

Jesus Christ Is the Truth – Who Are You? Part Three

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“Stand Forever” Episode 19

Hello, my name is Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 19 of the *Stand Forever Series*. Today we continue our focus on the question “Who am I?” In past episodes we considered your dual nature, both divine and natural/carnal, who you were before this life, and your preparations there for what you are to do here in this life. Today we will consider who you are within the circumstances of your life here and now.

Who Else Are You?

There is more to man than his divine origin and potential. You are not one-dimensional, rather you are a complex being and it is a mistake to consider the question “Who am I?” only in the grand, transcendent sense. You should also ask, “Who am I” in a more earthy vein. Within the context of your life here and now, considering your interests, your achievements, and roles, who are you and who are you becoming?

How do you define yourself? How do you see yourself? What is the perspective, the framework, model, or paradigm in which you view yourself? Who are you?

Boxes

We all live in boxes. Every person has a box. Inside your box is the stuff and circumstances of your life. All you know and believe, all your experiences, your community and neighborhood, city, town and country, your church, titles, and education, the relationships of your life, the people with whom you have contact, the media, and all they tell you, the roles of your life, your work, interests and passions, your possessions and wealth, however meager or great they may be, and you—all of that is in your box.

From the outside, most boxes look alike, but when you see what is inside, no two boxes are the same. They are all quite similar and yet very different. They are all boxes, but they all hold different stuff.

Your box is your world. It is not the whole world, but it is all your world, and with the expansion of global interests and communications, more and more of the world gets inside your box.

How you see yourself is monumentally important, but almost always you see yourself within your box, and that is a mistake.

My Box

Consider, for example, some of things inside my box. I grew up mostly around horses, cattle, ropes, saddles, farm equipment, grain, and hay, hired hands and hard language. By age three I was riding Ted, a big bay draft horse. I watched only two kinds of shows on TV, westerns, and more westerns. As a toddler, I was blubbering one day about having to wear a bib, and my mother asked why it upset me so. I said, “I never saw a cowboy wear a bib.” That was the last day I had to wear one. How I viewed myself changed my world even at the age of three.

From age 10 and on, I worked the very long hours ranchers work, for many years that followed. Up at the crack of dawn and work until it was too dark to see. Wash up for dinner and eat at 9:30 at night. Go to bed and do it all over again the next day and the next day after that and then after that, for years. I never resented it, never questioned it.

There were occasional, magical moments: the smell of fresh mown hay, or dew on the meadow in the morning, or the smell of sweat of a horse when the saddle is removed; the feel of a rope in my hand, the creak of the saddle under my weight, or the quick movement of a cow horse beneath me veering from side to side to push a steer in the direction it should go; the sound of a morning dove or the whinny of a horse or the bawling of cattle in the distance; the sight of a calf or a colt beside its mother, or one of the most beautiful sights in all the world — almost any horse, almost any time, almost anywhere.

Those times, the magical moments were the exception and not the rule. The rule was unrelenting, grinding hard work, but those exceptions, those magical moments, outweighed and gave meaning and purpose to the work. They made all the hard work worth it.

During the school year we lived in Provo as my father was a professor at BYU in Agriculture Economics. I always wore my western shirt, boots, and scarf to grade school. I would have worn my hat had it been allowed. I was oblivious to the fact that no one else — and I mean *no one else* — in all the Provo School District dressed like I did. I have no recollection of thinking I was weird or different. For me it never occurred to me to dress any other way — never entered my head. On one occasion, one of my teachers asked my mother if I owned any shirt other than the two western shirts between which I alternated from day to day.

The American Quarter Horse Association was almost as sacred as the Church. I read books about training and shoeing horses. I subscribed to *Western Horseman* and read the *American Quarter Horse Journal*.

In short, I was a cowboy. It defined who I was. It dictated what kind of clothes I wore and how I acted. The “cowboy way” became the standard by which I measured myself.

There were many other roles, such as son of a noble father and an angel mother, and brother to wonderful sisters and an exemplary brother. I later assumed or accepted other roles such as missionary and many others in the Church. I became the husband of a wonderful and righteous woman, father of five noble sons and a lawyer by profession. Several of these different roles blended from time to time along with the other stuff in my box to make up my reality, the way I defined or saw myself. The mix of it all became my paradigm, how I saw the world and myself in it.

Your box is different from mine, but it defines who you are just the same.

Don't Be Defined by Your Box.

Other people have other things in their boxes. They have other roles they assume. They have other models. They may view themselves as a surfer, a boarder, an athlete, laborer, wage-earner, homemaker, salesperson, computer programmer, entrepreneur, or a myriad of titles, callings, and assignments assumed along life's path. They have other experiences, and, as a result, different beliefs. Their associations, relationships, and community are different.

Your box usually defines who you are. Where you live, what you do for a living, what callings you have, your appearance, what kind of car you drive, how you interact with other people, how you comb your hair, wear your clothes, how much money you have in the bank, what you do for recreation, how you use your free time, what teams you support, how you see yourself within the framework of your immediate roles and possessions, how you act, how you stack up in comparison to everyone and everything else in your box and from that you decide how you measure up and who you are. Everything in your box blends together and defines who you are. *But it is a mistake, to be defined only by your box.*

When you look around and see you have less than others, or that you are not as attractive or as smart, clever, witty, or talented as others, you may greatly underestimate who you are. Your box may seem empty compared to other boxes

around you. The roles you hoped to have filled may be missing. You may not be a husband or wife, father or mother, athlete, laborer, leader, musician, racecar driver, artist, or as attractive as you would like. You may not have the house or car or money in the bank as others. If there are no defining roles, if your box seems empty, you may sadly and mistakenly conclude you are nobody.

Or you may be one of the fortunate few who has more, is more attractive, more capable, and more engaging. Your box may be overflowing, and looking around you may wrongly conclude, even unconsciously think, you are really somebody, better than those with less in their boxes.

We define ourselves the same way and yet in different ways. The process is the same, but the result is radically different, because the mix and the standard of measurement is different from box to box, as each person has different stuff in his box. As the Lord said in preface to the restoration, “(E)very man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god (or box), whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish.”¹

Although many of the roles in your box are worthy and admirable models that inspire you to greater heights, and although many of those roles are necessary, they are almost all transitory. John summed up the problem with most of what is in your box in five words. He said, “And the world passeth away.”²

The problem with most of what the world offers isn’t only worldliness, evil, and sin. If absolutely everything the world offered was good, it would still be subject to a fundamental flaw—it doesn’t last. Except for your character, knowledge, relationships, and the roles of husband and father or wife and mother, everything else in your box is transitory; it passes away. It doesn’t last.

If you define yourself by temporary roles, your sense of self-worth and focus will shift when those roles end, or if you don’t get the roles or achieve what you want, if you are not called to be the next bishop, made a high priest, or if you can’t be a cowboy as you hoped, frustration, discontent and disappointment will be the result, and you will be adrift until you find some other defining role, some other hook on which to hang your hat, if you ever do.

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 1:16

² I John 2:17

As a result, if you are defined by most of what is in your box, your concept or vision of yourself will be interrupted as the mix within your box changes.

Look Outside the Box

There is another problem with the stuff in your box—it's not good enough alone to enable you to rise to the level of your potential.

Almost everyone adapts to one's environment. Take two or more people and put them together and watch what happens. They will adjust to each other. A mission president pairs a weak and strong missionary together hoping the first will raise the level of the second. Usually, the weak missionary is better for the experience, but it is very hard for the stronger companion to not become worn down and drop a notch or two. Usually, they meet somewhere in the middle. This tendency to unconsciously adopt the attitudes and behavior of another is what sociologists call "mirroring."

Almost always, people adjust to one another. They adapt to the group, and in time an unconscious and unspoken agreement, often a silent truce, is reached regarding a comfortable level of expectations and conduct. It is a compromise, a truce of mediocrity. Almost always, those expectations undershoot your best potential.

Yes, environment is important. It is very important what gets inside your box. "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."³ You want that stuff in your box, because it will affect who you are and who you become. You must also regularly shovel out the junk. The better the mix inside the box, the higher the standard and the more you will achieve, and the better you will become.

But even still, no matter how good the mix within the box, it is never good enough to raise you to the full potential of your better self. The potential of your worst self is in your box, but your highest potential is greater than anything inside your box. Nothing in your world is sufficient to reveal your full potential, nor enable you to realize it. You can't see it, because it isn't there, and if you can't see it, you can't achieve it.

You may sink to the lowest levels of your box, you may be pulled down by the darker influences and believe as a result there is no way to escape from the lower reaches. You may look around and wonder if you are the least among the people of your world, disheartened by the talents and capacities of others with whom you have made no truce

³ Articles of Faith 1:13

of mediocrity. They seem to achieve so much more than you believe you can ever achieve. You may be overwhelmed by problems, pushed down flat to the bottom of the box under the great weight of life's burdens, afraid because of the great uncertainty in your box, discouraged by disappointments, and with nothing more you may see no hope, reason, or ability to rise any higher. And you are right. Inside your box there is no hope; there is no ability or reason to rise any higher.

Or you may rise to the highest level within your box and think you have conquered the world, unaware the real world is in fact much more and much bigger than your little box. Although your box is your world, it is not the whole world. But unless you look outside your box, you won't know that. And there you sit, alone in your box, oblivious to your greatest potential, much less know how to achieve it. *The only way to not become a product of your lower environment is to be exposed to a higher one that will supersede everything else in your box.*

Occasionally, someone stands up and looks outside his box. He looks up and beyond his box. He sees more; he catches a glimpse of another Way, the only Way to fulfill his divine potential, the only true standard, the One Thing. "What manner of men (and women) ought ye to be? Verily, I say unto you, even as I am."⁴ That is the model. That is the paradigm. Think outside the box. Otherwise, you will rise no higher than the best of your box, which is far less than your true potential.

Every challenge you face in your box, every hard thing you confront, every bad thing that happens to you, every unfairness, every conflict, every sadness, tragedy, every disappointment and heartache, every temptation and every opposition happens for one purpose only: to give you opportunity to look outside your box, see what He did, and apply the teachings of Jesus Christ, in your box. As you look up and out to Him, as you keep your eye on Him, you are changed to become more like Him.

But there is a problem: He is not in your box. It is not His intent to blend into the mix and merely raise the average of everything else inside your box. You have a record, scriptures that tell you about Him, but you can't watch, observe, and study Him as you can others within your box, because He is not there. As a result, it is far easier to accept and emulate the more immediate examples in your box.

You must deliberately look outside your box to see Him, and if you do, you will see yourself clearly in His bright light rather than the dim glow within your box. Instead of adjusting to your box, you will adapt to Him. Rather than adapting to the group, rather

⁴ 3 Nephi 27:27

than the unconscious and unspoken truce of mediocrity, you will make a singular agreement with the Lord, a covenant to remember Him always. And you will adapt to Him, and eventually He will take you out of your box altogether.

His offer is “take it or leave it.” There is no negotiation, no compromise here. The terms are set, but the offer is the most favorable ever made to man. There is no reason to negotiate because a better deal can’t be made. The best deal ever is already on the table. It can’t get any better. You give yourself to Him, what little you have and are, and in exchange you receive God’s greatest gifts, you receive His Son, His Spirit, and His life, all that God has.

Look outside the box to Him who is the Light of the World and reflect His light within your box. It may not be your intent, but you will raise the average in your box. Not everyone in your box will like that. Don’t be surprised by that. Learn to please the Lord above pleasing anyone in your box.

In rebuke of Joseph Smith for acceding to the expectations of another above the Lord, he was told, “you should not have feared man, more than God.”⁵ The fear of man is concern for approval inside the box. Our greatest concern should be approval from without. That is the fear of God.

The Lord said if men persecuted Him, they will do the same to you, and you will be blessed for it.⁶ Nephi predicted that in our day the devil will “rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.”⁷ If you look outside the box, if you focus on the One Thing, you will feel “the anger against that which is good.”

You can’t please the Lord and everyone within your box. Jesus also said, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.”⁸ It is a sorry and weak soul who attempts to please everyone in his box.

Don’t be defined, don’t see yourself only by what’s in your box. Look in your box, pay attention to what’s there, but also look up, out, and beyond. Yes, define yourself by looking in but also looking up and out. Think out of the box. *It is worlds better to be a humble, disciple of Jesus Christ than the king or queen of your box.*

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 3:7

⁶ John 15:20; Matthew 4:10-11

⁷ 2 Nephi 28:20

⁸ Luke 6:26

Are You Good Enough?

As you see yourself within your box and especially when looking up and out you may wonder if you are good enough?

We may be more focused on “self” today than any other time or people since the dawn of time. Self-worth, self-esteem, self-help, self-fulfillment, self-promotion, self-importance and self-image are top of mind and the common denominator is “self.” We are preoccupied with “self.”

Of all those notions, the most important is self-image. *How you view yourself is important and does make a big difference, not in the sense of having a positive or negative view of oneself, rather having an accurate one.* The question should not be “Do you like yourself?” rather “Do you see yourself clearly?” That’s the issue.

We often do not see clearly, especially as to self-perception. We think we do, but deception is to be unaware of truth, things as they really are. If you are a runner and time yourself, you will probably discover you run slower than what you thought. When you measure the distance, it is often not as far as you imagined. A few others may underestimate, but either way we are often wrong.

When you see a snapshot or video of yourself, you may be surprised at times by a behavior or something in your appearance different than what you thought. You see yourself in a different way, in the bright light of day. You may be disappointed to see how you really look or behave. Someone else may be happily surprised, but either way the truth is often a surprise, happy or not.

A common notion about the judgment is that we will see a rerun of our life. If that is true, I am not looking forward to it, not only because of all the stupid things I have said and done, but worse yet the ones I never saw and don’t see. The mistakes I know about, are bad enough but those I never saw may be worse. Repentance begins with seeing. You can’t fix what you don’t know is broken.

You don’t need to throw a spotlight to discover all the weaknesses you don’t see. Just don’t hide or ignore the ones you do. Adam and Eve hid from the Lord because they were ashamed.⁹ That strategy won’t work any better for us than it did for them. Hiding is never a good idea.

⁹ Genesis 3:8; Moses 4:14, 16

The Lord said, “I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little”¹⁰ and that may also mercifully apply to gradually seeing ourselves more clearly. While you can’t fix what you don’t see, you also can’t fix everything all at once either.

He also said, “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”¹¹ Part of the process of coming unto Christ is an increasing awareness of your weakness and gratefully that process is a gradual one.

Whether your vision is obscured by the great mist of darkness or seeing through a glass darkly, you often do not see clearly. You can’t chart a course to Point B, without knowing where you are (Point A), and part of where you are is getting an accurate fix on who you are.

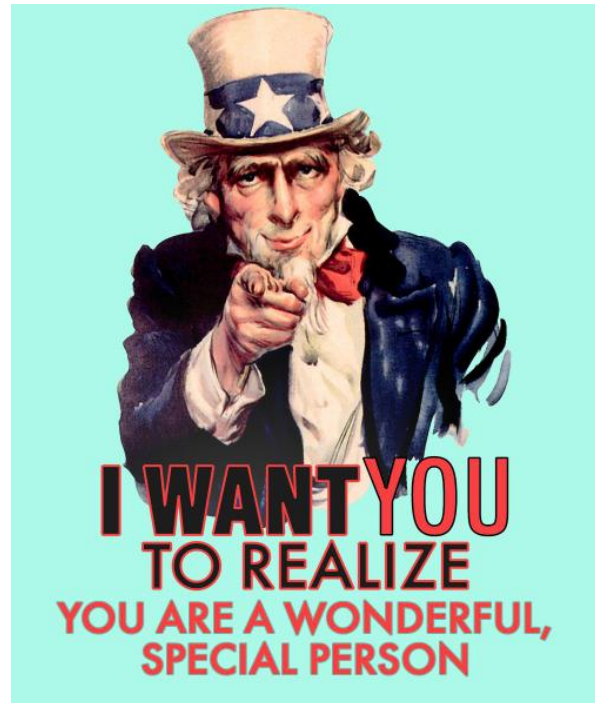
The 1980’s and 90’s gave birth to the self-esteem craze that has permeated much of the social thinking for decades. The premise is that crime, poverty, abuse, teen pregnancy, other social ills and even pollution are the consequence of low self-esteem and conversely high self-esteem produces high-performance—raise self-esteem, stand back and watch the world get better. Or, so they say.

An entire new cottage industry blossomed with feel-good, self-esteem books, videos, seminars, and audiotapes. Business consulting took up the cause to improve productivity by boosting self-esteem. Welfare recipients were given workbooks to boost self-esteem. Everyone on the team gets a trophy just for signing up. It was institutionalized and embedded in the American education curriculum. Red pens were scrapped. Some schools did away with grading. Parents readily embraced the cause, hoping to raise children to conquer the world.

From home to school and back again, children have been told the likes of “You are adorable; you’re wonderful; you’re awesome; you’re okay just the way you are; you can do anything.” Even better, repeat those mantras or others like them while power posing in front of a mirror. You could even write one on the mirror.

¹⁰ 2 Nephi 28:30

¹¹ Ether 12:27



The outcome of the self-esteem craze is a generation that, yes, does have higher than average views of themselves. And, yes, they do view themselves as special, but they also are more narcissistic and feel entitled to quick success because they are special, and, oddly enough, they suffer from higher rates of depression. And there is no evidence the gang of social ills that was to be run out of town has even so much as batted an eye at the high self-esteemers.

The self-esteem craze is grounded on two false premises. The first is the central thesis: high performance is the result of high self-esteem—raise self-esteem and greatly improve people's lives and productivity. There may be a correlation between the two, but there is little data to support the proposition that high self-esteem causes high performance. Those beating the drum did not consider the opposite and more likely proposition that high self-esteem is the result of high performance. It is more likely that successful people have higher self-esteem because they are successful, than the other way around.

The second faulty premise is you can become awesome or wonderful simply by saying it over and over. It is delusional to think people will become wonderful and special just by chanting it.

The most successful televangelists today are those who preach a feel-good gospel of optimism, hope, destiny, harvest, increase and bounty at the exclusion of sin, guilt, shame, repentance, redemption, or suffering. It is a message aimed at connecting with the most people by making them merely feel better about themselves. Self-promotion, self-importance, and positive thinking are at the heart.

It is a gospel in which God worships His children, rather than the other way around, children worshipping God. It exchanges the hope of a gospel centered on Christ for “a wishy-washy, self-centered, self-exalting message of psychotherapy.”¹² It is the philosophies of men mingled/mixed with scripture, and it fills the pews. It resonates with a lot of people because we all like to feel good.

By way of contrast to the feel-good gospel, consider the teachings of King Benjamin which had an extraordinary effect on all who heard it. Here are a few examples:

- ... if ye should serve (the Lord) with all your whole souls yet ye would be **unprofitable servants**.¹³
- And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. **Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth**.¹⁴
- Ye are **eternally indebted** to your heavenly Father, to render to him all that you have and are;¹⁵
- And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do **withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you** to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in **open rebellion against God**; therefore he listeth to obey the evil spirit, and becometh **an enemy to all righteousness**; therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples.¹⁶
- O, all ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words, for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might

¹² Albert Mohler, “Would You Trade Eternal Life For A Ferrari? The False Gospel of Prosperity Theology,” May 3, 2019, online at albertmohler.com. Mohler is commenting on Edward Luce, “A Preacher for Trump’s America: Joel Osteen and the Prosperity Gospel,” *Financial Times*, April 17, 2019, online at ft.com.

¹³ Mosiah 2:20-21, *emphasis added*

¹⁴ Mosiah 2:25, *emphasis added*

¹⁵ Mosiah 2:34, *emphasis added*

¹⁶ Mosiah 2:36-37, *emphasis added*

understand, I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of **the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression**.¹⁷

- 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.¹⁸
- And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and **your own nothingness**, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, **unworthy creatures**, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.¹⁹
- For behold, **are we not all beggars?** Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?²⁰

This is hardly sunshine, lollipops, and roses. It is a far cry from “you’re awesome” or “you’re okay just the way you are.” There was no attempt to build self-esteem, prop up or flatter here by telling people they were less than the dust of the earth. That is not a popular theme among the feel-good crowd. Many people today would say such teaching is insensitive and even harmful, a menace to our delicate sensibilities.

Think about what King Benjamin says in his categorical, black-and-white, no-holds-barred style of teaching: we are unprofitable servants, less than the dust of the earth, an enemy to God and all righteousness. He says the Lord has no place in us; he describes our awful situation, our own nothingness, unworthy creatures, and beggars. *And yet his teaching profoundly changed their view of themselves because it was the truth*—their absolute need for divine intervention, their need for redemption, their need for rescue from their “awful situation.”

¹⁷ Mosiah 2:40, *emphasis added*

¹⁸ Mosiah 3:19, *emphasis added*

¹⁹ Mosiah 4:11, *emphasis added*

²⁰ Mosiah 4:19, *emphasis added*

He isn't talking about inherent worth. I don't think he would disagree with the Lord's declaration that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."²¹ Rather, he is dramatically and plainly describing our total dependence on God "who created you, and has kept and preserved you,"²² who causes your heart to beat and grants you life from breath to breath and is the source of every good thing in this life and beyond.

By the metric of the effect on those who heard it, this was a unique teaching event in the annals of history. Everyone was affected. "And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive a forgiveness of our sins."²³ Every single soul (except for little children) entered into a covenant to do God's will and be obedient to His commandments in all things all the remainder of their days.²⁴ "There was not one soul ... but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ."²⁵

Part of the power of King Benjamin's teaching is precisely because it is pure, unvarnished, unadorned truth. Truth is hard to take at times, but it engenders trust and confidence, so much so that it had a profound effect on the hearts and minds of *everyone* who heard it. We must face the truth, even the hard truth of our weakness and deficiencies, acknowledge and own them before we can do anything about them.

Another part of its power is He told them the *whole truth*. He didn't leave them in the dirt. He raised them up in the hope that is in Christ,²⁶ and *the combination of those two elements made all the difference*. He vividly described the problem, what he termed "our awful situation,"²⁷ but he just as clearly taught the solution, who is Christ, "the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to eternity"²⁸—the One Thing. He revealed our situation as helpless but not hopeless. The dark reaches of our great need are eclipsed by the bright light of Hope. *Taken as a whole the truth is hopeful and encouraging, and the sun (Son) does eventually shine through dark clouds.*

When King Benjamin paused, there was no backslapping and probably no smiles. People did not jump to their feet and cheer. No, to the contrary, they fell to the ground.

²¹ Doctrine and Covenants 18:10

²² Mosiah 2:20

²³ Mosiah 4:2

²⁴ Mosiah 5:5

²⁵ Mosiah 6:2

²⁶ Mosiah 3

²⁷ Mosiah 2:40

²⁸ Mosiah 3:5

They understood their need for a Savior, and that's the beginning of the process to become *converted unto the Lord*.

Sherem took the opposite approach, the popular feel-good approach, and he also had much success. "And he preached many things which were flattering unto the people ... And he labored diligently that he might lead away the hearts of the people, insomuch that he did lead away many hearts ... And he was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil."²⁹

People usually know the difference between flattery and truth. And, although they may bask momentarily in the warm glow of flattery, they are changed by truth. You can deal with almost anything so long as you are dealing with the truth, and good people recognize and trust truth when they hear it.

We can easily go down the same road as Sherem and never know it by teaching only sunshine, only those things most pleasing, things that flatter. The beguiling aspect of the feel-good gospel is that it fills the benches and fills the coffers. It is the gold-mine gospel. If we want to fill the pews, that's how to do it. There is nothing wrong with sunshine, but it is not the fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—not hardly.

So, are you good enough? The answer is "no" and "probably so." A "false Christ" is not limited to persons. It can be an idea, philosophy or anything that obscures, diminishes, or distracts from the One Thing. Self-worth, self-esteem, self-help, self-fulfillment, self-promotion, self-importance, self-reliance, and self-image are not scriptural phrases. They are the philosophies of men. There is nothing inherently wrong with any one of them, except for the high risk they predominate, which is to become a false Christ.

In addition to the absence of those phrases in scripture, even the concepts are scarce. The Lord doesn't talk about building one's self-esteem. We do have "men are that they might have joy,"³⁰ and "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God,"³¹ and we should love others as we love ourselves,³² but those few are a scant foundation on which to build an entire life-philosophy.

Self-esteem is more likely the happy spin-off of the One Thing rather than a goal or target in and of itself. There are a few good things that are more elusive the harder they

²⁹ Jacob 7:2-4

³⁰ 2 Nephi 2:25

³¹ Doctrine and Covenants 18:10

³² Mark 12:31

are chased. Happiness and self-esteem are two of them. They seem to suffer the more you worry about them. Self-absorption is not scriptural either, and it clearly isn't good.

As I said before, if you feel inadequate, not good enough, like you don't measure up, or deficient, welcome to the club. It's a big club. The only difference between you and those not in the club is they don't see or acknowledge the truth. You are probably seeing the truth, and the truth is hard to face at times, especially when you see yourself in its reflection. And you likely see only part of the truth, your weaknesses without your strengths, your "awful situation" without the Solution. Seeing only part of the truth, it is easy to become discouraged or look away altogether.

You may cry out with Nephi, "O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities."³³ You may weep bitterly with Peter.³⁴ You may shrink with Paul or Alma or the Sons of Mosiah. Knowing your weakness, you may say as Isaiah, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."³⁵ You may often feel condemned for your "weaknesses and imperfections" as Enos and Joseph Smith.³⁶ Seeing what is ahead, you may ask as Moses, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"³⁷ And if you do and if you listen, you will hear the Lord say to you, "Certainly, I will be with thee."³⁸

A woman said, "I want to be what the Lord wants me to be, but I'm scared that I won't be able to do everything. I have anxiety that my doubts in myself will hold me and my husband back from being able to attend the temple and be sealed. I worry that my anxieties and shortcomings will prevent me from moving forward. I have a hard time talking through my doubts and fears. After my divorce I decided perhaps I wasn't good enough to qualify for the Lord's greatest blessings." She is right. We are not good enough, but the Lord is, and He will be with us and help us if we let Him. That is the One Thing.

It is tragic to step back from Church activity because of mistakes and consequent guilt. It is instinctive and natural, but catastrophically wrong. It compounds the error. *Christ atoned for our sins to draw us in, not to push us away.* Like mountain biking, the question is

³³ 2 Nephi 4:17

³⁴ Luke 22:62

³⁵ Isaiah 6:5

³⁶ Enos 1:2-4; Joseph Smith—History 1:29

³⁷ Exodus 3:11

³⁸ Exodus 3:12

not if you will crash, rather how often and how badly. As you get better, the crashes decline. Just don't let your crashes define you or worse yet, chase you off the mountain altogether. You are not your mistakes. Look down the trail.

We are deficient. We are prone to err, and we make mistakes. We fall short and don't measure up. But the Lord will be with us if we let Him. If you get discouraged, particularly as you look inward, it may just mean you have a pulse and are seeing things as they really are. In that regard, you're no different than anyone else on the planet. The good news is you see it, you're honest about it, you own it, and you can do something about it. That is why your heart beats. It is why you draw breath, to strive to become more like the Lord by following Him and doing His work, His hard work.

As I have said before, you might mistakenly believe that you can't really follow the Lord because the standard of His life is so astonishingly high as to appear to be unreachable. You might think it is too hard, too high, too much, and beyond your capacity, at least for now. Don't believe that. It isn't true. While the standard of the Lord is the highest, don't ever think it is only reachable by a select few who are most able.

In this instance, life's experience misleads us. Our experience here tells us that the highest achievements in any human endeavor are always the most difficult and, therefore, only achievable by a select few who are most able. The higher the standard, the fewer can reach it. That is not the case here, because unlike every other experience in this life, this is not a human endeavor, it is rather the work of the Gods. It is God's work, and it is His "glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."³⁹

There is nothing else like it—not anywhere, not ever. No other endeavor, institution, plan, program or system ever conceived by men has access to the redeeming and transforming power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, while the Lord's invitation to follow Him is the highest of all, it is also achievable by everyone, not because we are able, but because He is, and because He can make us able too.

So back to the question, are you good enough? Probably so, depending on where you are. So, where are you? We'll consider the answer to that important question in the next episode. I hope you will join me then.

³⁹ Moses 1:39