

# Doctrine & Covenants Study – D&C 6-9

Online zoom Sunday School, 31 Jan 2021

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*D&C 6:2*

*Behold, I am God; give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my words.*

Two edge swords cut both ways. Once you are aware of God's words, you now find yourself in a position where you need to act on them, or suffer the consequences of not acting on them.

After telling of an experience with a hernia infection that required surgery (back in 2003), Denver Snuffer, in a talk I attended in 2012, related:

*"I bled and I kept track of it, but it was months later when I went back and looked at it. I bled for 40 days, and after the 40 days, I learned yet more from the Lord. And I can tell you that covenants traditionally involve cutting and covenants in the Old Testament involve the shedding of blood and covenants with our Lord, at some point in some context with some reaches, require that we suffer." (The Temple, TDS Vol 1, pg 163, PDF)*

When you venture off the trail in your jeep, there comes a point where if you cross a certain threshold, you are committed and there is no going back. At some point you face the challenge of the ditch or gorge to pass through and you have to "gun it" to get through, or find yourself stuck, or worse.

This idea was beautifully illustrated in the short movie *The Pump*

<https://youtu.be/1DHNMrEOLqU>

*D&C 6:3-5*

*Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God. Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God. Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you.*

What does it mean "while the day lasts"?

Is there a time appointed beyond which it will be too late to "treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation" or to "thrust in his sickle and reap"?

Do we know in advance when that appointed time will come to an end? Had the 5 unwise virgins known when the bridegroom was to come, would they have got oil for their lamps, or would they have still put it off till the last minute?

What does it mean to "thrust in [your] sickle and reap"? Might it have anything to do with asking and receiving from God or knocking and having things opened unto you "while the day lasts"?

What is it like to ask and receive? Oh look, here's an example:

*D&C 6:6*

*Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion;*

What does it mean to "keep my commandments"? (Can it be considered a form of thrusting in your sickle while the day lasts?)

The Lord, in the Gospel of John, says, If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15). A commandment is a communication that is sent by God. Another way of putting this is, "If you love me, stand ready, watching for every communication I will send to you.... He that treasures my teaching, and stands ready, watching for every communication I send him, is he who shows love for me.... If a man loves me, he will stand ready, watching for every communication I will send him" (Testimony of St. John 10:11–12).

There is nothing given without effort. Christ paid the price to allow us to repent. But it is up to each person to choose for themselves the amount of truth and light they are willing to receive. The light and truth one is willing to receive is dependent upon his obedience. "How much light and truth are you willing to receive?" Christ says: I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness (D&C 93:19). So Christ gives men these sayings to teach them "how to worship." This is no idle statement. In this is the essence of what everyone must do to worship the Father. Worship Him by keeping His commandments. Keep His commandments to follow the example of His Son. That example allows men to go from grace to grace. Eventually, having grown from grace to grace by keeping His commandments, everyone can receive a fullness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fullness and be glorified in me as I am glorified in the Father. Therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace (D&C 93:20). Keeping commandments is not keeping statistics. Nor is it to attract notice from others. It is not to finish some checklist of questions in an interview. It has a deeper meaning and serves a much higher purpose. "Would you like to proceed from a lesser to a greater degree of grace? Would you like to receive a fullness of what God offers to mankind in mortality? Then you must worship the Father in this way. He wants you to worship Him by keeping the commandments and growing thereby in light and truth and grace. And no man receives a fullness unless he keeps his commandments. He that keeps his commandments receives truth and light until he is glorified in truth and knows all things (D&C 93:27-28)."

There is an opposition to getting there. All must face an adversary who is committed to keeping them from receiving light and truth. He knows very well how this process works. Unlike you, he has no doubts about this process. So the adversary directs his efforts to keep men from closing the distance between themselves and God. Interestingly, his role in this process is described with perfect clarity in the scriptures as well: And that wicked one comes and takes away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers (D&C 93:39). The Adversary is trying to keep you from gaining light and truth. He understands how to do that: Get you to disobey the commandments. You think you are just struggling with a problem or weakness. You think you are having some temptation that drives you to distraction. The criticism, complaint, or weakness you have that challenges your faith is not that at all. It is your enemy working on taking light and truth away from you. This is the balance in which you find yourself. Choose the light.

## Riches and Self-Reliance

### *D&C 6:7*

*Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich.*

Al-Ghazali wrote:

*"Or rather, I say - without trepidation - that the name "light" for things other than the First Light is a sheer metaphor, since everything other than that Light, when viewed in itself, has no light of its own in respect to its own self. On the contrary, its luminosity is borrowed from another, and this borrowed luminosity is not supported by itself, but rather by another. To attribute a borrowed thing to the one who has borrowed it is sheer metaphor. Do you think that someone who borrows clothing, a horse, a blanket, and a saddle, and who rides the horse when the lender lets him do so and [only] to the extent that he allows is truly rich, or [just] metaphorically so? Is the lender rich or the borrower? It is obvious! In himself the borrower is poor, just as he always was. The only one who is rich is the lender, from whom come loans and gifts and to whom things are returned and taken back." (Al-Ghazali, *The Niche of Lights*. A parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced,, and annotated by David Buchman, Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah, 1988, pg 15)*

Compare with these words from Revelation:

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Rev 3:14-20)*

At what point is being "self-sufficient" a curse instead of a blessing?

Is this description from Revelations ("*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*") not what we can consider a definition for "self-reliance"?

Why is "self-reliance" a focus in the church's general handbook? (see Chapter 22: 'Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance,')

But then consider these verses:

*And again, verily I say unto you concerning your debts, behold, it is my will that you should pay all your debts, and it is my will that you should humble yourselves before me, and obtain this blessing by your diligence, and humility, and the prayer of faith. (D&C 104:78-79)*

*How far it is the will of the Lord that we should have dealings with the world, and how we should conduct our dealings with them. You shall contract no debts with them. (T&C 26:20)*

*Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage. (D&C 19:35)*

According to king Benjamin, all are beggars (see Mosiah 2). No one is (or can ever be) anything more than a beggar, dependent upon God. God gives everyone the power to live. He gives them the power to breathe and the ability to move and do what they will. God lends all of this to man so he can choose according to his own wishes. Since all are beggars, utterly dependent on God for their very existence, they have nothing to brag of and no legitimate claim to self-reliance. That recognition is what motivated king Benjamin, though a monarch, to humbly labor for his own support. In this modern day of abundance, men and women are easily misled into thinking the blessings of their productive society permit them to be self-reliant. Of course, abundance is only temporary. The principles upon which current society's prosperity was built have been discarded. Therefore, one's riches [will become] slippery (Helaman 5:8), as the fruit of true principles vanish from those who dishonor the foundation upon which that prosperity was conferred. In the coming scarcity of the last days, safety will only be found in Zion. Zion will require the laborer to labor only for Zion, not for himself (see 2 Nephi 11:17), and together all will perform the required great labor to build and sustain the society. No one can expect to eat or be clothed in Zion if he or she does not work to produce the necessities. Benjamin's talk provides a framework for Zion.

*D&C 6:10-13*

*Behold thou hast a gift, and blessed art thou because of thy gift. Remember it is sacred and cometh from above— And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the*

*truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways. Make not thy gift known unto any save it be those who are of thy faith. Trifle not with sacred things. If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.*

## Know mysteries.

See D&C 8:10-11.

In a recent conference talk, Elder W. Mark Basset made the following confusing statement:

*“We were never expected ‘to have a perfect knowledge of things’ during this mortal existence. Instead, we are expected to ‘hope for things which are not seen, which are true.’” ((For Our Spiritual Development and Learning, October 2016)*

I comment in more length on this on my blog post, *Why Do We Avoid Delving into Mysteries?*  
<http://jayball.name/249/why-do-we-avoid-delving-into-mysteries/>

It also surprised me to hear Elder Basset teach that “like Nephi and Alma, I do not know the meaning of all things. Nor do I need to know all things; I too shall forbear”. Does he mean forbear from seeking to know the “mysteries of God until he know them in full”? (Alma 12:10). Nephi’s example suggests the opposite of what seems to be implied by Elder Basset’s statement. Rather than saying he needs “no more of the word of God, for we have enough!”, Nephi, in the audience of an angel, was being taught from on high because of his intense desire to know deeper things (see 1 Nephi 11:1-3).

## Oliver Cowdery's Gift

From my letter to Leroy and Judy on Nauvoo Period Ancestors, April 2019:

*Page 254: I was fascinated with J'Lene's experience with “divining” for graves. We tend to think of such gifts as wacky, but we read of this very thing in the Doctrine and Covenants. D&C 8:6 talks about a gift that Oliver Cowdery has, “the gift of Aaron”. That is talking about the divining rod he was able to use with some success.*

*The original revelation does not use “rod of Aaron” but instead mentions Oliver “working with the sprout,” meaning a divining rod. It identified this as a “thing of nature” because Oliver used what was considered ‘natural means’ to employ the “sprout.” When Sidney Rigdon prepared the revelation for publication, he did not like the description, and altered it to read as something more biblical. “Sidney Rigdon replaced ‘thing of nature’ with ‘rod.’” (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 1: July 1828-June 1831, Church Historian’s Press, (Salt Lake City), pp. 45-46, see also footnote 117.) See also footnote 118 for a description of how divining rods were used.*

Why do spiritual gifts tend to be minimized, disregarded, or spurned? The latest change to the general handbook discourages supernatural or energy healing practices.

*"An updated section on medical and health care notes that 'seeking competent medical help, exercising faith, and receiving priesthood blessings work together for healing, according to the will of the Lord.'" Latter-day Saints "are discouraged from seeking miraculous or supernatural healing from an individual or group that claims to have special methods for accessing healing power outside of prayer and properly performed priesthood blessings. These practices are often referred to as 'energy healing.' Other names are also used. Such promises for healing are often given in exchange for money." (The Latest Changes to the General Handbook <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/general-handbook-update-december-2020>)*

Just last month in our Book of Mormon Study we discussed this topic (Lesson from Dec 13, 2020) :

*Moroni 7:30*

*For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.*

I was impressed with this blog post from several years ago:

*When I first joined the LDS Church I thought every Latter-day Saint had revelations, visitations by angels, and miracles in their lives. I thought, the Joseph Smith story was the common experience for those who were members of this Restored Church.*

*It took a few years before I realized that it was the exception, not the rule, that such miraculous experiences took place. I learned that most saints were more akin to Hugh Nibley's description of his grandfather, a member of the First Presidency, who said that if he ever saw an angel he would "jump out the window."*

*I think there is a tendency to avoid discussing any contemporary occurrence of the miraculous in our individuals lives within the Church because of the frequent association of such things with deceivers and the deceived. In contrast to that fear, Moroni affirms that angels appear only to those with "a firm mind." (Moroni 7: 30.) How odd it is that we have this juxtaposition: On the one hand, in our day it is viewed as being evidence of a weak mind, or dubious character, and on the other Moroni asserts it is evidence of a "firm mind." One or the other has to be incorrect.*

*I think such things are experienced less because we talk of them less. As we talk of them less, we increase our doubts about such things. Doubt and faith cannot coincide.*

*So was Christ weak-minded or of "a firm mind?" Was Saul of Tarsus deceived or a deceiver, or instead a godly man who received notice from heaven? What of Joseph, Alma, Moses, Peter, Mary, Elizabeth, Agabus, and John?*

*Today we prefer our miracles at a distance. When we do accept the occasional miracle, we want it to be separated by culture, time and reduced to written accounts from the deceased. We think it's safer that way. Society trusts that when the miraculous has been reduced to history alone it can then safely be the stuff from*

*which PhD's and theologians extract the real meanings. After all, our scientific society only trusts education, certification and licensing; not revelation, visitation and ministering of angels. Well, even if that is not as it should be, it is at least as Nephi said it would be: "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. Behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work." (2 Nephi 28: 5-6.) (Denver Snuffer, Jumping out a Window, 24 Feb 2010, <https://denversnuffer.com/2010/02/jumping-out-a-window/>)*