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Counseling with the Lord

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Abstract: Seeking a testimony with real intent and counseling with the Lord allows a testimony of the Book of Mormon to grow.

Counseling with the Lord

by Monte C. Scoville*

Have you ever really counseled with the Lord in your search for truth? Alma in speaking to his son, Helaman, gave him great wisdom to follow when he declared: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings and he will direct thee for good . . ." (Alma 37:37.)

Recently through an exercise called "Counseling with God," which was conducted in seminary for the ninth grade students studying the Book of Mormon, many young people learned how to discover the truth of a testimony and how to plant it deep in their hearts.

The program asked the students to first read the story of Joseph Smith and then ask their Heavenly Father if this is true. It was explained that there was a difference between counseling and just praying. In order to counsel with real intent it was suggested that they first find a quiet place where they could not be disturbed. Then they were to kneel and pray out loud. After addressing their Heavenly Father they were to ask in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of their sins, and plead for this if necessary. Next they were to express their heart-felt gratitude for their blessings. Then they were to ask in all sincerity if the Book of Mormon is true and if Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God. With these basic elements, the students could enlarge their conversation with the Lord according to the promptings of the Spirit.

After having had this experience, they were asked to write their feelings or tell what happened. The response in student participation was spiritually gratifying. They experienced something more beautiful and touching than they had ever known before. Here are a few of their writings to illustrate the process as well as the rewards in the search for en-



during truth in a testimony of the Gospel.

Jane, in expressing her thoughts, perhaps is a living representative of countless thousands of young people growing up in the Church. She says:

All my life I have been brought up in the Church. I had taken most of it for granted. The last few years I have been asking myself if it is true. Then in seminary I was told to counsel with the Lord and ask Him if it is true.

One night a few weeks ago I decided I would do this. As I knelt in prayer I had a wonderful feeling inside of me. It is so very hard to explain it, but I can now truly say that I have a testimony and I know Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God. He did see the Father and the Son.

Most young people do take the Church for granted, even though they may stand up and bear their testimonies, simply because parents and teachers alike have never challenged them to go to the Lord in humility and ask Him if these things are true, and then *wait for the answer*. The last four words were italicized because this is what distinguishes counseling with our Father from casual praying. This is why the prophets of the Lord had tremendous faith—they pleaded for forgiveness first; and then, when they sought guidance from the Lord, they waited until they received their answers.

However, many young Latter-day Saints are developing solid testimonies of the truth, similar to Bill's expressions. He writes:

I have never as some people describe, had a feeling of truthfulness of all the principles of the Church come upon me suddenly like a bolt of lightning. Rather, I have lived amid these great basic teachings all of my life; and have never had reason to question them. But still I have always had a very strong knowledge of their truthfulness—especially since taking seminary. I have felt this silent companion, truth.

I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God and that the things he translated into the Book of Mormon are true.

In his feelings we detect the development of a testimony, built upon the foundation of belief, one brick at a time. Yet, we must never forget that the mortar which binds these bricks into strength and

(For Course 24, lesson of June 30, "Spiritual Refreshment in Prayer"; for Course 19, lessons of April 21, 28 and June 30: "Faith," "Faith and Works," "The Holy Ghost"; for Course 29, lesson of April 28, " . . . the Holy Ghost"; for Course 13, lessons of March 24 to April 7, "Faith"; and for youth of the Church.)

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beauty is the confirmation of truth which enters the heart when we go to the Lord in vocal supplication to thank Him for the knowledge of these basic truths. Then, being in tune with the Holy Ghost, ask Him for specific answers to any problems we have studied out in our own minds. We then wait for the answers. Searching for truth is an endless process of getting to know more and more about the Eternal God through continual supplication.

Carma expresses her feelings and experience that coincide with this. She writes:

I knelt in prayer one day in my bedroom. When I knelt there I felt like the Lord was right beside me. I asked Him to help me make my testimony stronger.

My answer did come true because I had so much faith. While I was counseling with the Lord, I started to cry.

I have read the Joseph Smith story, and I truly believe that he is a true Prophet of God.

Reading about his vision was the first thing that really made me believe that God is real and Joseph Smith is real and all the visions he had are true.

Some of us may ask: "Just what is it that we are to feel when the Lord answers us in our prayers?" Judy gives us an insight and also reveals that many of us learn to feel this when quite young and then "grow out of it." She says:

Joseph Smith is a true Prophet of God. When I asked, I felt so calm, different from the way I normally feel. It is unexpressable joy. The feeling is indescribable.

I received this same wonderful feeling when I was not too old (not long ago). I used to talk to my Father in heaven. Sometimes I even shed tears of joy. I would always thank Him for my wonderful mother. I have always felt joy and peace of mind. I had no hate in my heart when I used to talk to Him. I have learned now I used to counsel with God.

In our classes, we are taught many principles, but there is only one way we can discover their truthfulness for ourselves. Pam gives us a key to this as she says:

When I first started reading the Book of Mormon I didn't know the stories of the Book of Mormon were true. I heard other people get up and bear their testimonies on the truthfulness of the Book, so I just took it for granted. After I had read the Book of Mormon for several months, I began to realize the great courage of these prophets in the Book of Mormon. Then I began to realize that the Book of Mormon was true.

Then one night I had a feeling to get up and read the booklet of the Joseph Smith story. I knelt down and prayed to the Lord and asked Him if the Book of Mormon was true.

Then I knew it was true because of the joy I received while kneeling in prayer.

One of the most deeply spiritual experiences I have ever read was the expression of Evan Bring-

hurst, who died two days after Seminary concluded this past May. His counseling prepared him for a great mission.

After studying the Book of Mormon I asked my Heavenly Father if it was true.

I went up into the mountains, and I asked God if the Book of Mormon was true. I wasn't sure if I would be all right if I had my heart operation until I counseled with God.

Now I know the Book of Mormon is true because there was a burning in my bosom. This was a great feeling, and I started to cry while I was talking with God. I knew that the Book of Mormon was true, and I would be all right when I had my operation.

I am thankful for learning that when we die we will be very, very much alive. I used to fear death, but now that I know this, I am not afraid to die.

Because of this fine boy's willingness to counsel with the Lord, he grew in faith to the point where he could face death courageously, having sought for truth from its source.

But the promise is unto all of us: "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Moroni gives us the key to the beginning of searching out truth when we read: ". . . 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. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." (Moroni 10:4, 5.)

Each of us can experience the manifestation of the truth in all things in the manner in which the Lord declared: ". . . Ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right." (Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.)

It is fitting to conclude with the realization of this truth, as written by a ninth-grade boy. He said:

About a month ago you asked us to go home and counsel with the Lord, and you gave a lesson on it. I went home that night and was thinking about it and decided to do what you had told us to do. I asked my Heavenly Father if the Book of Mormon was true, and if Joseph Smith was a true Prophet, and if the Church was true.

I sat there for a few minutes; and I had a burning in my chest, right where you said it would be. I thanked my Heavenly Father for answering my questions.

Then last night I asked my Heavenly Father some more questions about the same as before. And I got the same answers. This has built my testimony and helped me to face the truth. I know that the Church is true and that David O. McKay and Joseph Smith are true prophets.

Library File Reference: Prayer.