

LET US BE VESSELS OF LIGHT

TO THOSE AROUND US AND THOSE WHO COME BEHIND US

By Connie Smith, May 2022

I. Our Foundation of Light & Truth

- A. *I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; DC 90:1a*
- B. *And now my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation...Helaman 2:74*
- C. Quote: Book: (*God's Spiritual Universe* by Arthur Oakman, p.49) There is no prophet greater than Christ; he is foremost. And there is no greater prophecy than the incarnation of the Son of God in human life. **That incarnation was a movement of heaven to earth, of spiritual to natural, of that which is above to that which is beneath. It was a lifting of the earth to heaven, a raising of the natural in the likeness of the spiritual, a purging of that which is below by the indwelling of that which is from above,** and constitutes a microcosm of all existence.
- D. We don't just "stand" on a firm foundation, we must "build" on that foundation which is Christ, our Rock & Redeemer.
 1. **Foundation of Humility:** Martin Harris was told to "*Humble himself in mighty Prayer and Faith, in the sincerity of his heart. (DC 5:5b)*"
Proverbs 15:33 *The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility.*
Helaman 2:31 *Nevertheless, they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility,*
 2. **Foundation of Prayer** = House of Prayer is an extension of Faith and a vital part of building your house of light that shines for others to see.
Moroni 8:29 And the first-fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith, unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; and the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart, cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.
 3. **Foundation of Repentance & Forgiveness:** Over the years, God has brought me to an understanding of several different aspects of Repentance and Forgiveness. I have 4 listed here. In order for us to be filled with light and to shine that light to others we must be established in these 2 things: Repentance and Forgiveness.
 - **Personal Repentance** = Sin is like turning off the light. It separates you from God and from others. Steps of Repentance = Conviction, Confession, Repent, & Remission of Sin
 - **Restoration of Relationships:** Repentance and Forgiveness is about healing a relationship. A restoration of us to God and us to one another.
 - **Repentance + Forgiveness = JOY!** When healing takes place in your heart...with God and others, it produces joy! It's about being restored and forgiven. **It's about coming home to the presence of God our Father...to our inheritance and true JOY in our salvation.**
 - **Being Set Free** - We set others free when we forgive them. Just like it sets us free when God forgives us. When we don't forgive others, we are the ones in bondage.
 4. **Love:** What is the margin you love God? Is there an enemy in your life? Is there someone you don't like? That's the margin that you love God.

II. Letting You Light Shine and Preparation

A. In order to be filled to shine we must rend our heart not our garment.

- *Joel 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and repent, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and he will turn away the evil from you.*

B. When your eye is single to the glory of God your whole body shall be filled with light! You will have direction to see by and to guide you.

C. Helaman prepared his sons. He gave them direction and light for their journey.

D. In the Garden of Despair, God is There. *Luke 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*

III. The Light that Endures and Faith

A. Will your light be able to shine during the storms of life?

B. In dark situations we are called to be the salt of the earth, and a light:

C. ...therefore hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. *Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up. 3 N 8:54-55*

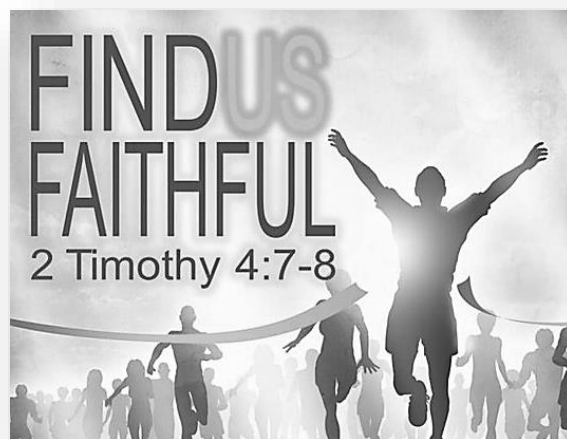
D. How do you have the kind of faith that allows you to not only live for Jesus but to die for Him?

E. Can the church, the Bride of Christ, shine when it's so divided? (See attached testimonies.)

- The Lord puts shepherds wherever his sheep are.
- How else would I preserve my people?
- The Lord will heal his church. – Whether we understand how that healing will unfold or what it will look like, knowing it gives us hope!
- Read the parable of the Olive Tree found in Jacob chapter 3.

F. The Olive Tree Parable found in Jacob 3:

- The tree waxed old, and began to decay.
- I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will.
- Take thou the branches of the wild olive tree, and graft them in, in the stead thereof;
- **I do it, that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree; and also, that I may lay up fruit thereof, against the season, unto myself:**
- Now, if we had not grafted in these branches, the tree thereof would have perished.
- Examples in Scripture: Tower of Babel-people scattered, Abram told to depart, NT Church persecuted and scattered, Lehi-told to depart, Joseph to Egypt, Nephi led away from brothers, Scattering of Saints in early church, scattering of saints in our time,...
- *Moroni 9:6 And now my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.*
- *Whom shall I send...Here Am I Lord, Send Me (Isaiah 6)*
- *I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; (DC 90:1a)*



Find Us Faithful

We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road,
And those who've gone before us
Line the way.
Cheering on the faithful,
Encouraging the weary,
Their lives a stirring testament
To god's sustaining grace.

Surrounded by so great
A cloud of witnesses,
Let us run the race
Not only for the prize,
But as those who've gone before us.
Let us leave to those behind us,
The heritage of faithfulness
Passed on thru godly lives.

Refrain: O may all who come behind us
Find us faithful,
May the fire of our devotion
Light their way.
May the footprints that we leave,
Lead them to believe,
And the lives we live
Inspire them to obey.
O may all who come behind us
Find us faithful.

After all our hopes and dreams
Have come and gone,
And our children sift thru all
We've left behind,
May the clues that they discover,
And the mem'ries they uncover,
Become the light that leads them,
To the road we each must find.

(Refrain)

My Testimony from 1984/1985 — by Connie Smith

My husband, Ken, and I moved here from Ohio in the fall of 1984. We were in our mid-20's and I was pregnant with our first child. To our dismay, the people out here were in an uproar over a "new revelation" that was changing the course of priesthood calls and would now include women. We had no opinion one way or the other but felt like the body of the church should follow the leadership of the church.

We began to study the scriptures to prove that the leadership was right. And there are plenty of scripture references that encourage people to submit to leadership. The more we studied, however, the more we became convinced that the leadership was in grave error. The dilemma for us became what do we do? Who's right and who's wrong? Should we stay or should we go? We had heard rumors of congregations of people being locked out of their church buildings and of priesthood who opposed the new doctrine being silenced.

We attended the last Central Missouri Stake Conference under the leadership of Glen Coltharp. He was soon to be replaced. Tensions were high at that conference held in Warrensburg, MO. Later, Ken and I heard a testimony from a priesthood member that it was made known to him that angels were present at this conference. They were recording the names of every person who attended the conference. They were not recording who was on what side of the issues at hand but recording who had taken the time to show up in support of Jesus, no matter what their belief.

Often, I would pray and ask the Lord who was right and who was wrong. I wanted to know and to do what was right. I wanted a yes or no answer! One day, as I knelt in prayer and asked this same question, I heard a voice speak to my mind, "What if the answer isn't 'yes' or 'no'? What if I say 'repent'?" I'm convinced that the body of the church was called to repentance at that time.

Another thing happened shortly after that. A time was set that if the people of the Oak Grove Congregation of the RLDS church did not accept Section 156 and begin to implement it, plus continue to pay their regular tithing and stop rebelling against the church leadership, the locks on the doors of the church building would be changed and a new pastor put in place. All who wanted to stay were welcome. As the day drew near for the locks to be changed, a final church service for all the membership at Oak Grove was announced.

The service was one of mourning and filled with deep sorrow of heart. Steps had been made by the pastorate to secure a new location for meeting outside the sanctions of the RLDS church. So instruction and direction were also a part of this final service. The current pastor encouraged the people to hope. He also requested that the building be left clean and in good order. He discouraged the saints from "taking" things. After the service I was saddened to see people collecting hymnals, the pulpit and many other "things" out of the building. All items taken were justified because so-and-so had donated them or built this or that. Whatever the reason, sound, correct or not, it grieved me at my heart. I quickly turned to look at the back of the sanctuary where a picture of Christ had hung for many years. It was a picture of Christ with his arms stretched open wide. To my relief and comfort, there on the wall was the beautiful picture. It wasn't until several days later that I learned that particular picture had been taken down from the back wall prior to that final service. I was shocked. I had stared at that picture for several seconds and been filled with love and comfort. I believe, that Christ was there wanting and waiting to comfort our broken hearts and to gather us to himself that night.

We were so busy in our own thoughts and desires and wanting to be right that we missed the opportunity to be gathered to Him as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Ken and I did stay with the institutional church for a few months before joining our brothers and sisters who were meeting elsewhere outside the sanction of the main church. When we pulled out, we were delighted that the branches that formed were on fire. There was life outside the church. There was joy. It was almost like a revival had taken place. Then differences of doctrine and lack of commitment to work together crept in. More splitting and fracturing occurred.

As I reflect upon that time I wonder and consider these questions: Could simple repentance have turned the tide of the church back in that day? Was gathering under the wings of the Lord in repentance and forgiveness what we were called to do? I believe Repentance was the order of the day. I also believe that at the Solemn Assembly that took place in 2020 was the beginning of a turn around for the Restoration movement. Masses of people turned to Lord in great humility and repentance. Restoration Branches were never supposed to be the end solution to the breakup of the church. Do we have hope that the church started back in the 1830's will thrive again? Let us pray the Lord of the harvest will bring reconciliation and true restoration to His church.

Broken Glass Testimonies by Erin Cornish

Peter and I were at reunion when the split with JCRB was happening. My family was in favor of the JCRB moving forward and Peter's family was not. We were both feeling very torn and praying about where the Lord wanted us. At the closing service of the reunion Peter stood up and said, "I've come to this reunion really torn."

Peter's prayer was something like, "Lord, I see people on one side of the issue and they are men that I love and respect and know that they are doing their best to live the kingdom and follow God. I look up to them and have consider them to be holy men. But then I look at the people on the other side of the issue and I see men that love the Lord, men that I look up to and respect, men that are trying the follow the kingdom way the best that they can and have considered them to be holy men."

Peter's prayer, was "Lord, who is right? Which side do I go to?" The answer that Peter received was not an answer that either of us expected. The Lord simply told him that He puts shepherds wherever His sheep are.

I can't remember the time span after this experience, but sometime after Peter had a dream. In that dream he was asked if he remembered a certain person's vision of the broken glass. In the dream, Peter said that he did. He had pictured broken glass on the ground and realized that it would take a great heat to get those pieces back together. He then heard the Lord's voice say, somewhat chastisingly, something to the effect of, "How else would I preserve my people?"

When Peter was relaying this dream to a friend and thinking of those words "preserve my people" he was drawn to the parable of the Olive Tree in Jacob 3. That chapter mentions the word preserve over 20 times. In this parable the Lord is pruning here, grafting there, digging around the roots, mixing things up over and over again just trying to get something to produce good fruit. He gets so frustrated with his vineyard that at some point he is ready to burn it all down. But our intercessor steps in and asks to give it another try and in the end the Lord had preserved unto himself, that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto on body. (Jacob 3:143-144). Peter found comfort in these two experiences knowing that the Lord was aware of the church's broken state and that He was about the work of preserving his people.

Not long after Peter's dream, I had the opportunity to visit with Penny Curtis. I told her about Peter's dream and my hope that the Lord knows that we are broken, but that he has a way to bring us back together. Penny said that she had very recently had a vision about broken glass in regards to the church. In this vision the Lord showed her broken glass, similar to that of a broken windshield, where the glass is shattered, but still held close together and she understood that this was the state of the church. She then saw the Lord pour a milky substance (which she interpreted to be the Holy Spirit) over the top of this glass, and it trickled down between all of the cracks and filled in all of the spaces. When all of those spaces were filled in, Penny said that the glass was sealed back together, like it had never been broken before. It was smooth and clear like new glass. This was confirmation to her that the Lord would heal our divisions and bring us back to one whole, one body.