to improve yourself, and to serve others. Gentle, meek, love unfeigned. You'll only receive a prompting a couple of times, and if you ignore it, the prompting will cease.

The more we listen to the voice of either God or the Adversary, the more we get in tune with their enticings, the clearer the voices become, and the easier it will be to understand and follow their enticings.

The "Two Wolves" parable is a Cherokee story about an internal battle between two forces: one evil (anger, envy, greed) and one good (joy, peace, love). When a grandson asks which wolf wins, the grandfather replies, "The one you feed".

Opposition in All things vs Opposition in Everything

Some people claim that half the time you will hear the voice of Satan and half the time, you will hear the voice of God. Their basis for this reasoning is "opposition in all things". But, there is a difference between **opposition in ALL things** and **opposition in EVERYTHING**. Do you actually think that every time Jesus received something from the Father, He had to question, whether it came from the Adversary, or was He so attuned to the Father's voice within him that He immediately recognized it so often that Satan had no influence on Him? The Book of Mormon says that He ministered in power and great glory. The light shined in darkness, but the darkness could not comprehend it (put it out). (John 1)

And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth. (1 Nephi 22:26)

But, never forget that you aren't immune to temptation, and you need to learn to recognize it for what it is. As you learn and use these principles, you will grow and learn to discern. And you will have the best coach in the world: the Lord, at your side, and instead of 50-50, your chances of hearing the Lord will be greatly increased.

Personal Testimony

What I have given here comes from things I have natively known all my life and also from many hard-won lessons of life. I hate the term, but my "faith crisis" came when I realized all the Mormon platitudes and cliches were not improving my life, as promised, and I began to seek the Lord, and "work out my own salvation", just between Him and me, with no middle-man. But, before I realized this, I had to go far away, get lost, and realize that I was lost, before I could truly be found. A "crisis" is a judgment that brings decision, and I needed to make a decision of my own free will and choice, not a decision that was chosen for me, and imposed upon me.

Over the last 30 or 40 years, I have tried to apply the principles taught here: to actually receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost, to enter upon the Way, and to commune with the Lord upon the Way.

Both the effort and the result have brought a great change into my life. Just the journey of simply seeking the Lord and following His direction from day to day will make you a better person. And, I say this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the transcript for this speech, I have included a few excerpts from a podcast from “Uncorrelated Mormonism” called The 8 Woes of Mormonism. I would recommend reading the quotes and listening to the entire podcast. It covers in detail exactly what I have been talking about, as related to the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ time, as well as to the LDS church of our time.

Appendix: Selected Quotes from “The 8 Woes of Mormonism”

From: <https://youtu.be/bGLFDCICBFU>

In the book of Matthew chapter 23, Jesus gave one of the strongest rebukes possible against the organized religion of his time. It was an incredibly pointed attack against the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, which they couldn't see. Today, we naturally think that it only applies to them, who Jesus continually railed against.

However, it applies to us as well, more than ever. In many ways, we are falling into the same mental traps that they did anciently. And just like them, we fail to see our own hypocrisy.

In Matthew chapter 23, Jesus describes eight woes against the scribes and Pharisees of his day. These woes attack the external rules and performances of organized religion and address the lack of inner transformation that they produce. These external rules create a blindness that causes us to lose sight of the purpose of the religion.

Instead of focusing on approaching the divine, we focus on meeting the obligations and rules of the religion and treat meeting those performances as a replacement for divine acceptance. If we can appear to be outwardly righteous, then in our minds we are righteous, regardless of a lack of inner transformation. In Jesus' day, the scribes and Pharisees were perfect examples of this blindness.

However, he is imploring them to also see that the leaders themselves were not examples of the inward change that should be a result of a religious life. The leaders themselves didn't even follow the rules they prescribed, and they failed to even see the hypocrisy of that situation. This is because the leaders now personally identified as the role they performed.

They were the role, and the role was godly. Therefore, they were godly. This is, of course, a direct attack against the general concept of organized religion with prescribed rules and rights.

In fact, they want all of the same things that Jesus railed against. In addition, their set of rules and performances lack the inward change that would show the validity of the rules. They hide this in increasingly clever ways, however, it will never go away.

If the rules of Mormonism produced the inward change that Jesus consistently described, then the leaders of Mormonism would be excellent examples of this. Instead, they are examples of

using public opinion to shape church policy, examples of focusing on dead works while the living suffer, and examples of placing themselves as lights between us and God. Each of the eight woes applies to the leaders of Mormonism today just as much as they applied to the leaders of the past.

Jesus says the leaders shut the kingdom of heaven from before the people and instead require them to see the leaders as the only valid path to God. Anyone that steps out of line is then excommunicated from the church, which eliminates the potential challenge to the leaders' authority. Today, this is no different in Mormonism.

Anyone that claims an encounter with the divine is labeled a heretic or an apostate and excommunicated from the church. In this way, the leaders eliminate any challenge to their authority or status and shut the door to heaven to all those seeking God. In the second woe, Jesus attacks the scribes and Pharisees for using their legal system to take advantage of the most vulnerable among them.

In order to compensate for this lack of inner transformation, converts would quite often prioritize the rituals and become more dogmatic in the hope of legitimizing their decision to convert. In this way, the blind were truly leading the blind, and the converts' new zealotry was actually mistaken for righteousness. This greater separation from God meant that the converts were in fact spiritually going backwards and hence becoming children of hell.

[We all know those who take some temporal commandment and carry it to the extremes, and then claim to be living a so-called "higher law", which is really a lower law. The way is strait (strict) and narrow. Keep this in mind, but also keep in mind the Lord's teaching against teaching for commandments, things which are "more or less" than what He taught, and establishing it for His doctrine.]

In this way, we are told to trust in the doctrines, the performances, and the rituals of the church instead of trusting in a living God. Prior to baptism, a convert could be seeking God, however after baptism, they are seeking to align themselves more with the church and its doctrines in the hope of approaching the divine. This is a key distinction and is how a religion of external rules, exact doctrines, and performances can make a person fit for hell instead of holy.

Their view of righteousness had become how closely a person follows the law, not how closely the person mirrors the divine. Today, this is no different in Mormonism. We are told not to focus on a connection with the divine, but instead on our connection with the church, instead with its doctrines and rituals.

According to the LDS church, in order to approach God and be worthy of his presence, then we must comply with all the minutia of the church. Not once is there a discussion about how closely we follow the teachings of Jesus, how merciful we are to those that seek it, how much we care for the poor and the needy, or how much we are seeking to be transformed by Jesus. Instead, our righteousness is determined by how closely we align with the church and its teachings.

They had to carefully maintain public persona to mask the truth and couldn't see the hypocrisy of their situation because they were now identifying with their religious role instead of their

actual behaviors. In many respects, they were ceremonially clean, however, were in fact religiously far from God and didn't even know it. They believed their exterior image was who they really were, however, the image was simply a fake facade over an inward nature that was in opposition to God.

Leaders have repeatedly taught that the only way to God is through the church with them and their priesthood keys. There is no other way. In addition, the leaders of the church today celebrate the bravery and courage of the prophets of the past who openly opposed their religious institutions, all while directly teaching that it is apostasy to oppose them today.

I'm not quite sure what is more hypocritical. They openly admit that opposing those in the past was God's will while teaching that any opposition to them today is ungodly. According to the doctrines of the church, they try to spiritually kill the current prophets just as much as they would physically the ancient ones.

How can we really approach the divine more fully when our very church is teaching us to approach them instead?

We must first, however, stop our dependence on the church and its leaders for our relationship with God and instead start being willing to trust in Him. The most important thing we can do is to trust God and follow Him, even if this means we sacrifice our standing in the church. The real church of God has no artificial requirements for entry, while organizations of men do

Revelation by Fabio Sebastian Cruz

[Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference.](#)

Revelation given through Elder Fabio Sebastian Cruz, who, while meditating and praying concerning what message he should share with the Reformed Communities who seek the name of Jesus Christ. This revelation was received the following dawn on February 27, 2026.

In answer to his petition regarding the spiritual condition of those assemblies who desire restoration, purity of doctrine, and the companionship of the Spirit, the Lord speaks concerning His everlasting love, the outpouring of the spirit of prophecy upon all flesh, the universality of Divine revelation among nations, and the commandment of charity as the foundation of all true discipleship.

1 Thus saith the Lord Jesus Christ, the First and the Last, He who was dead and liveth for evermore:

2 Hearken, O ye assemblies who gather in sincerity of heart; incline your ears, ye children of the covenant, and receive the word which proceedeth not from man, neither from the disputings of flesh and blood, but from the Spirit which quickeneth all things.

3 Behold, I know thy works, and thy prayers uttered in the night watches, and the questions that arise within thee as smoke before the dawn.

4 I have seen thy desire to restore that which was lost, and to cleanse that which was mingled with the wisdom of men.

5 Fear not; for though thou walkest through uncertainty, My hand is stretched out still.

6 Yea, I love thee with an everlasting love.

7 Before thou wast formed in the womb, I knew thee; and before thou didst call upon My name, I had already written thy tears in My book.

8 Each soul among you is precious in My sight; not one sparrow falleth to the ground without My knowing, and how much more are ye valued, O seekers of Zion.

9 Behold, a time cometh—and now is even at the doors—when My Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh;

10 And sons and daughters shall prophesy, and old men shall dream dreams, and young men shall see visions.

11 Not by compulsion, nor by pride of office, but by the meek whisperings of the Holy Ghost shall the spirit of prophecy abide among you.

12 For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Me; and whoso testifieth of Me in truth and charity, the same speaketh by My Spirit.

13 Let none say within his heart, "Revelation is for a few," or "The heavens are sealed."

14 For I am the same yesterday, and today, and forever, and My voice is not diminished.

15 Yet take heed: prophecy without love is as a sounding brass; revelation without humility is as a lamp without oil.

16 Therefore clothe yourselves with charity, which is the pure love that descendeth from the Father of lights.

17 Know ye also that My Father revealeth Himself unto all nations, unto every tribe and tongue, according to their language, their traditions, and the light they are prepared to receive.

18 I have spoken in deserts and in temples; in mountains and in cities; through prophets known and unknown.

19 Judge not the seed because it was planted in another field; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.

20 For I give unto you a parable:

21 A certain man had a great vineyard which spread across many hills;

22 And in each hill the soil was diverse—some red, some black, some stony, some rich.

23 And he sent servants unto every hill, giving unto each a measure of seed suited to the ground thereof.

24 And when the harvest came, the grapes were not all of one color, neither of one sweetness; yet the wine thereof gladdened the heart of the master.

25 So is the kingdom of My Father.

26 Diverse are the traditions of men, yet the breath that quickeneth is one Spirit.

27 If ye abide in Me, and love one another, ye shall know the true vine, and shall bear fruit that remaineth.

28 Therefore I command you: love without dissimulation.

29 Forgive as ye desire to be forgiven.

30 Seek not to build thrones for yourselves, but sanctuaries for the weary.

31 Let your assemblies be houses of prayer, and your homes altars of kindness.

32 Strengthen the faint-hearted.

33 Lift up the hands that hang down.

34 Let the widowed, the orphaned, and the stranger find refuge among you.

35 Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.

36 Behold, I come not with sword nor with fire of destruction, but with the refining flame of My Spirit.

37 Prepare your lamps; fill them with oil; and let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

38 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.

39 Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

40 Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

41 Even so. Amen.

“On the Sacredness of Doubt”

by Sarah Williams

Given April 4th, 2026 at the Third Reform Mormon General Conference.

This spring session of Conference the theme is "From Milk to Meat."

I want to tell you something personal, and I want to be careful and honest about it.

I grew up with visitations. Direct, vivid, undeniable experiences of the divine. Presences that called me by name. Messages that felt carved out of light. As a child I believed them completely. I would listen, and argue, and weep, and beg — with my whole heart — absolutely certain they were real.

That was the milk.

What I know now, as an adult, is that I live with a condition — shaped by genetics, by environment, by the wiring of my own particular mind — that sometimes produces what clinicians call "religious psychosis." These visitations, as real as they felt, exist in a clinical category.

And here is what I have spent years learning to hold: Doubt is Sacred.

The visitation episodes are, in a clinical sense, not reliable messengers from outside me. And yet — when I listen carefully — they almost always call me toward something better. Toward more compassion. Toward deeper responsibility. Toward being the kind of believer who actually walks the values they profess.

So I have developed a practice. I audit them. I hold them in two hands at once — the hand of faith and the hand of doubt — and I ask: does this message make me better or worse? Does this call me toward the light or away from it?

And I have found that this careful, deliberate skepticism has given me more genuine spiritual guidance than blind belief ever could. Because when I believe uncritically, I can be led anywhere — including somewhere harmful. But when I audit my beliefs, I am doing the real work of discipleship and indeed of revelation.

The meat has been learning to hold faith together with honesty and criticality, which I believe are the true expressions of the Holy Spirit, along with love. Faith is tempered and made more resilient by honest doubt.

I think Mormon history asks the same of us.

I read Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision carefully. He describes a darkness pressing in on him, an inability to speak, a desperate inner struggle before the light comes. That account, to my ear, sounds like a man in the grip of something overwhelming — a psychological crisis, a visionary episode, perhaps something chemically assisted. There may indeed be real historical evidence suggesting that entheogens may have played a role in the revelatory world that Joseph and those around him inhabited. That diminishes it for me not a whit, because whatever its origins, the *message* of that vision calls us toward something beautiful: seek your own revelation. Trust your conscience. The divine speaks to individuals. That is a radical, living idea, and I am grateful for it.

But I can hold that gratitude and still be honest, because Joseph Smith was also a man. A complicated, flawed, sometimes harmful man. And Brigham Young likewise was a man, and every prophet who has ever stood before us and declared "thus saith the Lord" — was a human being, with desires and fears and blind spots, mixed in with whatever genuine light they carried. The milk asks us to receive their words as though God spoke them directly. The meat asks us to do what we do with our own inner revelations: *audit them.* Ask always — does this call me to be better, or does it call me to be worse? Does this lead toward the light, or does it serve someone's fear, or pride, or hunger for power?

When a prophetic voice calls you toward greater love, toward justice, toward the dignity of every person — receive it. This is the Divine speaking through a human vessel.

When it calls you toward harm, toward exclusion, toward the diminishment of any of God's children — set it down. Not in anger, but with the same gentle skepticism I've learned to apply to my own inner voices. Because *that part is not the divine, not sacred; it is base and wicked*

We are a people who love narrative. We love the idea that we are part of a larger story — that our faith was founded in fire and light and angels and plates of gold. And I think that is not a weakness. I think that is something deeply human and even sacred.

Mythology and truth are not truly opposed. When viewed critically, Mythology is one of the most powerful containers truth has ever been poured into. These stories — the grove, the stone in the hat, the restoration — are scaffolding. They give us something to climb. They hold up the better self we are still in the process of becoming.

But scaffolding is not the building.

We can use these frameworks to build higher than we are — *only if we are willing to look at them clearly.* Only if we are willing to say: this part of the story calls us toward beauty, and this part was a man's fear speaking, and I will take what is luminous and set down what is shadow.

As I like to joke with my friends, we made it up and it's true

I used to think doubt was the enemy of faith. I now believe it is faith's most robust companion. Without doubt, I could have - would have - followed my own inner voices somewhere dangerous. Without doubt, we might follow any voice that claims authority straight off the edge of the world.

The willingness to say "I love this tradition and I will not accept all of it uncritically" is the most honestly prophetic thing I can imagine

Priesthood is our inheritance. Revelation is our birthright. And the auditing — the careful, loving, courageous criticality — the putting first of reason, fact, and compassion even and especially when it's uncomfortable to do so-- that is the work of true discipleship and of living ethically within the world

Do not put your faith in books or prophets, they are only giving you the myth to awaken you to what is already true and beautiful and divine within you. Put your faith instead in truth, compassion, reason, love, and put your faith also in doubt, for these are the ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us in truth.

May we all have the courage to hold faith and doubt together.

Amen.