

Good evening, brothers and sisters. It's good to be with you again tonight. Let's go over to John 6 in the New Testament for just a moment. I want to take a look at a scripture here. We have something called the bread of life sermon. I'm sure you've read that and I won't take time to go into that, I just want to pay attention to a couple of places in this sermon. It begins in verse 16 and goes all the way to the end of the chapter to verse 71. You may want to take a look at that sermon again. At the end of that sermon, the disciples are upset because some of the things Jesus has said and done are really contrary to their traditions. It simply says this, if you'll look at verse 60: "*Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this said,*" (you can read the prior verses and see what he said), "*This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*"

I want to point out now, these are baptized members of the church, men and women who have listened to some doctrine that flies in the face of their Jewish traditions. Another thing in content and context is, this sermon follows Jesus' feeding 5000 men. There were probably many more people there because it only numbers the 5000 men. It doesn't mention women and children. But again, when we get down to verse 60, and the disciples said "*This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*"? Look what Jesus says. 61: "*When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?*" Then he says a couple of other things that have to do with his pronouncement of him being the Son of God. Look at verse 66: "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him". Again, I'm going to emphasize, these are baptized members of the church that have witnessed this miracle of feeding the 5000 people and probably many other miraculous things up to that point. And yet, because of what he says here, what they observed, what he does and what he says, they walk away. Verse 67: "*Then said Jesus unto the twelve*" (you can see him standing there watching this multitude walk away. They're not going to have anything to do with this. We want our membership removed from the records of the church. And Jesus said to the twelve), "*Will ye also go away?*" What a poignant statement that is to the members of the twelve. 67: "*Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*" That's a question I'd like to ask us tonight.

The purpose of this lesson is to address this "going away" that's taking place in the church membership. Where will you go if you leave the membership of the church? Everything you know about the restoration, about the Prophet Joseph Smith, about modern day scripture, about priesthood, about temple ordinances, about the doctrine of the kingdom come as a result of your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All of the things you know, you could not have known outside of membership of the church. You would have been like all of the other Christian world who have the Bible and limited scripture resources. They can only go so far in their knowledge and they bump up against the wall. You who are walking away have access to all of this information and yet you are making a decision. You're in what your friends and family and people that talk to me during the week, you're in the middle of a crisis of faith. Well, congratulations, that's exactly what you're supposed to be doing here on the earth. Every one of us, at some time or another, are going to come up face to face and experience some kind of a challenge that will challenge our faith. That's one of the main purposes of the telestial world. Why would you walk away from the very thing that's given you all the knowledge you have up to this point? If you've experienced any joy and you have had any spiritual experiences, if you've participated in any miracles, if you've had priesthood active in your life, why would you walk away from that at this point? It's the same question that I ask you that Jesus asked them, "will you also go away"? And I would say, "where will you go"? You have access through your membership to all of the answers to life's questions and mysteries of Godliness that have been hid from the foundation of the world. They're made available to you now. You can only access or have access through your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

So, what are the reasons that people leave? When we were in the mission field, Margie and I, I think we got this from Prother Pontius, in fact I'm sure we got it from Brother Pontius, and we practiced this while we were in the mission field in the Philippines and have continued to practice it and have practiced it up until just the last couple of weeks. We tell every new investigator, every new member, and anybody and everybody that is new in the faith, and therefore weak in the faith, "You're going to have three things that are going to happen to you either before you are baptized or, for sure, after you are baptized and I promise you that somewhere in your

sojourn, in your journey as a member of the this church, these three things will happen to you. So, the old saying, being forewarned is forearmed, so what you do now is to get power through knowledge, so that when this happens to you, it won't take you away. Without exception, the number one reason why people leave the church throughout the world, and we've traveled throughout the world on missions and worked with people and have been involved heavily with the rescue and the number one reason is, they left the church because they were offended by another member of the church.

One of the three things that we tell them in their investigation process, as they are now getting ready to come to church for the first time, "You know you need to come to church for a certain number of times, as determined by the mission president, before you can be baptized." You tell them right up front, "Before you join the church or after you join the church you're going to be offended. Just plan on it! Another member is going to say something that will hurt your feelings. And you're going to say, and these words will be planted in your mind by a devil or an unclean spirit, well, I'll never go back to that church again if that's the way they are! Or, who do they think they are treating me like this? Now, those statements that you have placed in your mind come from hell."

I tell them up front, you need to do that. Heres the other thing you need to understand when an offense comes from another member of the church. More often than not, 95 to 97 % of the time, it's not intended. It's just that in the church we have some stupid people that do stupid things. They don't think! They put their foot in their mouth and say things that they don't give a thought too. So, we warn people up front, "this is going to happen. Know this, that it's not intended. It's just that in the church you have all kinds of people who are at different levels and different stages of their progression. You're going to come into contact with those people and somewhere in that contact period you're going to have your feelings hurt and be offended. Know this, that it has happened to all of us. Not only have some of us been offended, but some of us have been the offenders. We just needed to grow up in the gospel and repent and have that weakness in us transformed into a strength. Just give it some time, don't worry about that."

That's one of the three things that we tell people. And it is, without a doubt, the number one reason why people leave the church. Well, we've had people come back the very next week and even sometimes that very next Sunday. They would come back and say, "Elder Stroud, remember what you told us about? These three things that would take place?" "Yes, which one took place?" "Sunday I had a person who said this to me", and I said, "Wow, that was offensive"!

They looked at me and said, "Yeah and we remember what you said and it's no big deal". And we went right past it! It's wonderful!

The second thing that's going to happen is you're going to be tempted not to attend church. What's the big deal? So we tell them, "Why is the devil plying these three tactics against you as a new member or an investigator? We have to ask, what's the reason behind this? Well the reason he's going to tempt you to not go to church is to keep you from partaking of the sacrament. That's the primary reason. There are other reasons that have to do with fellowship and service, etc., but the primary reason is to keep you from partaking of the sacrament. In that sacrament, what you do, is you agree for the next 7 days to take upon you the name of Jesus Christ, always remember him and to keep his commandments which he has given you. You agree to do that when you take of those emblems, those tokens of his atoning sacrifice, the bread and the water, those three things. He in turn, if you righteously and with full intent, accept that agreement, he in turn promises that for the next 7 days he will give you the Holy Spirit to be your guide. You do that every 7 days, because frankly, even if you live in a world where you don't do it every 7 days, you're going to find yourself in a snare and a trap and captivated by the power of the evil one. So that's an insurance to help you continue to grow and receive revelation and guidance because you agreed to take upon yourself for the next 7 days the name of Christ, always remember him and keep his commandments and he's going to provide you with a compass. He is going to give you a lantern, a lamp unto your feet, a light under your path. You're going to get your own little personal Liahona for the next 7 days where you can be warned and guided, receive instruction from time to time, and be blessed because you are trying to do what you should."

When we explain that, why they're tempted not to go to church they can easily see that. This is where knowledge becomes powerful. We tell them up front, "this is what's going to happen to you. Here's what's

going to happen if you give in to that temptation and here's what's going to happen if you're obedient to the Lord's counsel to attend church and partake of the sacrament.”

The third thing is, you're going to come across anti-Mormon material. In our day, the information age, where the internet has made just about everything that was ever written about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [Mormonism] available at the click of a mouse. It used to be that this material was only put into print by apostates or anti-Mormons who hated the church, wanted to destroy your faith, so they would take portions of the history of the church out of context or take parts of it out of history and put it in such a way that it would cause your faith to be attacked. Now you don't have to go to the Gerald and Sandra Tarpres (?) in Salt Lake City or any of the other anti-Mormon press. You can get all that you want that will challenge your faith on the internet from our own history. Now that's the point I want to emphasize. This is kind of bringing me into this, what I want to talk about tonight. Why are people leaving? Why are they going?

It appears, brothers and sisters, that somewhere along the line a decision was made decades ago that a part of our history, the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that was not faith promoting, should not be made public. A decision was made, I don't know who made it. I don't know when it was made, but it appears that somewhere, either that decision was made or we slipped into that somehow because not everything in our history is savory. That's a fact. I think that President Hinckley will go down in history, that the hallmark of his ministry will be the “Joseph Smith Papers' project. Some people have said that the hallmark of his ministry would be the great temple builder. I'm not taking anything away from that because he was the great temple builder. When it comes to the salvation of the members of the church, and certainly temples are a part of that, but I believe this JS Papers project is one of the great revelations to come to President Hinckley, and I believe this came from the Lord through his prophet. President Hinckley decided that we should gather all of the information that we can find in this context and is available on the Prophet Joseph Smith, and compile it into volume and make it available to all of the public, the members of the church and anybody else that wants it. That is the first idea of the Joseph Smith Papers project.

Margie and I were involved in that a little bit and had a chance to travel with these esteemed BYU scholars, church history scholars, experts on the prophet Joseph Smith and Marlin K. Jensen who was the Church Historian. We had the chance to go on that tour, so I have an inside look into what was happening there. When the idea was first presented by President Hinckley to this group of scholars, one of them who was spokesman for the group, I can't remember the name, but he came out and he said; “Every thing President Hinckley? Everything”? Now these men knew and had access to the material that had been archived and kept in First Presidency vaults and in archives of the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU, and any other place that was restricted to anyone that did not have clearance as a church historian, a scholar, or someone else that had clearance to view these records. It was restricted, not available to the general membership of the church. They knew that in those records there were things that were not savory. There were also things that would butt heads against some of the things that have been taught as truths in the church. If we pulled these first hand records out and made them public you're going to have a lot of people saying, “wait a minute, that isn't what I've been taught”. And be it to President Hinckley's everlasting glory, he said: “That's all right. We want it all. And the prophet Joseph Smith's history will stand on its own”. Well, that's been a two edged sword. So with two things, with the advent of internet access and the information age, and the Joseph Smith papers, we're now involved in an interesting thing taking place in the church. Members of the church are being forced to face their own history. It is shaking them up! As a result of that, I just want to say that the church has printed us some essays. And you can find this on lds.org under general topic essays. Here's some of the names of the essay titles that the church has put out over the last two or three years, as a result of the confusion and turmoil that has taken place as members of the church have faced first hand accounts on their own history. Some of these essays are: “Becoming Like God”, “The Book of Mormon and May studies”, “Book of Mormon Translation”, “First Vision Accounts”, “Joseph Smith's Teachings about Priesthood, Temple, and Women”, “Mother in Heaven”, “Peace and Violence among 19th century Latter-day Saints”, (and that one, in particular, is going to talk about the Mountain Meadows Massacre), “Plural Marriage in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”, “Race and the Priesthood”, and “Translation and Historicity of the Book of Abraham”. These are all things that we've had answers to as Church Education Systems teachers. I've taught for years about Blacks and the Priesthood and

this, that, and the other. I'm not going to go into that tonight. I'm just going to say that what we have taught and what we've believed and what we now read in first hand accounts that are coming forth from our church about our church history and the Joseph Smith Papers Project appear to be in conflict. And I repeat, "appear to be in conflict".

Go back to the story in John again. The Savior taught some things, he did some things, and the members of the church looked at that and said; "whoa, wait a minute, wait a minute. This isn't the way we understand things here, this is different than we think things should be". And even then, in the Saviors own ministry, and throughout time, this has always happened, even then people turned and walked away. In reality, some knowledge, some information, some discussion, and more important than all that, a witness from the Holy Ghost through the Holy Spirit so that once again you can feel that spirit, and that would resolve a lot of these issues. We are right now in the middle of this conundrum, if you will, in the church. Let me just say a couple of other things in order to help you understand this. I'm liking that I'm hearing the brethren more and more in general conference saying things like this; "Take what you hear in conference and go home and ask Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, to confer this information that you've heard by the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Ghost. Receive a witness for yourself that it's true.

Somewhere along the line, we have slipped into this feeling that prophets and apostles in the restoration don't ever make any mistakes. Somewhere we've come into that. I don't know how we got into that, how we could ever assume or adopt such a philosophy, knowing the history of the church and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. It's beyond me. We go right on up to Joseph Smith and the 116 page manuscript where he went against what the Lord told him to do, acted on his own counsel, and as a result, we all know the story of what took place there. All the way through the prophet's life, throughout his whole life, he's chastised by the Lord for doing things that he shouldn't be doing. Let me give you one example. Joseph Smith received a remission of his sins many times. You can read about it in the Book of Mormon. I just want to show you one example. You go to Section 93 in the D&C. This was given in May of 1833 in Kirtland, Ohio. This was at a time when knowledge was being poured out upon this great prophet, seer, and revelator that was just outstanding. Section 93 is what I call the 'Holy of Holies' of the D&C. Its got such deep, significant, and profound doctrine in it that from vs. 1, where it gives you a five step formula on how to receive the second comforter, on through to talking about intelligence, glory, and spirit and truth. Its just unbelievable what's in here. And yet, go to vs. 47. Some of the deepest doctrine of the restoration are found in the first 40 verses of section 93 given through this great prophet Joseph Smith. You read this stuff and there is no way that you can say he made it up. This is so far beyond the prophet Joseph in 1833.

Look at vs. 47. The Lord pours all this knowledge out on Joseph Smith. He speaks to Joseph and he says this: "*And now, verily I say unto Joseph Smith, Jun.—You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord;*" I just love that! All the way through it, into Nauvoo, the prophet Joseph was not the greatest judge of human character. In the Nauvoo period and the Kirtland period he took into his bosom some nefarious characters, and entrusted them with things that were closest to his own bosom. Listen to what the Prophet Joseph Smith said. He made mistakes, brothers and sisters, and had to repent sorely for it. He was rebuked and chastised and called to repentance by the Lord numerous times. This is the prophet of the restoration. This is the man that stands in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who has all of these things that he's famous for and yet he made mistakes all the way through his life. Here's the important part, watch this, God allowed him to. Joseph said this, in the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith pg 268, "*I told them I was but a man and they must not expect me to be perfect. If they expected perfections from me I should expect it from them. But if they will bear with my infirmities and the infirmities of my brethren, I will likewise bear with their infirmities*". Another place the prophet Joseph Smith said: "*A prophet is only a prophet when he's speaking as a prophet*". That's in The History of the Church teachings pg 278.

I like this statement by David O. McKay. This is a conference report given in General Conference April 1962. Speaking about this, on what we'll call the 'humanity of the prophet'. That's a good term to use here, 'the humanity of the prophet'. President McKay said, "*When God makes the prophet he does not unmake the man.*" Isn't that a great quote? Lorenzo Snow said this: "*I can fellowship with the President of the Church if he doesn't know everything. I know, I saw the imperfection in Joseph Smith and I thank God that he would put*

upon a man who had those imperfections the power and authority he placed on him. For I knew that I, myself, had weakness and thought that there was a chance for me". That was quoted by Neal Maxwell in General Conference October, 1984.

Gordon B. Hinckley said this: *"I have worked with 7 presidents of the church. I recognize that all of them have been human, but I have never been concerned over this"*. Somewhere we have come up with this feeling of the infallibility of the Mormon prophets and apostles. We're no better than the Catholic Church and the infallibility of the Pope. Yet none of this was ever taught by the founders of the restoration. I don't believe that it is taught by the leaders today. At least, not intended the way it's taken by the Latter-day Saints. I believe that it's the members of the church that have built up this tradition in here, that prophets and apostles never make mistakes. What's more, God allows them to make mistakes, and we'll talk about that in just a minute. President Hinckley continued, saying: *"They have had some weaknesses, but this has never troubled me. I know that the God of Heaven has used mortal men throughout history to accomplish his divine purposes"*. Isn't that a great quote?

Here's one by Boyd K. Packer that was given in a CES symposium in August of 1981. Elder Packer said: *"The brethren then and now are men, very ordinary men who have come, for the most part, from very humble beginnings. Do you know how really inadequate we are compared to the callings we've received? Can you feel, in a measure, the overwhelming weight of the responsibility that's ours? If you look for inadequacies and imperfections you can find them quite easily. But you may not feel, as we feel, the enormous weight of responsibility associated with that calling that's come to us. We are not free to do some of the things that scholars think would be so reasonable, for the Lord will not permit us to do them, and it is His church."* I thought that was a great comment.

Here's a couple more that are really good. Brother Bruce R. McConkie said this. This is in Mormon Doctrine: *"With all their inspiration and greatness, prophets are yet mortal men with imperfections common to mankind in general. They have their opinions and prejudices and are left to work out their problems without inspiration in many instances"*. Bruce R. McConkie again, in an address given at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah in October of 1966 said this, *"The opinions and views, even of a prophet, may contain error unless those opinions and views were inspired by the spirit"*. And one last quote by Elder McConkie. This is a question and answer session for teaching seminary pre-service in 2004. Elder McConkie said: *"Every word that a man who's a prophet speaks is not a prophetic utterance. Joseph Smith taught that a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he's acting as such. Men who wear the prophetic mantle are still men. They have their own views, and their understanding of gospel truths is dependent upon the study and inspiration that is theirs. Some prophets . . . and I say it respectfully, know more and greater inspiration than others. In essence, prophets and apostles are first and foremost, aside from their holy calling and the anointing they receive for that, are men in a fallen world working out their own salvation with the fear and trembling like everyone else"*.

They have a holy assignment and a mission. Here's another thing. God allows them to make mistakes because they learn from their own experiences like you and I do. Now, in our day of the church, we have councils and we have quorums where they meet together and discuss, and input, and that, accompanied with the Holy Spirit, ensures that few mistakes are made. Yet, history has shown that in every ministry of a President of the Church, there have been decisions made that may not have been inspired, and the Lord allows that. How are we going to learn from our mistakes? Joseph learned from the 116 page manuscript. He said this: *"I learned that whatever God says is right"*. And he learned that good lesson when it was worth everything that took place there. I think in the Garden of Eden, even when Adam was told by the Lord: *"If he yields to temptation we will provide a Savior for him"*. That's the whole purpose of having a Savior, because we make mistakes. We learn from those mistakes and we repent. Hopefully, we won't make those kinds of mistakes very often. Individually, that's the way we learn. The Lord allows that to take place.

Think of Oliver Cowdery for example, and lets go into 1839 in Far West, and Oliver is in the stage of apostasy, as well as the majority of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve and two counselors in the first presidency. They were in open opposition to Joseph Smith. How would you have felt if you had been a member of the church, just a common, ordinary member at that time, witnessing this dissension in the church? What would you have done? Oliver Cowdery was a man who'd seen God, heard His voice, obtained promises,

had the ministrations of angels, and yet, in 1839 he's saying things to Joseph Smith like, "*If I left the church, the whole church would fall apart*". He was warned early in the D&C to beware of pride. Can you imagine a person who's had all of these experiences saying, "If I left the church the church would fall apart without me." Joseph looked at him and said: "Oliver you've just had it". (??) Well he did and he walked away for 9 years. He was gone for 9 years and then came back humbly at Winter Quarters in 1846 and asked to be re-baptized so he could come across the plains with the Saints. Nine years he was out of the church! Why would you walk away? Would you walk away because we have a tradition that needs to be corrected here, that God allows his leaders to make mistakes? What's the big deal? It's always been that way. Yet it doesn't change a thing as far as the overall performance and mission of the church and the gospel. It doesn't change a thing.

You ought to pull out a talk that was given by Ronald L. Halstrom and it centers on the difference between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is a difference between the two. Brothers and sisters, the church can't save you. The President of the Church can't save you, nor can the First Presidency, or any member of the 12 or any other general authority. They cannot save you! They are to guide us with inspired counsel. I looked up, for example, on lds.org to see if I could find anywhere in the scriptures where a prophet said; "Follow me". I couldn't find anything. Everywhere I found prophets, what they were doing was pointing those that they had stewardship over toward the place where Christ was. In essence they were saying; "I'm not Him. He's over there. Let me show you the way. I have a little more experience. I have some inspiration you may not have at this point. Let me point the way. He's over there and they are pointing you towards Him. It is Christ who says; "*Follow me*". I don't find anywhere in the scriptures where a prophet says, "follow me". I find all kinds of places where it says, follow Christ. Our prophets and apostles are guides. They are directors. They have received the holy convocation from the Lord and an anointing. For many different reasons, the Lord has chosen them to help us come to the Savior. They act as a conduit for revelation to be poured down on the general membership of the church. What the prophets want us to do, is to become so experienced in revelation and prophesy within our own sphere of influence, which is generally for our family, that we become prophets and prophetesses for our own family. They are setting that example as to how this works by being called apostles and prophets to the general membership of the church. They're pointing this out, this whole thing of leadership by general authorities, apostles and prophets, is a template the Lord wants to see done in every individual family. Why find fault with this? When all is said and done, it doesn't matter to me whether the church spends money on malls or game preserves. It doesn't matter to me. I am not concerned about what the salaries of the general authorities are. You know why I'm not concerned? Because my membership in the Church of Jesus Christ has brought me to a point where I am independent of relying upon those men and women for what the Lord wants Mike Stroud to accomplish. Its fulfilled its purpose. I am so grateful for my membership because every thing that I enjoy now, the peace and happiness, the direction, the guidance, everything I have comes as a result of my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I would have none of this. I would enjoy none of this. There would be no doors open. There would be no channels of light without my membership in the church. I would be like a biblical Christian banging my head against the wall because I've gone as far as I could. You want to leave that? Because you think President Monson is uninspired in building a mall? That's the reason you're going to go? I will admit also, there are some things that are just not answerable at this point. There are some things that people find a cause to find fault, and consider moving away. You're just going to have to sit it on the shelf and have faith that sometime you'll be able to receive an answer for that. But don't leave because everything is not available to you right now. By the way, it's probably not available because you're not paying the price to access it. There's a price for this stuff.

I've found out that every thing that I want from God is attached to a law and a formula, accompanied by covenants. If I find out what that law is, and I align myself with that law, through repentance and obedience, I can have the heavens opened, and receive anything I want. No restrictions. So, we get our feelings hurt and we're going to walk away from this? It take us away from the one thing that opens the windows of heaven and allows you to call down the powers of such.

Well, brothers and sister, let me read a couple of other things to you by the prophet Joseph Smith. This is marvelous. I go back to what Alma the Younger said. In Alma 30 he is talking to Korihor and Korihor is a lot

like us in having difficulties and finding fault with the church and finding fault with the leadership. It's nothing new. This has been going on since Adam. You can see in Alma 30 the microcosm or pattern of what's going on in the church today. People are being led away because they say, look at vs. 31, this is Korihor and he's accusing leadership of the church and he says: *“did revile against the priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers.”* See? Now skip over to vs. 35 and Alma has a comment he makes, after he listens to Korihor rail on and on. By the way, Korihor is a member of the church. Probably a priesthood bearer. So this is not an outsider. If you read closely the whole 30th chapter you'll get a feel for that. In verse 35 Alma says: *“Then why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of thyself, knowest that we receive no gain? And now, believest thou that we deceive this people, that causes such joy in their hearts?”*

There's an indicator. Those of you who have walked away from the church or those of you who are contemplating walking away, take a deep breath and take a different view. Nothing in the celestial world is stable. Nothing in this world is stable. This is not the real world, and you in the celestial body, the natural man, is not the real you. You are a spiritual being who's been called to get your glory and power and knowledge so that you can be sent into a classroom behind the veil, get everything, and pass through sorrow, that you might learn the good from the evil. 'It is better for us to do this'. Notice that the 'passing through' indicates it's temporary at best. You're in a school room and you're taking a test. Don't let one item or two items cause you to throw the whole thing out the door. It's the proverbial 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. It doesn't make sense. And yet, that's what you're doing. Take a different view. Take a view that church leaders always have, do, and always will, make mistakes. Take a different view and know that God allows that. If God were to correct and protect every decision that comes down on how to direct the church and guide the members, what is the need for the gift of the Holy Ghost? And why the purpose for the agency of man? If you have to be directed in every thing, then, what's the purpose of the gift of the Holy Ghost?

Let me read you a statement by Brigham Young. *“Now those men or those women who know no more about the power of God and the influence of the Holy Spirit than to be led entirely by another person, suspending their own understanding and pinning their faith upon another sleeve will never be capable of entering into the celestial glory to be crowned as they anticipate, they will never be capable of becoming Gods. They cannot rule themselves, to say nothing of ruling others, but they must be dictated in every trifle like a child. They cannot control themselves in the least, but Peter, James, or somebody else must control them. They never can become Gods nor be crowned as rulers with glory, immortality, and eternal life. They never can hold scepters of glory, majesty, and power in the Celestial Kingdom. Who will? Those who are valiant and inspired with the true independence of heaven”.*

Did you catch phrase that right there? That's what you want to grab. That's where you're being lied to and you're forsaking, if you walk away from the organization that's providing you the opportunity to be independent. *“Who will go forth bodily in the service of their God leaving others to do as they please. Determined to do right so all mankind should decide to take the opposite course. Will this apply to any of you? Your own heart can answer.”* See, brothers and sisters, if you have to be told what to do in everything, if you don't make a move until you're instructed by your leadership, you forfeit exaltation. The leadership is there to provide for you, until you become experienced and perfected in receiving revelation for yourself, and you become, within your own circle of influence, a prophet, like your leaders are, in the circle of the church membership.

Margie likes to call everything that we do in the church 'training wheels'. When you take the training wheels off, you don't throw away the bike. The training wheels are there to help you to come up and obtain something higher. In the meantime, you stay in balance. And if you come up against something that upsets you or you don't understand, don't make a drastic decision at that point. Put it aside. Let it work on you. *“The things of God are of deep import”*, Joseph said, *“and time and experience and careful, solemn and ponderous thought can only find them out”*. Notice the first thing necessary in the formula to find out the deep things of God: time, give it time.

Brother Packer used to say, *“If you have time, take time. Don't be in a rush to make decisions that could determine your eternal destiny.”* The war in heaven was fought over this principle. There was a mighty general there that said, *“You can't think for yourself. Let me take care of you. If you think for yourself, there's*

too big a chance, too big of a risk that you'll never make it back and you'll fail and lose the whole thing. I will take care of you." It's the same message big government gives to its populations. "You're not talented enough. You're not intelligent enough to take care of yourself and if we leave it up to you, you'll mess up and not only mess up your life, but everybody else. So, let us take care of you. Just do what we say and don't give it a thought." Sound familiar?

I hope that I'm not misunderstood here. A couple of things that I just tried to explain are causing way too many to be offended and to go away. All we need to do is adjust our thinking and come back to what was revealed, what is doctrine, and taught by the 'early foundation brethren and sisters of the church'. Somehow, we've gotten away from it a little bit. Not finding fault, it's not my place to correct the church or correct the course. I think that the church has been exactly what it's supposed to be. It's taking the gospel to the convert level membership of the church. Those of you who want more are going to have to step outside of that comfortable little box of the traditions of the fathers, the precepts of men, and the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. You're going to have to pay a price to seek for and obtain personal revelation. You're going to have to align yourself with the laws and covenants that will put you in a position that you can obtain that revelation. There is nothing that can or will be withheld. I pray with all the fervor of my heart that you understand correctly what I am saying here, and that you take a different view of things, look at things differently.

I had a lady that visited me and I asked her if I could share this and she gave me permission. She came up to the house and we had a marvelous visit. She shared with us a vision that she had had. And I said: "Can I share it on my podcast?" She said, "Please do". So, without mentioning her name, she told me that in this vision she'd seen an arm, from the mid-shoulder upper arm down to the hand. In the hand was a handle, and the handle was connected to the spin that led to a little red wagon. You can kind of get a picture of this. She's had this vision given to her of this arm and hand holding onto the handle of the little red wagon. In the little red wagon were all kinds of wonderful gifts. They were just luminescent. They were vibrating with light and life. It was just filled to the brim with these wonderful gifts. Then she said this, "The little red wagon was rusted, it was patched, the hard rubber wheels had pieces and chunks of rubber out of the wheels. The little red wagon had seen better days. But it was filled with all kinds of gifts, and that arm and that hand that had hold of that handle, I immediately got the message of the vision. I said, "The little red wagon is pretty beat up, but it's His little red wagon". She looked at me and smiled and said, "That's exactly right, Mike. It is His little red wagon. And it's filled with gifts. But you have to look past the delapidated, beat up, rusted, chunked-out tires of the little wagon and remember whose hand is at the helm and the gifts that are available."

God bless us to not let the devil deceive us and captivate us by his cunning lies. Take a different view, take a deep breath. If you're experiencing a crisis of faith or you have, take another look at it and think of things differently. Prophets and apostles are men. They're working out their salvation with fear and trembling. This is how we justify what Nephi says; "*Put your trust in no man. Cursed is he who puteth his trust on man. Yea, cursed is he who maketh flesh his arm*". Follow Christ and let the apostles and prophets, while you're in your beginning, elementary, rudimentary stages of learning how to receive revelation, let those prophets and apostles point the way. Let them guide you. Pray for them that they'll be inspired by the Lord. Imagine what it would do for the brethren as they guide the church, if they knew that the vast membership of the church were exercising their right to the gift of the Holy Ghost and acting independently, not being acted upon, praying for the first presidency, the twelve, and other church leaders, regularly, to receive inspiration. You think the membership, operating in that kind of power, would have an affect on the leadership of the church? Would it bless their lives? Contrary to that, what does constant accusation, name calling, lawsuits, and other satanic approaches and pursuits do to hinder the growth of the church and to make it difficult for the brethren?

I pray that the Lord will bless us in this. God bless us all. I hope that you understand this. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.