

How Do We Know What is Truth?

By Cameron Ford 1998

These are some of my thoughts and understandings on how we know what is truth. I write these understandings because of their importance to me in knowing that the Book of Mormon is true. For that matter, not only are they valid in knowing that the Book of Mormon is true, but I have found that they can be applied to anything in my life. In my mind, the most important thing we can ever learn in our lives is how to know what is truth. The Savior spoke the following words to his disciples:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

(King James Version of the Bible, The New Testament:
The Gospel According to ST JOHN: Chapter 14, Verses 16 & 17)

By this we know that the Savior has given us the Spirit of truth to dwell within us. To me, this means that I should look for answers to truth in my heart. Later on in the same chapter Jesus says:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. “

(King James Version of the Bible, The New Testament:
The Gospel According to ST JOHN: Chapter 14, Verse 26)

Another time the Savior was trying to explain to his followers that there were many things that he still needed to say to them, but that they were not ready to hear these things yet. He explained that never-the-less, there was still someone that could teach them what was truth:

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

(King James Version of the Bible, The New Testament:
The Gospel According to ST JOHN: Chapter 16, Verses 12 & 13)

The next question that comes to mind is: What does the spirit feel like? How can I know when the Holy Ghost is trying to tell me when something is true? This really isn't an easy question. Many churches have different understandings on what the spirit feels like. One very good clue comes from the life of the prophet Elijah in the Old

Testament. When Elijah was trying to get direction from the Lord as to what he should do because the children of Israel were trying to kill him, the Lord said to Elijah:

“...Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

(King James Version of the Bible, The New Testament:
1 KINGS: Chapter 19, Verses 11 & 12
underline added for emphasis)

I think that what this scripture is trying to tell us is that, although many times we would like the Lord to answer our prayers with blaring trumpets, most of the time he answers us in a still small voice. Not necessarily an actual voice that we can hear (although it certainly could be), but more a small, gentle feeling in our heart that tells us what the Lord is trying to say. So small that we will miss it if we are not paying close enough attention. Paul tells us that the fruit of the spirit is:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

(King James Version of the Bible, The New Testament:
The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians:
Chapter 16, Verses 12 & 13)

In my mind, these feelings are more aligned with the quietness of the still small voice than with the loudness of earthquakes or great winds. This is why I believe that the world has such a hard time seeing the miracles that the Lord performs on a daily basis. Most times people are so busy looking for the big and the grand that they miss the quiet beauty that surrounds us on this earth. Think of the peace and love that we feel when we hold a new born baby in our arms, or the awe we feel when we lift up our heads and look at the night sky. These in general are all small quiet things, yet, when I really think about it, I can honestly say that in my life these quiet miracles are some of the most inspiring things that I have experienced.

I remember when I was in the process of determining if the Book of Mormon was true, I wanted God to send me an angel to declare it to me so there would be no doubt. If you will, I was looking for the Lord to be in the earthquake or the strong wind. I was very skeptical about it being true. I kept on trying to disprove it while I was reading by convincing myself that Joseph Smith could have made it all up. I was so caught up in trying to prove that it was wrong that I was not listening to what the still small voice was trying to say to my heart. At that point, I really didn't even know what the still small voice felt like. It wasn't until I read the following scripture, written by a prophet

on the American continent by the name of Alma, that I was able to understand how the Holy Ghost was trying to communicate with me. Alma is speaking to a group of people that had been humbled by poverty and were ready to receive an understanding of the word of God.

“Now, as I said concerning faith --that it was not a perfect knowledge— even so it is with my words. Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until you believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.

Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves— It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge. But behold, as the seed swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, then you must needs say that the seed is good; for behold it swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow. And now, behold, will not this strengthen your faith: for ye will say I know that this is a good seed; for behold it sprouteth and beginneth to grow.

And now, behold, are ye sure that this is a good seed? I say unto you, Yea; for every seed bringeth forth unto its own likeness. Therefore, if a seed groweth it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away.”

(Book of Mormon-- The book of Alma:
Chapter 32, Verses 26 through 32)

I realized from this, that I had been “resisting the spirit of the Lord” by trying to prove the book wrong at every step of the way. Instead of saying to myself “Is it possible that this is true?”, I was saying “This can’t be true, so I will just have to prove to myself that it is not”. After I realized what I was doing, I opened my heart and my questions started getting answered. I realized that what the book was saying made me feel good, and that I felt a sweet spirit in my heart when I read it. Since that time, every doubt I ever had about the Book of Mormon being false has been brushed aside one at a time.

In the Bible, the Savior taught a principle similar to the one that Alma was trying to teach in the passages above. Jesus said:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

(King James Version of the Bible, The New Testament:
The Gospel According to ST MATTHEW:
Chapter 7, Verses 15 through 20)

He clearly tells us that to know if someone is telling you the truth, just look at their actions. Look at their fruit, or in other words, what comes as a result of what they are teaching? Do they practice what they teach?

When it all comes down to it, that is the real answer to knowing what is truth. What is the fruit? How does it make me feel when I am open enough to really listen to it? Do I feel Peace, Love, Forgiveness? Does it inspire me to want to be more like Christ? I am sure that if we follow the formula given to us in the Holy Scriptures, we will never be led astray.