

Topics to Consider, Part 2

“What Have We Learned? What Ought We to Have Learned” General Conference

October 27, 2024

Zion Ponderosa Ranch, Utah

Denver and Stephanie Snuffer

Stephanie Snuffer: Okay, while he’s coming up here, we came up with some other subjects we want to talk about. But we didn’t... I didn’t print out the things. So basically, we’re gonna do the same thing we did last time, in a riffing kind of manner, meaning I’m going to present some ideas, and we’re gonna talk about them, and we might, I don’t know... I know audience participation in these kinds of things is really bad for the recording and everything. But you know, somebody gave me the two... Like, we’re here ‘til two o’clock. It’s 11:10, people. I’m not takin’ ‘til two, I can guarantee...

Denver Snuffer: You’re on Arizona time; it’s 12.

SS: Is it really? Oh, good Lord Almighty.

DS: Yeah, in the wrong state. Does this microphone work?

SS: Okay. Now hold on. I gotta wait for my computer to come up.

DS: I finally understand Leroy’s talk yesterday, because he left the writing up.

SS: Alright, so...

DS: We’re gonna talk about gossip, right?

SS: Yeah, so I have three things. Gossip is one of them. We... I think we decided that’s the first one we’re gonna talk about. Then I have... (Oh gosh, okay.) Then I have... These are just things that are rocking my world, so I figured I’d rock your world with them. The other one is the accountability component from Marshall Rosenberg’s *Nonviolent Communication*. [Audience applause.] I know, thank you. Not, you know... Thank you for clapping. Thank you for reading it. Thank you for thinking it’s important. And then... And thank you for recommending it to me. I... The book was recommended to me—probably, I don’t know, maybe by Q, I don’t know—like, several years ago, but the name really just sort of rubbed me the wrong way. I didn’t like the name, so I just left it... ‘til I read it. Changed my life! Oh, my gosh!

Okay, so my computer is up. We’re gonna go to gossip. Okay, so I’m going to just throw out something, and you tell me what you think. So, gossip: We talked about the definition of gossip on the way here yesterday. I simplify it by saying gossip is anything that you say about another person that cannot be proved in a court of law. Now that goes to my husband, right? Because gossip as a definition (like, that I Googled) is anything you say about a third person, right? If that person isn’t there, it’s gossip. Gossip doesn’t necessarily mean it’s bad, right? I mean, I can talk about something wonderful about one of my kids who’s not here. So I’m not... I mean, gossip, obviously, the word has a negative connotation, but any time you talk about somebody who’s not here, it’s gossiping. So we did go through

the a lot of the legal aspects of what gossip was and why. And I mean, you could talk about those if you wanted to; they were kind of interesting.

DS: If you're going to introduce a fact as evidence at court, you have to be the witness of the fact. You can't say someone told you about this, and therefore, you're going to testify under oath to the truthfulness of what someone told you. Because whatever it was they told you is not within your own knowledge; it's you relying upon and relaying what someone else has said.

One of the really unfortunate things about the Restoration is how very much of what we take as the history of the Restoration is based upon second-hand accounts, repeated stories, or stuff that gets repeated 40 years after the event took place. The reason why I read from my journal is because the journal was kept contemporaneous with what happened. And I don't have to rely upon my recollection. I can actually state what occurred on the day when the event occurred because it got recorded contemporaneously.

Almost everything that we think we know that is critical of Joseph Smith is second-hand accounts or reconstructed memories from long after the fact. We have a lot of information that is first-hand account, contemporaneously recorded by things Joseph Smith said in public that got written down that day or within a very short time after that. And we even have contemporaneous writings of his and a talk (he wrote one talk; he didn't deliver it, but he wrote the talk, and it got read in a conference at Nauvoo). And if you confine yourself to that stuff—instead of the reconstructions, the repetitions, the gossips, the 40-years-later recollections—Joseph Smith emerges as a very different character. I've suggested that when the Lord warns us in a revelation that “fools will hold Joseph in derision, but the honest and the virtuous will constantly seek blessings from under his hand,” that imposes, based upon a revelation from God, a burden of proof that I would suggest is comparable to today's requirement for convicting someone; that is, “proof beyond any reasonable doubt.” If you confine yourself to the materials that we have absolutely no doubt about its authenticity (and that does not include section 132), if you confine yourself to the real proof that we have available, you will find that Joseph Smith was a remarkably virtuous man, devoted husband to Emma Smith, who fathered children with one and only one woman, whom he loved.

It's historical gossip that has created a new caricature that most of the Latter-day Saints and most of the apostates and most of the fundamentalists rely upon. It's gossip that turns us against one another. It's gossip that makes us view people in a very unfavorable light, for the most part, because of what someone repeats to us about what they think, saw, or heard someone else say that got repeated from yet still another earlier source. We're doing ourselves a disservice when we engage in any of that. And the Prophet Joseph Smith's reputation is monumentally an example of how gossip turns negative, distorts history, and changes virtue into vice.

SS: Cool. Thanks for that. Because, yeah... Perfect example.

So gossip erodes trust, okay? So it undermines trust among community members. And when people are worried that they might be gossiped about because they are in the

presence of someone who gossips about other people... That's the interesting thing. I mean, if you are a gossiper... And we all are, so no judgment, alright? We all gossip. That is part of human conversation. It's part of connection. It makes us feel good. There are some actual positives from gossip, although they're not long-term positives, right?

- You feel like you're the one with the story, right? People come to you. They want to hear what you have to say. That feels pretty good.
- You gossip... You might spread gossip because you think you're protecting someone or something. That might be true; it's hard to tell.
- You might appreciate gossip because it makes you feel better than someone else, and that is a basic human need: to feel good about ourselves. Not necessarily to feel *better*, but a basic human need is to feel good about yourself. And if gossip helps you do that, there might be a reason you were participating in gossip.

I don't have it... You know, gossip is going to be different for every relationship, every environment, every community. But it undermines and erodes trust because ~~if you are in the~~ if you are communicating with a gossiper, then you have no guarantee that when you are not there, they are not gossiping about you. It is ubiquitous. It's not contained to specific people or specific circumstances, right? And so, it's really important to sort of check yourself, and you can check yourself with your "others," if you want to: Is this gossip?

Now, to be clear, I do not have this... Well, I'm not... Gossip is not really my biggest weakness. I don't really engage in gossip, and when I do, I absolutely 100% keep it contained to my family, within my family. So I... We might do it, but I don't do it outside of my family. I remember when my kids were younger and they'd get in the car coming home from school, and they would tell me about someone at school or give me some criticism of somebody or whatever. I would take it, I would listen to it, I would, you know, kind of say, "Yeah, that's fine. But don't you for one minute think that they're not in their car, driving home from school with their mom, talking about you," because they are because that's just how it goes. So it undermines trust among community members. When people feel that their personal lives are discussed behind their backs, they become wary of engaging openly, leading to a breakdown in relationships, okay? This goes, again, to partly what Q was talking about: If we cannot get ourselves back online through trust and companionship and, you know, reducing these negative traits in ourselves, then we stay traumatized, and we re-traumatize. We re-traumatize ourselves. Because if you have ever been the victim of gossip, that's really painful, and I'm really sorry—because that's hard to combat, and it is, in a way, it is traumatizing. Gossip also creates division and polarization.

Do you want to talk about that—just anything you have to say about polarization and division?

DS: We have a Communist trying to become the President of the United States. And we have a Nazi running against her. Don't forget to vote!

SS: Okay, good.

Gossip creates a negative environment. It's a negative... Gossip is a negative atmosphere. It's just unpleasant. A community that engages in gossip develops toxicity where more

negativity thrives (not just gossip). It breeds other negative behaviors. And negative behaviors are not necessarily community building—although they can be, because if we're willing to deal with them head-on, then we have the ability to, you know, come together, repair. I like Q's, definition; I mean, of not compromise, but "negotiation," where both parties' needs are met.

I'm gonna throw a couple of my kids under the bus. (One I already did; the other one... Oh, never mind. I can't do it.) Compromise: She apparently didn't know what compromise meant. And I... It was a very weird conversation. She's like, "I thought compromise was when I got what I wanted!" And she may have actually said, "You did not teach me what compromise was," which may have been true, but I just thought, "Wow, that's kind of strange."

So, like, that was a little bit of a tangent, but there is very little collaboration in a gossipy society—because, again, nobody trusts each other. Nobody feels like they can say what they want to say. You know, gossip is as simple as, you know, you're meeting with someone to prepare a conference (right?) and to put something like this on. And you know, some conference committee member goes home to their, you know, to their community or their fellowship or whatever, and says, "Oh my gosh, you would not believe what so and so wants to do. This is the dumbest thing I have ever heard. I cannot believe that they want to do this," right? And if that gets back around, then the collaboration in that group is limited. You're not getting a free flow of ideas because we're worried about being criticized and then gossiped about behind our back.

Which brings me to this thing that I told Denver I was gonna talk about, and now that it's come back up, I think I'm supposed to. So first of all, I want to thank everybody who's ever put on a conference, because I cannot imagine how hard it is. And I want to thank everybody who has put on multiple conferences, because I think you do it because no one else will, and you've already kind of got this system in place that sort of runs itself. And I want to thank Mark and Carolyn and the conference organizers, because when they started planning this conference, we had not had a June Sawtooth conference, and there was no Covenant of Christ vote to be taken at a conference in October. (It is October, right?) And I really think that threw them for a loop, right? And I think they rose to the occasion beautifully. [Audience applause.] Again, thank you, thank you, thank you. But what I observed... Because grateful people do not run around calling people up on the phone and saying, "I'm so grateful for this thing that Mark and Carolyn are doing, and I'm so grateful that we're gonna have this thing do." What grateful people do is they're just grateful. And then they'll say to Mark and Carolyn and everybody else who's involved, "Thank you so much," you know, those kinds of things. But people who are not grateful will call people up and tell them how stupid they think this is because this is wrong, and this is wrong, and this is wrong. And I was... I heard many of those conversations. So check yourselves, because you might think you're talking to someone, and you might be talking to someone else—because I was shocked at the people who criticized, who condemned, who gossiped, who showed contempt and disdain for what Mark and Carolyn were trying to do at this conference. It was heart-sickening because the people I heard it from shocked the shit out of me.

DS: For those of you who aren't aware, yesterday Leroy introduced some "French."

SS: Oh. Thank you. Yeah, yeah.

And frankly, I consider that gossip, right? That is an opinion about another person or another group that you are dissatisfied with, and so you feel completely at liberty to share it with other people. And again, be careful who you're sharing it with, because there are voices, there are people listening. Okay? So that reduces collaboration. It reduces people's willingness to come together and put things like this on. The people who are willing to deal with the slings and arrows and the fears of other people and the gossip and the backbiting—and I know it happens to everybody who puts on a conference. God bless them because it's wrong. Be grateful, people. And if you can't be grateful, shut your mouths. And if you want to be ungrateful, ~~be grateful with~~ be ungrateful in the privacy of your own home, because that's okay too. We can be frustrated, we can share our concerns, we can be afraid, we can be worried, we can be anything we want—just don't bring other people into it. They don't need that, okay?

The mental health effects of gossip: Take a shot at that one. It's a very short paragraph, but let's see...

DS: I enjoy gossiping when it makes me feel bigger than someone else. But it's short-lived, and I don't enjoy the regret for the rumors and the foolishness when my wife points out to me, "That's just gossip." But it was such a great story! And it reduced them to rubble, and it made me seem heroic! ...And it's *just* gossip. I'm so sorry.

There was a time when I used to come home from the courtroom and describe the opposing attorneys in colorful and graphic detail...

SS: We have not stopped that!

DS: Yeah.

SS: That's just too much fun.

DS: Yeah, I better end there.

SS: The sweatshirt... Can't you tell the sweatshirt story?

DS: No [laughing].

SS: Okay, the obvious mental health effects of gossip is increased anxiety, increased depression. I mean, if you're engaging in gossip, you may feel good temporarily, but you don't feel good long term. It increases anxiety. It increases depression. If you're the butt of gossip, if you are the person for whom the gossip is about, it really is harmful. It's depressing. ~~It's disconnection~~ It's disconnecting. So...

DS: By the way, if you're the target of that sort of nonsense, the things that may be said about you that are false, you needn't give it a second thought. There's nonsense that gets published and repeated and said about me, and I don't respond to any of it. I know what is

and what is not the case, and therefore, the repetition of nonsense has no effect on me. The only troubling thing about that is that it took some time for my kids to adapt to the idea that gossip and nonsense and bullcrap on the Internet is something that they shouldn't allow—about their father—that they shouldn't allow to affect them, and I think they've adapted to that.

I do think that the purpose of some of the slander and the defamation, the lies, the distortions, I think some of the purpose of that is to try to get people NOT to listen, NOT to explore, NOT to consider, to shut the mind down so that vested interests elsewhere are not threatened. I mean, we are talking about a religion that is unprofitable in this world. Tithing donations go to support people who are in need. They don't aggregate into some profitable venture. No one earns an income from practicing a religion that involves sacrifice. And there are numerous people out there who crave the opportunity to earn an income by doing nothing other than advancing a religious idea and making themselves appear to be some great, you know, guru source of wisdom-like truth and knowledge.

We lose money—I lose money—to practice what I believe in. We've drained out of religion, profitability. And when that happens, then anyone and everyone, including podcasters, including practitioners of anti-Mormonism who are trying to derive an income from opposing it... I mean, that's as much a practice of priestcraft as is what goes on at 47 E. South Temple. Earning a living and profiting off of religion or irreligion is no different from one another. And what we talk about drains the entire field of profitability. And so some of the gossip and some of that is self-serving in the sense that the lies benefit an agenda *they* want to pursue. They want to sell you a membership in a secret podcast where they'll tell you about, you know, the coming tent cities, and they'll sell you preparedness nonsense.

That kind of stuff, I would hope all of you would realize what is true about you (that's inside you, who you are), and let the critics say what they want to say. You don't need to defend yourself. Let it go. If it's a lie, it's meaningless. Now, other people may rely upon that, and then, if they actually take the time to investigate, they become shocked at what they learn that is so contrary to what has been said that, very often, that's who gets converted and stays with it. And the people that are easily misled by a lie can enjoy their own reality that's based upon a lie.

I would hope everyone, everywhere—whether they believe in the Restoration of the gospel or not—would seriously consider looking into the Restoration of the gospel at the time of Joseph Smith and what is currently underway. Because if you could get an honest view of what happened in Joseph Smith's day and what is happening now, you would be ~~better~~ ~~under~~ better able to understand Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism; they all began somewhere, just like the Restoration began somewhere. And what is happening right now is a revival of what began in Joseph Smith's day—again. If you study and you look at and you consider carefully as much authentic information from what was underway with Joseph and what is underway today, it'll equip you to understand how religions have been founded and how religions have grown. Because by the time you got two centuries into the time of Christianity being founded by Jesus Christ, it was... It became as much a mess as Mormonism has become today. And by the time you get to the Christological debates of the third century, they were butchering and rewriting their own Scriptures.

It was a careful examination of what was happening to the scriptural record by Bart Ehrman (who was a Doctor of Theology) that changed him from being a devout, believing Christian into an atheist—because he found the compromise of the record to be so significant that he couldn't trust the Bible; he couldn't trust the New Testament. So what has gone on with LDS Scriptures actually required us to rework them into the Scripture project that produced the canon of Scriptures that we accepted in 2017. And what's going on right now is further clarifying, fixing, refining, and undoing the mischief that creeps in any time you have people spreading lies for their own self-interest. And just because they're not making a living from spreading lies doesn't mean *that* gossip is more pure. They still have a personal agenda that they're trying to advance.

Keep that in mind when you think about gossip and how perniciously it has altered the record about good people or continues to alter the record about people living today.

SS: I like those bigger, grander perspectives because that... It really does show the evil nature of gossip. So check yourself. Ask, you know, is this gossip? Do I *need* to say it? Is it true? If it's about you if it's not true, you don't need to worry about it.

So this brings us to this idea of ~~word~~ the importance of words. And I'm gonna use the phrase, "Be impeccable with your word," which is one of the four agreements in Don Miguel Ruiz's *The Four Agreements*. It's the very first one. Being impeccable with your word is realizing that words have power. Words have power to create or destroy. So if you go back to gossip, you can see how gossip literally destroys, right? It has the potential to take something big and grand and glorious and turn it into rubble. So the principle of being impeccable with your word is speaking with integrity and using the power of your words positively. So if I say, "integrity," in terms of being impeccable with your word, ~~what is~~ what does it mean to have integrity with your word?

DS: Well, to be honest, to be reliable, to be dependable, to be a source that is reliably pure in the intent behind what is being conveyed, and not hypocritical. The Book of Mormon uses "acting no hypocrisy" in a number of places, and that becomes the problem.

SS: Yeah. And also: Say what you mean. Part of relationships, part of marriages, part of being families and parents: Say what you mean. Here's an example, right? So let's assume you have a kid who, I don't know, took the car, left, you know, snuck out, took the car, came home late, you know, maybe even, you know, dinged the car ~~in the~~ on the garage as they were driving in, right? So you get up in the morning and you see this ding on the car, and you figure out which child it was, and you go to the kid and you say, "Why did you do that?" Okay? Well, I mean, it's a very simple question. It's an obvious question. You want to know why they did that, but that immediately puts them on the defensive. I mean, they should be defensive because they stole the car and snuck out, right? But "Why did you do that?" doesn't imply in any way, shape, or form that you actually wanna know why they did that. What you're saying is, "You're an idiot. I can't believe you did that. How dare you do that?" So you don't want to say, "Why did you do that?" You want to say what you mean. What do you actually mean? What you really mean is (or what you're really thinking is), "Why...? What was going on for this kid? How is it that this kid thought this was okay?" There's a whole bunch of other questions to be asked, rather than, "Why did you do that?"

So, say what you mean, and mean what you say. Don't hedge, don't soften, don't... I mean, go ahead and soften, but say what you mean. I think we had a conversation, I don't know, we were driving somewhere, and I used some backdoor way to bring something up. And after, I don't know, 30 minutes of not going anywhere fast, you said, "Why don't you just say what you mean?" I'm like, "Oh, wait, I can do that? I can just say what I mean? I don't have to protect myself, I don't have to protect him, I don't have to be careful. I can just say what I mean." Do you remember that?

DS: What's that?

SS: Do you remember that? Oh, my gosh, are you even listening to me?!

DS: Am I supposed to listen?

SS: Are you even listening to me? Oh, my gosh.

DS: I'm thinking, you know, to myself...

SS: Oh, Lord.

DS: ...I'm kind of getting hungry. We've been here some time. I know that there are other subjects... Why don't we jump into a couple of the other subjects...

SS: I have already moved to the other subject.

DS: ...and let's close it out and go eat because...

SS: I've already moved! I have!

DS: And I'm looking out there, and these people are hungry.

SS: I have moved to the other subject already! We're talking about being impeccable with our words. What are YOU doing?

DS: I'm being pecked on with your words!

I'm hungry.

SS: Okay. Will you...? Hey, will you bring...? Hey, will you bring me some?

Okay, we're gonna wrap this up.

DS: Okay, okay, okay, I've decommissioned it [holding up the leftover sacrament bread]. It's now just food. You can pass it out. Pass that around.

SS: Okay, alright, while he's doing that:

Say things that will not hurt or harm another (oh, thank you very much), and that means yourself. When you're talking to yourself, be impeccable with your words. Say what you mean. You don't need to criticize yourself. You don't need to judge yourself. These are topics that are so much better explained in the books that they come out of. So I really want you to

read *The Four Agreements*, *Nonviolent Communication*, and there's another one... Oh, my gosh, there's another book; I can't think of it right now.

Words have tremendous power. They have the power to lift, to build, to bring people together, or to make people feel small or to diminish them. And by choosing your words carefully, you can create a positive impact on yourself and those around you. There's an example in this book where a student has a teacher—right?—and ~~they hate~~ they didn't like the teacher. And so, when they're talking to a friend who has the same teacher, they say things like, "Oh, my gosh, that teacher was really... I didn't like him. I think he's kind of pervy. He was not a good teacher," right? So the minute you say that, you have destroyed someone else's ability to go into an experience and have their own experience, because we're not that good at differentiating those things. And those words... The power that words have to uplift or destroy is pretty significant. So be careful what you say. And if you can't say something nice, say it in your house, in your closet, to your husband or your wife where it won't go anywhere else because that's your safe space. Okay? Because I'm not a fool. I know we need to say these things. I need to say these things sometimes. So...

Avoid miscommunication. Being impeccable with your word means being clear and honest in your communication. Misunderstandings often arise from careless speech, so striving for clarity can help in maintaining harmonious relationships.

I'm about done with this one. Read the book, *The Four Agreements*.

DS: Yeah, there's almost always...

Let me rephrase that. There is never a reason to say something ALWAYS happens, especially when you're talking about your spouse and something that irritates you. Absolutes are not true. There are moments when your spouse is wonderful, you know, interrupting the continuum. So it's not "always," and it's not "never." (I'm saying that tongue in cheek.)

SS: I know what you're saying. I know what you're saying. Those are also referred to as imperatives...

DS: Yeah.

SS: ...and you should cut imperatives out of your vocabulary unless it's used for something other than an imperative. So no "shoulds," no "always," no "have to," okay? When you're talking to your kids, don't say, "should." Don't say, "You have to."

DS: "Must."

SS: Don't say, "You must." Don't say it to yourself. Don't *should* on yourself, right?

Okay, I'm good. I'm golden.

DS: Hey, I'm good too. And I've had a little bit of bread to eat, and it's a happy moment. Umm...

Congregation Member: Hey, Denver?

DS: Yeah?

Congregation Member: I really, really wanted clarification—just really quick—on something you said earlier...

DS: 'kay...

Congregation Member: ...if you don't mind. You talked about accepting Christ and if we did that, we'll be saved. Can you define what accepting Christ looks like? Does that mean you believe in Him? Does that mean you got baptized? Is that "you took the covenant"? I'm just wondering if it's...

DS: Yeah, the question that is being asked is "Accepting Christ, and what it means to be accepting Christ." It was actually the Covenant of Christ that provoked me into trying to investigate that. I had the impression that T&C section 69 (which is the Doctrine and Covenants section 76), in the description of those that would inherit the Celestial Kingdom, I had the impression that the language there was pretty demanding, that it required a great, great deal. But in the Covenant of Christ, over and over again, it appears that what the acceptance, the conversion, the teaching, and the redemption—the saving of souls—consisted of was the explanation that Jesus Christ was the Redeemer, and that His sacrifice fulfilled the law of Moses, and that it wasn't the sacrifice of animals that was redemptive, but it was the Son of God who came into the world and offered Himself as an offering in order to remove from us the responsibility and the guilt of sin; and that the sign of having recognized that as truth was to be baptized. And then once you are baptized, you—automatically in the Book of Mormon—receive the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost then takes it from there. So redemption in the Book of Mormon is that cutting edge/that leading edge/that acceptance of Jesus and recognizing that you are in a fallen state and you are actually alienated from God, and you need to reconcile yourself back to God. And the way that you do that is through Jesus Christ. And if you accept that idea, then you must act on that idea and be baptized, because that is the mechanism that He wants you to undergo in order to demonstrate your faith and your repentance in Him. You are immersed in water...

The breath of life is given to you by God in the beginning, and the first breath of life is when life begins here. It's how Adam acquired life. It's what happens when a child is born. The breath of life means you are alive. Baptism puts you under the water. You are cut off from the breath of life. You cannot breathe under the water. You stay there too long, and you're dead in fact. But the symbol of going under the water is being cut off from the breath of life or the air that sustains us. And then you emerge from that, taking a new breath, and that new breath is the commencement of a new life. It is a symbol of death and resurrection, and when you take upon yourself the name of Christ...

Christ's name is "Anointed." The name that Christ asks that you take upon yourself is the name of *Christos*, the name of *Anointed*, the name of *Messiah*, the name of having been *anointed with His Spirit, the Holy Ghost*, and He's essentially saying He wants to make you like Him, in possession of the Holy Spirit—represented by oil, represented by washing, represented by baptism. You come out a new creature. You take in the breath of life, and the

spirit now is with you. That is a very simple process representing very profound ideas in which now—a new creature, having been forgiven of sin—you get to set out on a new journey in your life. And that spirit that was given to you at the time of the baptism is intended to help shape you, improve you, inform you, develop you, and you're to live by that guidance that's given to you as a consequence of baptism.

So the... Last night, when we were talking to the kids, I told them to go read something out of the glossary, and I'm going to go ahead and locate it and read it here. Umm... The idea that you've finished the journey at the point that you recognize and accept Christ and you are saved is a profoundly important moment to begin on a new journey. But the new journey:

Joseph Smith said...: "Thus you learn some of the first principles of the gospel about which so much has been said. When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom and go on until you learn the last principle; it will be a great while before you have learned **the last**. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it is a great thing to learn salvation beyond the grave." ("Ascension," *Glossary of Gospel Terms*, emphasis added)

See, juxtapose that idea—which is true, on the one hand—with this statement in Paul's writing. (It must be Second Timothy. Oh, yeah.) This is Paul writing:

*This know also: ...in the last days, perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, without self-control, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of [pleasure] more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. From such turn away, for of this sort are they who creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with [sin], led away with divers lusts, **ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth**. (2 Timothy 1:8 RE, emphasis added)*

So now you've got this statement by Joseph Smith in the King Follett discourse saying that it will be a great while after this world before you have learned everything you need to know in order to have the fullness of salvation. And you've got Paul criticizing people who are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And this is one of those juxtapositions of ideas that, in the contraries (as Joseph Smith put it), in the contraries, you will learn the truth; and that Christ encountered more of those than any other soul—hence the greatness of the man and the greatness of His understanding.

You see, you don't know—and will never know in this life—everything that is necessary in order to create worlds, in order to bind the elements, in order to ordain a creation, in order to control the elements necessary in order to be as God. BUT the first principles of the gospel are faith, repentance, baptism, and then the gift of the Holy Ghost. As a consequence of those first principles of the gospel, you should grow in light and knowledge until the perfect day. In a perfect day—with the sun directly overhead and with no shadow being cast anywhere—you are covered entirely in light; the only darkness that exists in that perfect

day is the shadow confined beneath your feet—because it's fully illuminated. That is a metaphor used in both Psalms and section 93 of ~~the~~ both the T&C and the Doctrine and Covenants, as it turns out; they're both section 93. It's a metaphor that gets used about growing in light and truth until the perfect day. That perfect day is what we seek for. And look at how that section begins:

Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am... (T&C 93:1)

And then later on, it talks about the perfect day. You grow...

The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one. (Ibid, 11)

So look, the purpose is to have you grow in light and truth.

You were also in the beginning with the Father, that which is spirit, even the spirit of truth, and truth is a knowledge of things as they are, ...as they were, and as they are to come. (Ibid, 8)

Look, our religion is incomplete; and it tells you that it is incomplete over and over and over again. It says:

- "I'm forbidden from saying further."
- "It is not permitted for me to go on from here."
- *You must not write the things you'll see after this (1 Nephi 3:30 CE).*
- *I'm forbidden to write the rest of the things I saw and heard. So, I'm satisfied with [that which] I've written, and I've only written a small part of what I saw. ...even though everything I saw isn't written, the things I have written are true (1 Nephi 3:31 CE).*
- Jesus Christ: He prayed unto the Father, and what He prayed can't be written. ~~That~~ ~~which~~ *Those that heard Him testified about it; and they testified to the following: The eye has never seen ...the ear has never heard such great and awe-inspiring things [as] we saw and heard Jesus speak to the Father. And no tongue can speak, neither can anyone write, neither can people's hearts conceive such great and astonishing things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak (3 Nephi 8:4 CE).*
- And again, *And now, not even one percent of what Jesus taught the people can be written in this book (3 Nephi 12:1 CE).*
- And then this: *The Lord gives to every nation, from their own people, using their own language, teachers delivering His message that He decides is relevant for them. Therefore we should trust that the Lord is wise enough to guide everyone to the truth appropriate for them (Alma 15:13 CE).*
- And then we've got that closing stuff in the vision that... (I used to be a lot quicker with this stuff, back when we only had one set of Scriptures that I'd read for decades.) *But great and marvelous of the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom, which he shewed unto us, which [surpass] all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us [that] we should not write while we*

*were yet in the spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the holy ghost, which God bestows on those who love him and [purify] themselves before him, **to whom he grants [this] privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves,** that through the power and manifestation of the spirit, **while in the flesh,** they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory (T&C 69:29, emphasis added)*

The purpose of the fullness of the gospel is to fully restore you back—redeemed from the fall—into the presence of God. It's still the purpose of the fullness of the gospel to accomplish that WITH you and FOR you. I think I've said before that people that are on the path to return to the Lord's presence may not return to His presence until the last moments of their life, but I believe that almost every person who sincerely seeks after the Lord gets delivered to them vindication of the promise in that section 93, first verse, that I read a moment ago: "...shall see my face and know that I am." Alvin Smith, in the last months of his life, when he was dying, had angels ministering to him. Martin Luther; St. Francis; Stephen (who was stoned to death) had the heavens open to him in the last moments, bearing testimony, "I see the heavens open and the Son of God sitting on the right hand of power." Dying, he receives that.

Well, I think it is possible—if you were trustworthy and if you were sufficiently self-disciplined to limit what you say to what you are commanded to say and nothing further (so that the Lord could trust you)—that you, like Nephi, could talk about, "Well, that's forbidden; but what I can say, I testify to you IS true. And while I may not have told you everything I know, what I have told you that I do know is true and reliable."

The gospel's the same. The fullness of the gospel is the same. The desire to be redeemed from the fall is a righteous desire. But many people want to gallop out ahead in order to take in what they are utterly unprepared yet to take in. I mean, the journey that took place in the tenth parable is a journey of decades. It's not a journey of moments. Some things get asked for, and the answer may be, "Yes," but the *yes* means "decades from now, when you are prepared," OR if you're just not gonna be able to contain your enthusiasm because you're that sort of person, it'll be on your deathbed when everyone thinks you're out of your mind anyway. "Grandma was mumbling about Jesus and stuff, right there at the end; it was kind of incoherent: Angels, Jesus, Thrones... I think she said Principalities, something... I mean, it was just nonsense," because grandma wouldn't keep her mouth shut! So she gets the blessing, she gets the benefit, she gets the restoration, she gets redeemed from the fall, but it happens at a moment when no one else is cheated out of the journey themselves.

And that's really the point of it all. That's a journey for you, every one of you. It's a journey for you to take and for you to be received back into the Lord's presence because that is what He intends as the fullness. But to be saved by Jesus is to recognize Him as the one who can and will redeem you from the grave and forgive your sins; and He offered Himself as a sacrifice, and He asks you to trust in that and then to accept the ordinance of baptism as evidence of your acceptance of that, which if you do, you will be saved. And that is the point the Book of Mormon intends to bring you to. Then having been saved, with the benefit of

the Holy Ghost, study the words of the prophets, and they will bring you further along—ultimately, far enough along in the journey, that you'll be redeemed from the Fall.

This is the message of the gospel. This is what Christ intends to accomplish for every soul that lives here. This is His invitation to you, and I'm telling you, I know that He vindicates that invitation and promise. It's real. I testify to it, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.