

Jesus Christ Is the Truth—Who are You? Part One

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There is a valuable question we should all answer from time to time. The question is simply, “Who am I?” Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 17 of the *Stand Forever Series*.

Point A: Who Are You?

To chart your course in life, you must know where you want to go (Point B) and get a fix on where you are (Point A). Only then can you plot the course in between.

And again, what is Point B, what is the destination? Life is about getting to the end, getting to the destination, reunion with God, receiving the gift of God’s Son, God’s Spirit, and God’s life, helping others do the same and in that process become more like the Lord. More concisely it is to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and help others do the same. That’s the destination. That’s Point B.

What about Point A, taking your bearings as to who and where are you? You can only do that in the light of truth, and Jesus Christ is the Truth.

There is a valuable question we should all answer from time to time. The question may be the most critical question to evaluate your current station, condition, and standing in life. The question is simply, “Who am I?”

You become what you think and do, and you think and do according to who you think you are. You do much of what you do because it aligns with how you view yourself, who you think you are.

“Who am I?” should be addressed from time to time because the complete answer changes as you change, and one way or the other, you are always changing. Getting a fix on who you and where you are is essential to staying on course.

A woman chose to marry a man to please her father. She lived through years of abuse until the marriage ultimately failed. Her stake president said, “She tried to make her marriage work but, in her efforts to please others *she lost track of who she was.*”

Another woman's comment is typical when looking back on an abusive relationship. She said, "My thoughts, emotions and actions changed so completely that my parents and friends could not find the person they had known and loved. I had little self-esteem and no confidence. I lost myself; I didn't know who I was."

A man who walked a long and dark road of immorality and infidelity said, "During the period of my transgressions, I was selfish, reckless, hard-hearted, and living without integrity. I had become something foreign, even to myself, and was rushing headlong down a path into darkness. The term 'gall of bitterness' was used by both Paul and Alma to describe living without God and moral foundation. I knew that feeling and wanted to change."

Another who struggled with pornography and consequent infidelity said to his wife, "I'm not a good person, nor can I be and so, we shouldn't be together." Withdrawal of Church membership and divorce were the result.

How you view yourself and getting a fix on who you really are may be more important than where you are. Those few who have a clear definition and vision of who they are, are more settled and usually accomplish more. Elder Peter Johnson taught, "If we do not understand who we are, then it is difficult to recognize who we can become."¹

"Who am I?" is a question not often asked because you usually think you know who you are, but you can easily be deceived. The great mist of darkness is very real, and you do not always see yourself clearly.² Occasionally the circumstances of life may press the question upon you. Occasionally, you may be forced to wonder, "Who am I really, and who am I becoming?"

To see yourself clearly requires careful attention. You must watch yourself, not only in the sense of being careful, but from the outside looking in, trying to see yourself as others do.

The most helpful class in law school for me involved a process of reviewing with two law professors a previously recorded video of me making an oral argument in court. I was always surprised that I looked, spoke, and acted differently than what I thought. It was always gut-wrenching, usually discouraging, but always enlightening and enormously helpful to see myself as others do, to see the truth because we rarely do.

¹ Peter Johnson, "The Power to Overcome the Adversary," General Conference, October 2020.

² 1 Nephi 8:23

As a newly called stake president I had an executive secretary who was probably one of the three Nephites. He only served a few months and then he was gone, never to be seen again. He was most helpful because he was willing to help me see myself as others did.

On one occasion he said, "President, you said 'I' twelve times in that meeting" (meaning "I the stake president" rather than "we the stake presidency"). On another occasion he said, "President sometimes your sentences are so long people get lost in them. Maybe it would be better if you spoke in shorter sentences." (You can tell I haven't improved much on that count).

Like the class in law school, his feedback was always helpful, and I was never offended because I knew he was motivated by love and a desire to help me see more clearly and be the best president I could be for the benefit of the stake. That kind of honesty is rare.

King Benjamin said, "But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not *watch yourselves*, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not."³ More than watch-out or be careful, King Benjamin says, observe yourself, pay attention to what you do and say. Watch yourself.

Alma admonished, "But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and *watch and pray continually*, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering."⁴

When Jesus administered the sacrament to the multitude of Nephites He said to His disciples: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must *watch and pray always*, lest ye be tempted by the devil, and ye be led away captive by him (H)e turned again unto the multitude and said unto them: Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, *ye must watch and pray always* lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."⁵

³ Mosiah 4:30, *emphasis added*

⁴ Alma 13:28-29, *emphasis added*

⁵ 3 Nephi 18:15, 18, *emphasis added*

Integrity and Humility

As you “watch yourself,” as you look inward to get a fix on who you are, nothing is more essential than honesty. Without honesty, you will fail. People can deal with almost anything so long as they are dealing with the truth. Integrity is vital.

From the dawning of time one of the most fundamental commandments has been to tell the truth, live with honor and do what you say you will do. In the same divine breath as “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” we have “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”⁶

Speaking of those who will be in condition for a telestial glory, the Lord said: “These are they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.”⁷ He mentions lying twice.

Now, before we think we are all doomed and throw in the towel, I should say what I think the Lord means by “liars.” Not everyone and anyone who ever told a lie is swept into the same black bucket, otherwise, we are all doomed.

When the Lord speaks of liars, I think he is speaking of people who become dishonest because of their choices. The question is not, have you ever told a lie, rather are you honest? Who are you? That’s the question.

Two bad things happen whenever you lie, shade the truth, or allow a falsehood to go unchallenged. First, the truth goes wanting, but the second is worse, i.e., you become more dishonest. That’s the biggest problem. Dishonesty becomes more engrained in your character, more a part of who you are. That is absolutely true.

I think the reason integrity looms so large in the grand scheme of things, is because there can be no redemption without integrity. No unclean thing can enter the presence of God and repentance begins with honesty.⁸ You can’t be forgiven of sins for which you don’t repent, and you can’t repent of sins you cover or ignore. Repentance begins by owning and acknowledging your sins.

Honesty leads to humility. Pride and arrogance are dishonest and delusional. If you see yourself as you really are, you will be humble. Humility is the condition of the human spirit when presently aware of who you are and who God is. It is to recognize

⁶ Exodus 20:13-16

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 76:103

⁸ 3 Nephi 27:19

the gap, recognize your weakness and absolute dependence on God for every good thing, including breath and the beat of your heart.

When Moses saw God face to face, experienced His presence, saw the workmanship of God's hands, and witnessed His greatness and glory, he honestly said, "Now; for this cause *I know that man is nothing*, which thing I never had supposed."⁹ Could it be that in comparison to the greatness and glory of God, Moses saw that the power and capacity of the natural man in his weakness is nothing? Ammon said, "*I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak.*"¹⁰ Integrity and humility are essential to see clearly and get a fix on who and where you are.

Divine Nature

Many people of faith interpret the question "Who am I?" in the context of the grand scheme of things, and they quickly and correctly reply, "I am a child of God." Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will knee-jerk answer that way, having sung "I Am a Child of God" from early childhood, and there is probably no truth more frequently taught or more important. But although the words are the same, the meaning for Latter-day Saints is vastly different than for others because of different beliefs about who God is. *You can't know who you are without knowing who God is.*

Religions of the Christian world variously believe God to be a divine mind, spirit, truth, three-in-one, and one-in-three, without form, body, parts, passions, or human attributes, everywhere at the same time, incomprehensible and unknowable. Man is created in the image of God only figuratively, or so they say.

But centuries of darkness finally gave way to glorious light bursting forth from a grove of trees in the Spring of 1820 especially revealing who God is. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones but is a personage of Spirit."¹¹ That truth rocked the religious world and continues to reverberate today.

Joseph Smith said,

There are but a very few beings in the world who understand rightly the character of God. The great majority of mankind do not comprehend anything, either that which is past, or that which is to come, as it respects their relationship

⁹ Moses 1:10, *emphasis added*

¹⁰ Alma 26:12, *emphasis added*

¹¹ Doctrine and Covenants 130:22

to God. They do not know, neither do they understand the nature of that relationship; and consequently, they know but little above the brute beast, or more than to eat, drink and sleep. This is all man knows about God or his existence, unless it is given by the inspiration of the Almighty.

If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves. God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks with another.

These ideas are incomprehensible to some, but they are simple. *It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did.*¹²

Lorenzo Snow, fifth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, authored the now famous couplet: “As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may become.” President Dallin H. Oaks affirmed: “The purpose of mortal life and the postmortal growth that can follow is for the offspring of God to become like He is.”¹³

As Joseph Smith said, “these ideas are incomprehensible to some, but they are simple.” That is especially so for the second half of the couplet, “As God now is, man may become.”

Although the idea that man may advance and progress to realize the full measure of his heavenly parentage has especially raised the ire of the religious world, as did Christ’s declaration to be the Son of God trigger religious rage in His day, it is nonetheless a simple doctrine. It is comprised of only two affirmations: first, “I am” and second, “I can be better.” That’s it! That’s the whole of it!

¹² Joseph Smith, “King Follet Discourse,” *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 341, 345, 346, *emphasis added*

¹³ Dallin H. Oaks, *The Great Plan*, General Conference, April 2020

It only requires the acknowledgement of one's existence and the possibility of improvement from one degree of light, knowledge, and character to the next, and on to the next. Unless you dispute either one of those assertions, you must accept the ultimate conclusion: "That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light growth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."¹⁴

It is evolution consistent within the species of divine progeny eclipsing Darwinism in the full measure of its bright conclusion. Darwinism looks back to the origin of man and claims he came from the slime of the sea evolving from one species to another but capping where he now stands. Fantastic evolution from there to here, but no farther. It either stops here or one must acknowledge the potential for ultimate perfection.

The truth also looks back and finds man's origin in heaven and looks forward as well to his potential to return from whence he came but more in the likeness of his Heavenly Parents in both form and character.

C.S. Lewis said, "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest ... most uninteresting person ... may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship. ... There are no *ordinary* people."¹⁵ We might add, the potential to become extraordinary is so universal as to be ordinary.

Nothing is more central to your physical identity than knowing who your parents are. Your DNA is comprised of theirs, which affects your appearance, health, and longevity. Physically, your parents were created in the image of God, as their parents before them, and on and on to our first parents, Adam, and Eve. You are the physical likeness and image of God.

Spiritually, however, is a different matter. You are not only in the likeness or image of God physically; you are divine through and through, spiritually pure blood! Spiritually, there is no comingling of ancestral gene pools down through the ages to you. You are not a distant descendant with traces of divinity from a primordial ancestor long ago. *You are first generation son or daughter of God. There is no one, no generation, no one in between you and your Heavenly Parents, no one in between — no one!*

¹⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 50:24

¹⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 45-46

As I said in Episode 4, to speak of a divine spark within you is a huge understatement. More than your earthly parents, your heavenly parentage is the essence of who you are. Your earthly parents gave you the marvelous blessing of a body which YOU animate and inhabit, but without you your body will die while you will live on. You are endowed with astounding intelligence which permeates every cell and molecule of your body, intelligence which surpasses understanding and yet is undeniable.

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” states, “Each [human being] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.”¹⁶

Ammon and his brother, Aaron, both taught the same glorious truths with the same result. Ammon taught King Lamoni and shortly thereafter Aaron taught Lamoni’s father. They must have had the same missionary handbook because they both taught of God the Father, His creations, our heavenly home, the character of God who “looketh down upon all the children of men; and ... knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart,” that man was “created after the image of God,” the fall of man and redemption through Christ. In both instances, these glorious truths revealed their true identity and God’s plan for His children which infused their souls with light and joy dispelling the cloud of darkness.¹⁷

No truth is more fundamental, more ennobling, or essential to successfully navigate the dark waters of life than to know of one’s “divine nature and destiny.”

Naturally Good or Evil?

But what about what Paul and King Benjamin called the “natural man?” Are you naturally good or evil? Maybe as long as man has walked the earth, a debate has ensued as to whether man is inherently good or evil. There is evidence, arguments, and scripture to support either proposition.

Alma taught that Adam and Eve, our first parents, suffered spiritual death being cut off from the presence of the Lord and became “carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature” because of the fall.¹⁸ Abinadi advanced the argument further to include all of us saying, “that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil

¹⁶ “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”

¹⁷ Alma 18, 19, 22

¹⁸ Alma 42:10

from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.”¹⁹ Behavioral evidence, such as children’s cruelty on the playground and the atrocities of men, is often offered as revealing true human nature.

On the brighter side of the debate Paul echoes the Psalmist saying, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest Him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou has crowned him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.”²⁰ On this side of the argument, different behavioral evidence is offered to show human nature as essentially good, such as an infant’s willingness to share food and the endless examples of people’s selfless giving and sacrifice for the benefit of others.

At least one thing is clear, our nature is to fall. King Benjamin said like Adam, it is the nature of little children to fall.²¹ Whether you call it a fallen nature or not, we must all acknowledge our propensity to fall. We are prone to err.

Hamlet is conflicted and takes the middle of the road. While he sees the good, even the divine in man, he is at the same time disgusted. He famously says to friends: “What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me—nor woman neither, though by smiling you seem to say so.”²² Hamlet both admires and is disgusted with man. He also says, “that one may smile and smile and be a villain.”²³

In his first inaugural address, newly elected President Abraham Lincoln appealed to “the better angels of our nature” to avoid civil war which would erupt only a month later at Fort Sumter. He too seemed to recognize the duality of man.

I tend to agree with Hamlet and Abraham Lincoln. It is not one or the other. There is a Jekyll and Hyde duality to men. Men are capable of great good and unimaginable evil. Our potential is limitless in both directions.

The argument of whether man is innately good or evil is flawed. It assumes a false premise, that man is inherently one or the other. *The truth is we have a dual nature, and it*

¹⁹ Mosiah 16:3

²⁰ Hebrews 2:6-7; See also Psalms 8:4-5

²¹ Mosiah 3:16

²² William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 2, 303-312

²³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 5

is up to us which one we feed. It's that simple. We are co-creators; we do the feeding. Go your own way, feed the monster long enough and it will devour your better nature. Feed the spirit and starve the monster, rely on the Lord and His Atonement, and eventually become like God.

When God revealed Himself to Moses, He said, "behold thou art my son,"²⁴ but when Satan appeared to offset that glorious truth he said, "Moses, son of man, worship me."²⁵ Both God and Satan spoke the truth; taken together they describe our dual nature. We are both God's child and a child of man. God speaks to the divine and Satan to the carnal. It is a matter of which we choose to hear, which is emphasized, and which is fed. We determine which will survive or starve, which will win or lose, which will become our nature. We do that; no one else can.

Alma said we are our "own judges, whether to do good or do evil."²⁶ "Who you are and who you will be" is now a work in progress and is always in your hands and the Lord's hands if you will give yourself to His care.

²⁴ Moses 1:4

²⁵ Moses 1:12

²⁶ Alma 41:7