

# Church of Jesus Christ

## Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

# NEWSLETTER

2320 State Highway 2, Mount Ayr, IA 50854  
Ed Anderson, Pastor

Lamoni, IA

[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)  
Phone 641-223-0480



*Hayride Fun*



## News & Notes

## What's inside?

### Thanksgiving Dinner

The branch will have its annual Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday, Nov. 22, following the morning services.

This is always a great time to share in fellowship and thanksgiving to God for his marvelous blessings.

A sign up sheet will be passed around for people to participate with items for the feast.

### Men's Activities

Special men's activities are planned

for the second Saturday each month.

The November activity is set for Saturday, Nov. 14. Watch for details.

### Hayride/wiener roast

The annual fall hayride and wiener roast was held at the home of Jim and Linda Barber of Bethany, MO, Sunday, Oct. 11 at 4:30 p.m.

A good crowd attended the event. Pictures from the hayride, cookout and campfire are included in this issue.

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# EXPANDING OUR DEFINITION OF 'SELF'

**Elder Steven Smith  
Lamoni, IA  
October 4, 2015**

We are in a season where if you do not like a political candidates position, you can wait a while and they may change. They may clarify or expand the definition of what they are.

Some people call this flip-flopping, and it is when it is done for political expediency and not because ones heart is fully into it. If we integrate our thoughts, emotions, words, and actions as we make a change in who we are, this is called repentance, and it is real, and it is possible, and God desires it. Today, I would like to convince you to expand how you define yourself.

Let me interject that I will ask a three word question throughout this sermon. It is... "Is all done?". Your response should be to answer with a loud, robust, emphatic chorus of "No". In fact, lets try it. "Is all done?"... "NO"... good.

So today, when we look at ourselves, how would we define the term "self" or how do we define, Steve... or any one individual in the congregation.

We may use physical terms, including height, ideal weight, eye or hair color or age.

We may use prowess, including IQ, athletic success, musical ability, or creativity.

We may point to success or failures in life, our jobs or our trophies.

Whatever the criteria, I am going to ask today that you consider expanding the definition of who you are.

John 17:21 says: *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;*

Do we have the courage to be one with the Father, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?

I knew a man who decided that

Christ was in him...he was one with Jesus Christ and took upon himself the name of Christ...and said so...demanding people call him Jesus. He had long hair, and a beard. He started dressing like Jesus with a robe and sandals, wandering around town preaching to anyone and sometimes no one. The men in blue eventually picked him up and the judge had them turn him over to the nice young men in their big white coats, and I never heard from him again.

Jesus, in his final recorded prayer to God, as recorded in John 17, asked the Lord to make us one with him, and with God, just as Jesus and God are one. It was his final wish ... Jesus willed that we would become one with God, just as he was one with God.

Today, we are partaking of the bread and wine, symbolic of the blood and body of the sacrificed Christ. In the old law, when a sacrifice for sin was made, the animal was cut up, cooked, and when you paid the prescribed price, you were allowed to eat of the sacrifice. Eating the sacrifice nourished your body and spirit, and your participation sanctified the sacrifice. It made perfect sense in a day without refrigeration, so you went to the temple to get protein and because there were enough eating, none was left over.

When we partake of the Lords' supper, we are witnesses to Christ's sacrifice, our broken hearts are healed by the spiritual participation and nourishment we eat. Christ is sanctified, and in us. We promise to keep his commandments and remember him...remember who healed our broken hearts...remember whose sacrificed body and blood is nourishing us. So as of old, Christ is in us, spiritually nourishing us because of the Lord's Supper. It is Christ who promises to heal our broken heart.

Now, being one does not mean that we loose our identity. The phrase "may

be one" is used in Exodus to describe making a tabernacle.

*And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches; and it shall be one tabernacle.* Exodus 26:6

A tache is something that joins fabric. The Hebrew word is Keh-res' and it means to protrude, a knob, or a belaying pin that causes a protrusion in fabric pinned together. We still attach things to e-mails, or refrigerators. Fabrics pinned together often did not have the exact color match, so tache came to be a stripe or color difference of fabric or fur...thus a raccoon has taches on its tail, and a tiger is known by its taches.

Some people were known to have a mouse sized stripe of hair under their nose, and they still call it a mus (latin for mouse) tache (stripe) or mustache. In medicine, the itchy red line I got around my abdomen with shingles, is referred to as a tache. So the tache is the joiner, that held together two different dyed curtains creating a line by the variation in color, which also became known as a tache. I would like to use the example of a tabernacle as an analogy for our being "one".

The individual peices are still there, but they are connected in such a way that they can function at a greater level than any individual peice. We do not have to say "I am Jesus Christ" and visit with the nice young folk in the big white coats.

Using the tent analogy, we are still a curtain, joined to God to make a tabernacle, that functions as one unit. Christ has repaired the imperfections -- the patches if you will -- the invisible repairs, in the curtain. If we have taken Christ's name upon us through baptism, and we are keeping his commands, he has promised his Spirit to be with us, with the righteousness- love, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness, gentleness,

faith, meekness, and temperance. The Holy Spirit is the tache that joins us to God. That combination is greater than we are, modifying how we define who we are. This takes committment to our covenant, that we celebrate today to pull this off.

I would invite you to redefine yourself to include something bigger than yourself. Include God, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. You can now say, "I am like the tabernacle because I am tached to God by the Holy Spirit; I have taken the name of Christ upon me to repair my broken heart; I will keep his commands and remember my connection to God and Jesus Christ. I maintain this connection by the taches of the Holy Spirit by keeping his commands and remembering him. We are one."

If we choose not to change our lives to allow Christ's healing and reject the Holy Spirit's taches, we deceive ourselves with the act we do today...we are liars...we are flip floppers, indeed we are sons of perdition, having committed the unpardonable sin.

We have done three things to expand the definition of who we are:

- We have made a covenant or an agreement
- We have adopted a common brand name by making the covenant (Christ)
- We have repented -- changed our lives to be compatible with the the expansion of our definition to accept God, Christ's patches, and the taches of the Holy Spirit

This is what we call the atonement, or being one with God.

Leaving the tabernacle analogy for a moment and going to the promises of the scriptures, we observe when we are one with God we have the promise that we will:

- See God, (DC 85:18b), and work for God ( 1 Peter 3:15) being sanctified
- Be with God, which is called Celestial Glory (DC 76: 5j-r)
- Walk with God, which is called Zion (Psalms 46:5)
- Have the Holy Spirit always, which is being in the Kingdom (Romans 14:17)
- We will talk with (pray) and con-

fess Christ, which leads to Salvation (Romans 10:9)

- We will know God and Jesus, which is Eternal Life (John 17:3)
- We will be one in Judgment with God, marking us as Saints (1 Corinthians 6:2)

But is all done? No, let's back up a bit.

## More

*And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches; and it shall be one tabernacle.* Exodus 26:6

God has asked us in our families to be one with the same terminology used in joining curtains to make one tabernacle.

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.* Genesis 2:30

We honor this in a family by adopting a common last name. (Just as we take Christ's name upon us at baptism.) So Michael covenants with God and Julia, and we know them as the Jordisons. Two individuals who become joined as one, by the taches of the Holy Spirit, caring for each other despite outside distractions, choosing to consider their union as being a part of something greater than either part, co-creating and raising children with God and giving them their brand name and securing their childrens spiritual, physical, and emotional nourishment.

The family is a type and shadow that teaches us how to become one with God. Our connection to God, darned by Jesus, and tached by the Holy Spirit in turn makes it possible to connect as individuals within a family. The family held together as one, gives us a glimpse of how we are to relate to God.

Many families today have dysfunctional taches, but then many relationships with God are also dysfunctional, as individuals chase distractions. It takes a committment to our covenant, and change to ensure that our taches are maintained to pull this oneness thing off.

Your family is like an interwoven single curtain of the tabernacle. You can now say, as Joshua did:

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* Joshua 24:15

I would invite you to redefine yourself to include something bigger than yourself... I am us/we... include God, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. You can say "I am an integral part of a family that is knit together." This takes committment to a covenant of marriage, where it takes a weft and warp running at 90 degrees to each other to create the cloth -- like choosing an enemy to grow old with. Our children are tached to us with the golden taches of the Holy Spirit. They will leave and weave their own curtain, secured by the taches of the Holy Spirit. About 1/2 of this world has not been able to maintain their weave in marriage.

You can now also say, "I am like the tabernacle because I am a part of the we in God; I have taken the name of Christ upon me to repair my imperfections; I will keep his commands and remember the 'we' connection to God through the taches of the Holy Spirit.



Steven Smith

So, as we consider the becoming of one in families, like becoming one with God, we must expand our definition of self.

But ...is all done? No.

We are connected to God and family.

**There Is More**

God has asked us to become greater by expanding our definition of self beyond our connection to God, and our connection to the family. Do you have the guts to respond? How much more can we do? If my family is one, and I consider those in my family as important as myself using all my spiritual and physical resources to minister to their needs, and my family is attached by the golden taches of the Holy Spirit to God, what more can he ask of me.

*I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one.* Doctrine and Covenants 34:1b

God wants us to be one as believers. Just as we carry a brand name in the family, he sometimes talks of the church being the bride, and carrying his brand name of Christ. As believers, we sometimes think we have the answers, and separate from the apostates who think differently. We have become "the schizophrenic bride of Christ". (Sounds like a horror film.) We sometimes choose division rather than being one... and I mean really being one where we consider another believer as a family child.

Rob tells the story of the man marooned on a small island by himself for many years. At his rescue, the rescuers notice three buildings along the sandy beach.

They ask "What is the building in the center for?"

The answer..."That is where I live."

"So what is the building on the right for?"

"That is where I go to church."

"So what is the building on the left for?"

"That is where I used to go to

church."

I believe that the problem is that there are only two ways to come together as one. First, and the easiest for me, is that if everyone would only believe as I do, we could be one. (Of course, we cannot all believe as you do, because I refuse to agree with your stupid ideas.)

The second way, is if we all choose to agree with God. This takes commitment to discerning God's will. This takes great amounts of prayer, forgiveness, love, and interactive teaching.

**A Demonstration**

Talking of interactive teaching:

I need a strong volunteer. A volunteer is conscripted.

Can you break this stick? (The volunteer is handed a dead thin stick to demonstrate that indeed it can be broken).

Now I have a bundle of sticks that are tached together with duct tape. Can you break this? (The bundle has large and small sticks, with some green sticks in it, requiring more force than one person can muster.)

As long as we maintain the taches that hold the bundle together, which is greater than one individual easily broken stick, it will not be broken.

I would invite you to redefine yourself to include something bigger than yourself. You are attached by the taches of the Holy Spirit to God, your family, and all believers. You are a part of a connection in marriage with taches of the Holy Spirit, and you are identified with a family name. You are connected to God with the taches of the Holy Spirit through the covenant of baptism, and you bear Christ's name. You have your imperfections repaired to be like new by Christ, the artist who heals the broken heart without a blemish. You must maintain the taches in your life which comes by remembering Christ, and keeping his commandments. The "one" has taken on new demensions and strength.

So, as we consider the becoming of one in families and our church, and with God, we must expand our definition of self so I becomes "we" yet still remains "I". You are considered as im-

portant as I am, as we become one, and as I love others as I do myself.

But... is all done? No

**There Is Still More**

God wants us to expand the definition of self to include still others...But who is left? Hint:: He loves all his creation, and wants us to become one.

You mean he loves ISIS and wants us to join ISIS? No.

He wants us to become one with the world and not the evil that persists in the world. Now that we have expanded our concept of who we are, or I am this far, he requires more. We must use the strategies and skills learned in becoming one with Him, with our families, and with the church to bring the world to God and spread the taches to our enemies...our brethern who he made and loves, and is incomplete without.

*I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* DC 34:1b

I stated before that a covenant was needed. The covenant or promise to us if we take this to the world is called the Everlasting Covenant.

*And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all*

*the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.* Genesis 9:21-23

Today, I invite you to expand your definition of self to include God, allowing Jesus to repair you, attached by the tashes of the Holy Spirit. I want you to include all of your family in the definition of who you are. I want you to expand your forgiveness, prayers, love, and teaching to all believers. Then God wants you to reach out to that part of the world that you are in contact with, with the same love you have for your family, realizing that God made them to be your brothers and sisters and dem-

onstrate the taches of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, and there is one other advantage that I would like to tell you about. Some of you live in your past sins. They sometimes haunt your sleep at night. You may excuse them as beeing too small to mention, or justify your sin as not being as bad as anothers', or perhaps you're so good you are entitled to a little sin because of your covenants or adherence to other promises, or sometimes tou feel your sin is too great for God to forgive. Whatever the excuse for not repenting, that sin and its memory, will make your life Hell.

Think of the tabernacle, made of curtains, attached to God with the tashes of the Holy Spirit. God wants a tabernacle without blemish, that is not going to tear apart in a wind. You see that

allowing Christ to fix the blemish, is in God's interest and greater plan to create a perfect tabernacle... it is not about you...it is about the redefined you or we and his plan to use only the best material.

You can do it. Repent. Redefine yourself. You can keep the covenant you made in the Lord's Supper today. He will take away your imperfections, and darn the holes perfectly, so you are good as new. You need no longer own your sin. Give it up. Today, he will replace your rusty taches with the golden tashes of the Holy Spirit, if you promise....and I mean not flip flop, but truly promise....to keep his commands, and remember him.

Is all done?

# JUST DO IT!

**Elder Michael Jordison  
Lamoni, Iowa  
October 11, 2015**

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I'd like to share a couple of scriptures this morning. The first one comes from the Book of Moroni and it's one that I think I've probably shared several times in the past. It comes from the 7th chapter starting at verse 47 if you'd like to read along with me. *Behold I say unto you, that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal; and this because of your faith in him according to the promise; Wherefore, if a man have faith, he must needs have hope; for without faith there can not be any hope. And again, behold I say unto you, that he can not have faith and hope, save he shall be meek and lowly of heart; if so, his faith and hope are vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly of heart; And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity, he is nothing; where-*

*fore he must needs have charity. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son Jesus Christ, that ye may become the sons of God, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is, that we may have this hope, that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.* (47-53)

The second scripture that I'd like to read comes from Doctrine & Covenants 85:38. *See that ye love one another; cease*

*to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires; cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated; and above all things, clothe yourselves with the bonds of charity, as with a mantle, which is a bond of perfectness and peace; pray always, that you may not faint until I come; behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen.*

I want you to be able to hear what the Lord has to share this morning. I know that whatever I say today is not going to be adequate. It's probably not going to be the way that I would intend for it to come out because I like everything to be perfect, spot on. But the important thing here today is that we are able to hear the Lord and that He is able to speak to us regardless of what I or anyone else might have to share with you this morning.

I'm going to share with you this morning about love. I believe it was Joel



Loving who said recently in one of his sermons, and I might be paraphrasing here, "Your ability to love others is determined by how much you love God." Your ability to love others is determined by how much you love God. If we don't love God very much then we can't love others very much. And conversely if we love God a lot, then it would stand to reason that we would be better capable of loving others a lot. But I think that really this doesn't have so much to do with a quantity of love, whether a little or a lot, - but the quality or the type of love.

From what I recall Joel was referring to the Greek form of love, 'Agape', or 'unconditional love'. If I have learned anything from my study of the scriptures and through my own experience with the Spirit, God is a stickler when it comes to words and their precise meanings. In fact if you look at a study of the Hebrew language from ancient texts and also the Book of Mormon itself you'll find that this is true. God uses precise words and He means exactly what He says. Zephaniah 3:9 and Genesis 6:6 also tell us that God has a pure language for His people. When God speaks, not only is it important to understand the context that it is given in, but it is important to understand what He means when He uses the words like "love".

You can study this out for yourself, but if you'll look at the parable of the sower in chapter 4 of Mark you'll find that Jesus, in speaking to His disciples, admonishes them that the parable of the sower is the key to understanding all the other parables. Let me read Mark 4:1-12 to you. *And he began again to teach by the sea-side; and there was gathered unto him a great multitude; so that he entered into a ship and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables. [OK Jesus taught by parables. We know that.] And he said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow; And it came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun*

*was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it; and it yielded no fruit. And other seed fell on good ground, and did yield fruit, that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty-fold, and some sixty and some an hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone with the twelve, [This is the key right here. He was speaking to the multitude.] and they that believed in him, they that were about him with the twelve, asked of him the parable. [He was off to the side with the ones that were REALLY interested.] And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables; [Did you catch that? Those that went to Him were those that were truly interested in understanding His teachings.] That seeing, they may see and not perceive; and hearing, they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. [If I could paraphrase this, basically I think what's He's saying here is that He's wasting His time on the people that aren't really interested in understanding this parable. He was saying that He was condemning them if He shared truths with them that they weren't ready for. That's true for us today. Then He continued.] And he said unto them, [those that were with Him now.] Know ye not this parable? [He's just shared this parable with them and now they are off to the side asking Him about it. They just didn't understand even though they had been with Him a long time listening to His teachings. He wondered why they didn't understand the parable.] And how then will ye know all parables? What He's saying here is this parable is the key to understanding all the other parables. If we go back and look through the Gospels we find that His parables teach us about the Kingdom of God. His parables are there to teach about the Kingdom of God.*

He follows that up with the sower sows the "word" of God. We've all heard this parable a hundred times haven't we? And based on the condition of the

heart of the one who hears and receives the word, the word is either nourished and eventually understood, or it is taken lightly and eventually rejected. In this parable if you recall there are four different responses to the seed being sown, four different responses to the word of God.

But this story, or parable, is more than just an illustration of how people can respond to the word of God. The real importance of the story is that it shows us that it is how we receive the word of God that is key in our development. How we receive the word of God is key to us understanding the Kingdom of God and being able to do anything about it, whether to be a part of it, to be in it, to know about it, to be able to share it.

Jesus could speak to us today. He could be standing up here and sharing with us but until our hearts are prepared to hear and to understand it would mean nothing to us and would not affect any change within our being. How we receive something is tied to our understanding and how we understand something is tied to the purity of the community between the giver and the receiver.

I think we're all familiar with the phrase, "talking apples to apples" or "apples to oranges", when discussing our ability or inability to communicate with others. Unless both parties in a conversation are using the same words, and the same definitions of those words then they really can't communicate.

Shortly after college I was visiting with another former Graceland student. We were on a car trip and had an opportunity to share at length about the gospel. We shared about the church and our beliefs and our thoughts. After we spoke at length, I came to the realization that this individual didn't believe in God. Even in our conversation he was using words and expressions as though he believed in God. We were using the same language and the same terms. So while we were visiting there was this "aha!" moment like wait a minute. We're talking but we're not really talking about the same thing.

I don't know if you've experienced

that but I'm sure we all have especially maybe when we're talking to our spouses. There comes a moment when we realize we're not even talking about the same thing. I had that moment with this individual and I said to him, "You don't believe in God, do you?" And I remember this half smirk - half smile coming across his face as he responded, "What makes up say that?" like he was surprised that this secret had been discovered by me and he didn't want me to know.

Honestly, this was the first time that I had become aware of subtlety and deceit from someone in the church and it really took me by surprise. I'm sure there have been a lot of people who said they believed in God and they didn't that I've talked to but this was the first time that I had ever realized it. What's interesting is that later on this individual went on to become very high in the church in Europe. I don't understand that.

Had our conversation been brief and left on a fairly superficial level, I would have had no idea of his real convictions and would have thought that he was a deeply religious individual in the true gospel of Jesus Christ. So I asked myself how does someone like that attain such a position of power in the organization, in the institutional church. I think the answer is found in the parable of the sower.

Our communication is dependent on our understanding of the words that we use. Unfortunately, as far as I know, God has not restored His pure language to us yet as is mentioned in Zephaniah and Genesis. Therefore when we speak and when we communicate we receive the word according to our definitions, according to our language. There were four responses to the word of God in the parable of the sower and I believe there are four definitions - or levels of understanding - that we can apply to the words that we use in communication. These levels of understanding determine how we receive the words that we are given.

Joel, I don't remember if you talked about this in your sermon but the ancient Greeks had six words with six different meanings for our English word,

'love' that we use today. The Greeks used agape, eros, philia, pragma, ludus, and philautia. Each one of those words carries with it a different understanding of relational affection. But when a man and a woman are having a conversation and they each say, "I love you", but he means, "I eros you" (I really like and love you and feel that you are way more than just a friend) and she means, "I philia you" (I value our friendship), you can easily see how he might get the wrong impression based on her words alone. They are both saying "I love you" but he's meaning a deeper greater level than she is expressing back to him.

If I had an orange up here and called it an apple and you told me how much you loved apples I might decide to make you an "apple" pie. How surprised are you going to be when you bite into that slice of apple pie and find out there are oranges in it. Was there a problem with our communication? We sure didn't think so. I used English and you used English and we both thought we knew what apple pie was.

These illustrations are meant to emphasize the importance of understanding in our communication - whether that communication is what we are reading in the scriptures, what we are hearing in a sermon, what we are discussing in conversation, or what we hear through a prophecy or by the Spirit. Going back to the parable of the sower, if we are to understand "the mystery of the kingdom of God" we must receive the word of God using the definitions that God gives. Otherwise the parable teaches we will have no lasting fruit. It will be of no lasting value to us.

Going back to the thought that your ability to love others is determined by how much you love God, if we add the word 'unconditional' to this then how does it change it in your mind? And not to convolute things too much I could ask you, what does the word 'unconditional' mean in your mind? We could even tie different meanings to that word.

I dare say that there are some who might argue that unconditional love does have conditions. My point is not to argue and parse terms with yours, mine

or Noah Webster's opinions. My point is that God, who created language in the first place and has a pure language, is the one in whom we should look for understanding. When we study and use the word "love" then really to have effective communication about love and what it means we must look to God for the meaning. The scriptures are the word of God. If the sower spreads the word of God, then the word of God that is sown should be just that - the word of God, His word - with all of His understanding and connotations and definitions. The word of God is His word. It is not our word.

Again from the book of Mark, *Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables; That seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may not hear and not understand...* [Mark 4:10-11] "Them that are without" are those who do not receive the word of God with all readiness of mind. They are those of us who read the scriptures but don't seek to understand them. I have been guilty of that on many occasions.



Michael Jordison



Receiving with all readiness of mind is more than just looking up the definitions of the unfamiliar words. I've read a lot of scripture and seen a lot of unfamiliar words and not even bothered to look up the definitions. Receiving it is more than just looking up those definitions and understanding what it means. It is more than learning the context in which the scripture was given to try to understand in the setting that it was provided. It is more than knowing the cultural customs of the time when something is given or stated. These are all very important parts of understanding the words of God. But the primary and most important aspect to receive the word of God is being prepared to understand God on His level. It is being able to understand what God means when He speaks - it is the ability to truly communicate with Him.

John wrote, "for God is love." What does that mean to you? God is love. God commanded Moses to write, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." What does that mean to you? If we are to love God, and God is love, using the English language if we interchange the word "love" with "God" then we are in essence being commanded to God God. What does that mean to you? We have to understand what we are talking about. To understand the scriptures, to understand the prophets requires that we are brought UP to God's level.

When I think of where I am - my level and I think of where God is - His level, I know that there is absolutely no comparison between the two. I think how in the world am I going to be able to communicate? How are we ever going to be able to speak with each other because there is just too much of a difference in who He is and who I am. In fact He even said, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* [Isaiah 55:8-9]

How many times has God had to "spell it out" for us? How many times has He had to make things plain for us

to see and understand, because we have complicated them? God comes down to our level because of His compassion for us because of His desire to communicate with us and to make us understand. The point of His coming down to our level is not so that we remain there. He comes to our level to establish a basis for understanding. When God has our attention - because we are able to communicate with Him in our limited capacity - His desire is to pull us UP to His level so that we can begin to see and perceive and hear and understand His truths as He has given them from the foundation of the world. He begins where we are and then takes us to a higher plane.

**T**o understand God, to be able to love God, to be able to receive the word of God with all readiness begins with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ -- God in the flesh -- came to Earth for one reason. What was that reason? He came to die. Paul in the book of Hebrews says, *But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the victim. For a covenant is of force after the victim is dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the victim liveth.* [Hebrews 9:11-17]

Jesus came to establish the Covenant between God and mankind and that covenant cannot be forced unless there is death. At the very heart of this covenant is selfless - unconditional

love. This is the "agape" love that Joel spoke to us about. When God uses the word love, this is what He means: being selfless - preferring others unconditionally. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...* [John 3:16] *A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* [John 13:34] This is also backed up in the Book of Mormon. *Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever;...* [Moroni 7:52] The modern English word 'charity' is derived from the Latin, 'caritas', which is a translation from the Greek 'agape'. Charity is unconditional selfless love, the love of Jesus Christ. Our ability to love others is determined by our ability to understand God's love.

I'm going to step to my geeky side for a little bit and borrow from Star Wars. Luke Skywalker is the hero. He comes to the planet Dagobah to learn the art of becoming a Jedi, a kind of mystical soldier. He lands his ship in a swamp, where it promptly sinks down into the water. His teacher, the Jedi Master, Yoda, was training him to use the mystical energy force, called the "Force". At one moment in the movie after training for a long time, Luke was told to raise the submerged starship from the swamp using only the Force. His reply was something like, "I'll give it a try", and Yoda yelled out, "No, there is no try. Do or do not!" Luke attempted to raise the ship but only managed to cause it to sink further into the bog, completely under the water. Defeated, he looked at his disappointed Master and said, "You ask the impossible", sulking away.

It is then that the Jedi Master, with his heart heavy and hopes for the young learner crushed, uses his mastery of the Force and lifts the ship out of the swamp and sets it down on dry land. Luke, amazed at what was just done by this small and seemingly unassuming teacher, runs over and exclaims, "I don't believe it!" Yoda hangs his head and turns away and simply says, "That is why you fail".

To love, as God loves, cannot be

done in partiality. We cannot "try" to love in any lasting sense. We either love or we do not love using God's definition. And if we say that we love God - then we cannot really LOVE God if we're using our own definition or a conditional love. Anything less than God's love is not really love at all. God only receives the kind of love that He gives - selfless and unconditional.

Ask yourself, do you love God unconditionally? Is your love for Him done without thought for yourself? Are you willing to subject yourself to whatever God has in store for you - no matter how difficult or hard it may be? This is selfless love. This is the love of Christ to do the greater good for another when it appears that it will cost you everything.

This is the basis for our understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will either learn this basic understanding of love now and use it to build Zion, or we will have to learn it in the Prison House after we die because there will be no dwelling with God until we can learn to love God on His terms and according to His precepts.

All of the Gospel is wrapped up in the sacrifice of Jesus. The foundational Principles of the Gospel - Faith, Repentance, Baptism, Laying on of Hands, Resurrection, Eternal Judgement (and some would add Come Unto Me as the 7th principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ) are ONLY understood in their proper context and meaning according to the scriptures and word of God.

To understand Faith and Repentance as God intends requires that we understand how God loves. To under-

stand authority and the gifts of the Spirit requires that we understand how God loves. To understand Life after Death and our being with God in eternity requires that we understand how God loves. To keep our covenants with God as we promise to do every first Sunday of the month requires that we understand how God loves.

If we are going to claim a greater understanding as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as members of a church that uses three books of scripture instead of one. If we are going to make that claim we are going to have to understand and be able to love as God intends. After we understand how God loves, after we open up ourselves to be able to receive His Spirit and understand His teachings on His level then all we can do is "Do It!" All we can do is to do it.

**M**ost of you know that Isabel, Elyse, Samuel and I did a Tough Mudder in Columbia, MO yesterday. It was a little over ten miles of running up and down hills and pastures and climbing over obstacles and going down through mud bogs and climbing over walls. There was quite a bit involved. I know Julia was concerned about her children surviving it. I think Isabel was pretty concerned too for her own welfare. There was this one event, King of the Swingers, where you had to climb this platform about 15 feet or so off the ground with a pool of muddy water below. They had a bar that was out about feve feet from the edge of the platform where you had to jump out and grab this bar, then swing down and

back up 12 feet or so then let go and ring this bell hung out in mid air. Then you fell 15 feet down into the muddy water.

Isabel wasn't going to do it but she saw her Dad up there who had already done it twice and she came up and against her better judgment went out on the platform. I could see the fear in her eyes as she climbed up. I knew she was scared but she did it. Afterwards, I don't remember exactly the words that she said but something on the lines of that as she listened to the guy in charge who said "3 2 1 GO". She said that she knew if she was going to do it she just had to go for it when he said GO or otherwise she would chicken out. So, she just did it.

So if I could sum up everything that I wanted to share with you this morning, we have to understand God on His terms. The beginning of understanding anything about building the Kingdom, anything about building Zion, about establishing a Storehouse, about reaching out to our youth, about reaching out to those who are sick, those who are in need begins with understanding the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When God talks about love that is what He is talking about and He wants us to begin to see to understand according to that eternal sacrifice of Jesus because then we can begin to branch out and we can relate to each other.

We can begin to speak to people on their level, to find commonality, to find common ground and understanding and then raise up to God's level. That's where we want to be as a people.

So get out there and just Do It!



Young people providing music ministry in the past month included, left: Josh and Isabel Jordison.



Right, Eli, Esther and Millie Cornish.





# IN PURSUIT OF ANOTHER JOSEPH

**Elder Tony Crandell**  
Lamoni, Iowa  
October 18, 2015

I want to speak from Galatians 6:11-17. This is Paul speaking. He says, *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.* (Paul had a scribe but at this particular time he is writing it himself.) *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

You notice in the bulletin I titled my talk this morning "In Pursuit of Another Joseph." As I have said many times before, my sermons are about the doctrinal questions I personally don't entirely understand. The sermon preparation causes me to seek out answers to my own questions. How can I instruct you when I still have doctrinal question of my own? It's just phenomenal how things comes together.

I am going to talk about some of the things Jim (Major) talked about in class. Peter (Cornish) gave the heart of my sermon in class also. All I need to do is say "Amen" because you're going to hear what he said again.

I was listening to the electronic

church the other morning on the way to Des Moines and the word circumcision caught my ear. Circumcision is not normally a topic that we discuss in detail. We know it is specific to the instructions to the Jews in the Old Testament but how important is it today? It is still practiced today by some but I believe the popularity has diminished greatly unless you are a Catholic or a Jew. It's not as popular as it used to be for different reasons.

I want to go back and read just three verses out of Genesis Chapter 17:9-11 so you have an idea from whence circumcision came. *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*

Already you're saying ok, Tony, where on earth are you going with this topic? Paul said in my scripture reading this rite was not important any longer and then he went down another road with his topic. I left him at that point but I did remember that Paul circumcised Timothy only so his ministry would be effective among the Jews. Yet Paul resisted performing the same procedure on Titus and making it a requirement for the Galatians.

I began to muse as I drove along about his comment on why the Jews visiting from Jerusalem were so adamant about the practice. Let me go back to Galatians 6:13 *For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.* These were zealous Christians from Jerusalem, missionaries if you will, who came to visit

after Paul had left the Galatians. To them the more important thing about their teaching was that they aligned the Galatians with the traditional Jewish rite. That was the most important thing.

If they could go back to Jerusalem and say that they had accomplished that their mission would have been successful. Paul as you will see will disagree with that as we read in the scriptures.

In the discussion here Paul talks about three different approaches to salvation. He doesn't talk about it in Galatians but in various parts of his letters. The first example of salvation is the one with the young rich ruler. He came to Christ and said that he had done everything he could to obey the law and the Lord said except one thing. You need to give all that you have to the poor. He couldn't go that extra step. The young ruler tried to do all that he could do to live up to the law, but Jesus told him as commendable as that was it would not be enough. You see the law only condemns and convicts. There is no salvation in the law. It is almost like an idol. It is cold and without spirit. No one except Christ can live up to the law 100 percent.

That first approach to salvation I call the personal approach and the testimony is what can I do or what have I done for Jesus and not what has Jesus done for me. The young ruler was quick to tell Christ of his personal accomplishments. He was asking Christ to recognize his sacrifice of sin. Up to that point that is all he had sacrificed. He had sacrificed sin and he wanted Christ to recognize his effort to keep the law. So, in effect, the ruler was asking for recognition (glory) for his effort. He was not edifying Christ. He was edifying himself. Ok that was the first approach.



The second approach is the church will take care of my salvation. The visiting Jews from Jerusalem in Chapter 6 of Galatians would have been satisfied to go back to Jerusalem and report that the Galatians had complied with the law and therefore would be saved or maybe at least be Christians in good standing. That thought caused me to reflect on my heritage and historical belief about salvation.

I remember reading and hearing that I just needed to be patient until Joseph would come again. That's why I entitled my talk "In Pursuit of Another Joseph." I asked Sandra last night as I was finishing this up to go find the scripture in the Book of Mormon that talks about this. It's not there. We looked. We called people. I was a victim of traditional doctrine, doctrine that I learned back in the old church in Boone. I never researched it but I was a victim of traditional doctrine. I'm going to talk more about that in a little bit. I remember hearing that I just needed to be patient. If I would just follow the teachings of the "church," my salvation would be secure. Joseph would lead all to salvation.

Due to my lack of study and understanding of the scriptures and as a neophyte in the scriptures, I thought that Joseph the son of Joseph was yet to come and would lead us to or at least prepare us for Zion. That mystical Joseph, oh he was going to be my salvation! I would direct your attention to II Nephi Chapter 2:7-17. I was doing a little research last night I found where I think the train probably ran off the track.

Latter Day Saints, this is from the commentary by our church, believe that this refers to the prophet and seer Joseph Smith Jr. Note that he was referring to Lehi's descendants . . . *a knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers.* (II Nephi 2:12) Also, that he should devote himself fully to the work which the Lord had commanded. Now this was in response to the 11th verse of chapter 2 where he says, Joseph truly said, *Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins.* In

our research that was as close as I could find and that's already happened so my quandary is I think Joseph has already come so I can discontinue my pursuit of another Joseph.

When I discussed leaving my previous church, I can't begin to tell you how many folks told me that they could never and would never, ever leave the "church." I believe they honestly believed the church organization and maybe to some degree the physical church building was, or would ultimately lead to their salvation.

That caused me to think, I wonder how many people are basing their salvation on a "branch of the restoration," hanging on to that branch as an organization which somehow, mystically will bring about their personal salvation.

Oh! How many of us are victims of traditional doctrine and not scriptural doctrine? It has been a real eye-opener for Sandra and me who travel to many different denominations and congregations that we visit to hear various quartets singing. The greatest percentage never ask what denomination we are.

There are a few, very few that do get that worried look as they automatically think we are Mormons. The name Community of Christ confused a lot of folks who assumed we were a non-denominational community church. When I knew that I was not going to have time to fully explain from whence I came or it was not a place conducive to a lengthy discussion I sometimes jokingly just say, "It was part of the Ebenezer Fellowship Nondenominational Baptical Free Will Church. That name basically encompasses all of their denominations. Other than giving me a strange look they go on to another topic.

I am not ashamed of my church. Don't get me wrong but unless you have the time and setting, I believe you only confuse folks with just the name. Isn't it interesting that to a lot of people just the name of your denomination is indicative of the chances of your salvation in their minds?

It wasn't hard leaving my church when it ran off the track as I believe it did. It was very difficult leaving the peo-

ple in the congregation and the memories that took place in those buildings. I still can't go home to Boone and not reminisce about memories that took place in the old Boone Church at 3rd and Marion streets when I drive by. But having said all that, it was very difficult to leave the people and the buildings.

It is extremely disheartening to think about all of the sacrificial living and sacrificial giving of the early founders of the original church and later the reorganization. This is somewhat like the first approach to salvation. What can we do for ourselves? This approach has become what can we do for the church? The churches today are so replete with programs and processes, and formalities that result in a subtle movement to nudge Christ out of the picture for the glory of the "church."

Now having said all of that, the "church" is somewhat like what Paul said about circumcision. Go back to verse 15 again. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Circumcision is not important. That instruction originally was for the Jews. It's still in their canons of scripture but for



Tony Crandell

the gentiles it was not important.

Any church program or process must be held up to the light with Galatians 6:15. I believe the peace and justice and social programs (albeit well meaning) are really just distractions in our personal relationship with Christ when held up to the light with Verse 15. Does peace and justice benefit Christ or is it for our benefit and relief?

Are we still getting hung up on the wrong issues; petty or legalistic restoration doctrinal beliefs? I pray that I personally will no longer become a slave to church programs and processes. It is so easy to get hung up on minute issues. But what matters is is Christ creating in us a new creature? Remember back in verse 15 Paul said circumcision was not important but we needed to become a new creature.

Are we different compared to before we were baptized? Are we different since we last took communion? Are we different since last Wednesday's prayer meeting? Are we different still since we came into the Master's house and presence this morning? Like the first approach, it's not what the "church" can do for Christ. It's what Christ has done and will do in and through the church.

This leads me to a third approach to salvation. The first was personal. The second was the church. Paul said it was not important what he had suffered for his zeal and belief, it was what Christ had done with Paul's life and spiritual understanding. Although he bore the physical marks of persecution for Christ, that was not important. Christ's sacrifice for us, and in that case for him, was what was important.

The third approach to our salvation is our personal relationship with Christ. This transcends the law, [Approach #1] and the "Church" [Approach #2]. This third approach I believe is the approach that is most important. It is our testimony of what Christ has done in and through us.

That is the single thing that I find remarkable about this restoration group here in Mount Ayr. You are quick and eager to testify about what Christ has done in your life, your work, your wit-

nessing. Many of you have become new creatures in Christ. He is foremost and centered in your daily actions and thoughts and deeds. I commend you for that! We are truly family here! Mount Ayr is different. Thank goodness. Thank God.

We must continually ask ourselves if the new creation is manifest in our personal life. Is it still dynamic? Is it still witnessing and causing us to reach out? In my mind, the new creation is the new vibrancy and capacity to love others and to be concerned about others as "manifested" in us by the Holy Spirit. That's why I think Mount Ayr is different. Your individual quest for the secrets of the process for salvation will never be successful. We must come as "little children" unto Christ and invite Him to take control of our destiny, our thoughts and our deeds.

I have always wondered about that phrase "little children" and I guess until you either have children, grandchildren, or are an elementary teacher, you can really never appreciate the innocence and faith of a child. They will hang on your every word with complete conviction and faith. Remember, I said little children. With the age of accountability, that all starts to change. Instead of faith, they question. Instead of wonderment, they scoff. Instead of belief and acceptance, they argue.

Our testimony should be what Christ has done for us on the cross. What Christ through the Holy Spirit is doing with and through us today. If our testimony is what we have done for God, then we are getting the glory. If our testimony is about what we do for each other, then we get the glory. If our life is about what Christ has done for us, then He is getting the glory. Paul says may I never boast. *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* Galatians 6:14

If the center of our interest is in our self-preservation/salvation, then we get the glory for our achievements. If our interest is in the church and its programs and processes, then the Church is getting the glory.

The term personal savior has become such a trite expression, so I will say it a little differently. If our interest in a personal relationship with Christ and His gospel, and our lives reflect that gospel-centered commitment, then Christ will be glorified. Our approach, our highest calling, our mission, our manifestation of the third approach is to show other people that through the Bible and our other scriptures, God has made Himself known to us.

Our calling is further to show people what God has said about Himself in these scriptures, and that turning to Him through Jesus Christ, people can find forgiveness from God and receive the power from God to live a new life in this world that is pleasing to God. Then, after they die, they will have everlasting life in His presence.

It is as simple as that. This is the gospel by which we are saved and by which we are taking our stand. May God give us the strength to understand it, and to live it, and to communicate it in every way possible to a lost and sinful world, all for the sake and glory of Jesus Christ.

Oh, by the way, am I still in pursuit of another Joseph? Well, yes, but if he is to yet come, I think I will find him without looking for him. He will be manifested to us in the Lord's due time. We will not have to search for him; he will search for us. For the short time I have left my emphasis will be the process of witnessing to others.

The timetable for Zion is very important. I believe in Zion. It's as real to me as it ever was but I can't let the mechanics of that process overwhelm my witnessing. The timetable for Zion is in the Lord's hand and it will come forth as He said. But my time here on earth is finite.

I have many more days behind me than in front of me. I need to be alert for the signs and for His call, but I need to spend less time pursuing Joseph and more time understanding and testifying of the gospel.

There's a southern gospel song by Mark Bishop that says, I'm no longer looking for the signs. I'm listening for

the call. I appreciate the opportunity to share this morning. Sometimes we get wrapped up in the actual details of the

processes and procedures but what is important is that two or three sentence statement of the gospel mentioned pre-

viously that we should be communicating to others.

# GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS

## Priest Rodney Bastow Mount Ayr, Iowa October 25, 2015

Rod Bastow read Philippians 4:4-7 as his scripture reading. *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be afflicted for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

When I first see that I'm scheduled to speak, I always wonder what I'm going to say. I have no idea and it scares me to death. When the three month schedule came out, I noticed that I was not only scheduled once but twice during that time. That really scared me. I couldn't do this if I didn't have the faith to believe that the Lord would provide.

I believe that the Lord has given me something to say today and that He will give me something to say in the future. I thank Him for that and give Him all the praise and the glory for that blessing.

It's going to seem a little odd today and I hope you don't get bored with this but Deb and I just took a trip to the Grand Canyon. We've talked a little bit about this to some of you but that's what I'm going to talk about this morning. You might not understand what that has to do with a church service or a sermon but to me it was a real spiritual experience.

First of all you need to know, I'm not a traveler. I don't like to travel. I

would just as soon stay home and look at the cows. That's just me. When I was about five years old the folks took us on a trip to Florida. I barfed twice and I haven't forgotten that feeling or experience. I really have trouble with motion sickness in cars, planes, etc. so I avoid traveling too much.

This last winter Deb's oldest brother Don suggested that we take a family trip. He wanted all of his brothers and sisters to go with him on a trip to the Grand Canyon. I thought that sounded like fun. I knew I couldn't do it but I really thought Debbie should do it. I couldn't do it because I knew I'd get sick along the way and who would take care of the cows? Thank God for those cows being there. They've saved me a lot of times. I just didn't see any way that I could go on this trip.

I knew Debbie really wanted to go. Debbie would really like to travel. She thought when we retired that is what we would be doing. She didn't think we would be taking care of a bunch of cows. I knew she really wanted to do this and I strongly encouraged her to go. I think she was going to even without me. That caused me to think about a couple of things.

First of all I was wondering how I would get along a week without Debbie. I would starve to death by the end of that time. That would not be a good situation. Then I kept seeing on Facebook that a lot of my friends and some of my relatives had gone to the Grand Canyon, and they were so excited about their trip. I started thinking that it would be nice to go see some rocks. I watch a lot of Westerns. All of them

seem to take place in the Grand Canyon or someplace like that.

I got to thinking that I would really like to go see a mountain. I had never seen one before in my life except for the ones out east and they really don't count because they don't compare to the Rockies. I don't know for sure that I ever did see a mountain on this trip but I saw some really TALL hills.

Part of this trip was to be on a train and I had never ridden a train. I thought that that would be fun. We were going to be over 24 hours on a train and I thought that would be neat. We could look out at the scenery as we traveled along.

That's two things I had never done before. I had never seen a mountain and I had never been on a train so I decided I might like to go. I talked it over with Debbie. She didn't get too carried away with my suggestion but decided that maybe we could go.

I had a boy working for me and I thought he could take care of the cows. He knows how to do all the chores because he's helped me out before. So we decided to go.

In May we had to make a down payment for the trip so we were really committed. We started getting information about the trip and getting excited about it. We read about this train in the information. Did you know that trains can be two-stories high? We were going to be in the top story. Did you know that in that one car on that top story there is only one bathroom? We were going to get on the train at 10:30 at night. Nine o'clock is Deb's bedtime. Eight-thirty recently has been my bedtime.



From say ten o'clock to about seven o'clock in the morning we make numerous trips to the bathroom. In our house the bathroom is right next to the bedroom which is very handy and works well. We were thinking that if there was just one bathroom on this train how would we find our way? We just kept worrying and worrying about that and thinking that it was going to be a problem. I didn't know how we were going to handle that.

This young man that had been helping me on the farm worked on my farm through a school program so by the end of school he was done working for me. He said he would keep working for me for the summer and keep giving me a couple of hours every day but that didn't happen. Once he got out of high school his Dad took over and he was just working for his Dad. I got concerned that he wouldn't be able to take care of the cows while we were gone on our trip. I kept asking him and he kept saying he could do that and it wouldn't be a problem.

Well when I started coaching football Tucker started coaching with me. You'd be surprised how much time that takes up. Right in the middle of the afternoon you quit whatever you're doing to go to football practice. You're there for an hour and a half or so. Not only did he do it in junior high he did it in high school so he was really busy.

Apparently I bragged on him too much because my nephew Colton who has a big operation down south here talked him into doing his chores for him. One day Tucker didn't get done choring until football practice and his Dad never did see him that day. I worried that he wouldn't be able to help me. I've got fall cows that are calving. I have cows that seem to like to go wherever they want to go this time of year. He assured me that he could do it so I decided I would just let him help me while we were gone.

Then fall cows started calving and we had three sets of twins which meant that I had three bottle babies. That takes extra time and I was worried that he couldn't do it. One of them needed surgery and I needed for him to take the cow in. I wanted to wean calves but

I decided that I hadn't better trust my luck with that. I should just let him do what was there to do at that time. I worried about it but left Tucker there to take charge of things.

That scripture I read before said, *The Lord is at hand. Be afflicted for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.* That's what I did. I prayed about the trip and had to have faith that God would take care of us and everything would be all right both with the trip and on the farm. That was my constant prayer.

Friday before we were to take off on Sunday, we went to a football game. One thing I got for coaching was a nice white jacket. I decided to wear that jacket to the game. It was a little chilly that night. Debbie wore a coat and was fairly warm but I was sitting there getting colder and colder. By the time I got home I was really chilling. I couldn't stop shivering and piled on blankets when I went to bed. I wasn't feeling too good. Then I started sweating. I got so hot. I thought I had a fever.

We had paid for the trip and hadn't taken out any trip insurance so I couldn't be getting sick. I prayed that the Lord would not let me get sick. Next morning I got up still feeling kind of shaky but by noon I was feeling better and I thought, 'Praise the Lord!' I am so glad that He answered my prayer on that one.

The Sunday that we left we were able to come to church which I thought was a good thing. We didn't have to leave until 4:30 p.m. so we could take it easy Sunday afternoon. We were going to try to get to Deb's sister's place an hour before the van was supposed to pick our group up. We were just about ready to leave and her sister called and said that the van was on its way. The van came and picked us up and took us to Omaha in time to have supper. Then the bus pulled in and we got on it and headed to Kansas City to Union Station to get on the train. Luckily we had been there once before so we kind of knew our way around. The trail pulled in and we got on. It was 10:30 p.m. at night and pitch

black.

Our accommodation on the train was a little roomette. They already had the beds made up. There's about 6-9 inches between the curtain or the wall and your bed. Debbie's bed was the lower bunk and my bed was the top bunk. I thought having my bed on the upper bunk would be a challenge. I wondered how I would get up there but I found some steps to help me get up in bed. There were these straps coming down in the bed area and I wondered why I would need those. I thought it must be in case you tossed and turned so you didn't fall out of the bed. I found out during the night why I needed those straps. You won't believe this but the bathroom was almost right next to our roomette. Wasn't that an answer to our prayer?

The train started going and we tried to sleep. It was way past our bedtime by now. We found out that trains rock back and forth, pick up speed going faster and faster and then slow down. Then the whistle blows louder and louder and then the train switches tracks. That's when I found out why I needed those straps because I would get shook from this side over to that side. Oh my gosh, my stomach was not going to take this very well. It started hurting. I'm thinking we're going to be on here for 24 hours. This is going to be a long, long trip on the train.

I found out it's harder to get down out of the bed then it was to get up in it. I almost had to step on Debbie to get down. Somehow I crawled down and found my way to the bathroom to try to get some relief. I prayed about it and it went away and I felt fine. Somehow we made it through the night even though I didn't sleep much.

We got up and had breakfast. On the train we could eat all we wanted because it was paid for. I thought maybe I shouldn't eat all I could so I just had some toast and eggs for that first breakfast because I wasn't sure where this food was going to go. I was really worried about that but it was fine.

We walked around the train and up to the observation car where we could watch the scenery. I found out that the

scenery in the west isn't anything like it is right here. For some reason they don't have grass out there. I think it's because they have red dirt instead of black dirt. They have a lot of little trees which weren't like anything I had ever seen. Once in a while you would see a herd of cows. You did see these big black mountain-type things, some rocks and mesas and buttes. I called them all sorts of names. It was nice.

One thing that made me curious was that along the railroad tracks every so often you would see what I would call a shack. There were people that lived in those shacks. I don't know how they survived because it didn't look like there was anything there for them to survive on. I asked a guy from Albuquerque what they did and how they lived but he didn't know. Apparently they survive but they did not appear to be living very well.

We finally got to our hotel. It was a big huge hotel. Sleeping in a real bed that was not rocking back and forth was great. Being able to take a shower and change clothes without being in front of everybody was really nice. I got a pretty good night's sleep.

The next morning we went to a big buffet breakfast. I loved it. I could eat all I wanted. They had a gift shop by the restaurant where we ate. I was looking through the gift shop because I wanted some kind of souvenir to take home to show that I had been at the Grand Canyon. I found these pocket knives. I like pocket knives and I found one that said "Rod" on it and I bought it. As I was walking around, I got to thinking. We were going to carry on our luggage when we flew home. We didn't want to have to check anything but I knew I was never going to be able to go through security with a knife in my pocket or in my carryon. I wondered if I should take it back to the gift shop and try to get my money back or should I hide it in somebody else's luggage? It was a concern and I worried about it for a little while and then decided that God would take care of it. It wouldn't be a problem. Instead of carrying on our luggage we would just check it. It was a good thing we decided to check our luggage be-

cause we had gotten travel mugs and I'd bought a metal bank. We also had some videos that we put in our luggage. We would never have made it through security with all those things in our carryon. I think maybe I was led to do what I did just so that we wouldn't carry on our luggage but check it.

After breakfast and seeing a wild west show we got on a train and headed to the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon and the hotel we had stayed in were two hours apart. I think it was so they could make me ride on another train. This train was a nice train and I liked it. I felt pretty good. We got to sit up in the observation car so we really got to see things well. We saw a lot of ponderosa pines which made me think of the TV show Bonanza. They had an entertainer even though we didn't really need one because I had gotten to know everyone in our travel group and I was doing a lot of the entertaining myself. He was really good. He sang songs that I could sing along with.

I really enjoyed the train trip to the Grand Canyon. When that train pulled up to the Grand Canyon it was like all my breath went right out of my body and that was just catching a glimpse. I had never seen anything so magnificent in all my life! When we finally got to see the Grand Canyon from the South Rim I had never seen anything so beautiful. It was just awesome, quite a sight to see.

The author of the hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth" had to have been looking at something like the Grand Canyon. All I could think was how beautiful the Grand Canyon was. All I could think of was how great and powerful our Lord must be to have created something like this. We had a geologist on the trip and others who said that the Grand Canyon was formed by erosion that has taken place over millions of years maybe even billions. I disagreed. God created this.

Another thing I thought was interesting that the guide said. Do you know what is at the top of the Grand Canyon? It's sedimentary rocks. Right? What you see that's so beautiful in the Grand Canyon is sandstone which is sedimen-

tary rock. Where do sedimentary rocks come from? They are rocks that are created by great pressure. They were once a seabed. So here we are up two or three miles above the bottom of the Grand Canyon and there are sedimentary rocks. We saw fossils and sea shells in amongst those rocks on the side up at the top of the canyon. How did that happen? How did we get sedimentary rock, how did we get seabed up here?

When I was younger Florence Irving taught the Book of Mormon to us. We came to this part in the Book of Mormon 3rd Nephi 4 chapter. She said that when Christ died there were three days of darkness here in the Americas and there were storms and earthquakes. The low places became high and the high places became low. I think that's what we were seeing. I never could understand that when she was teaching the Book of Mormon. Seeing that in person now I understood what that meant.

Here's the scripture where it says that. *And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had*



Rodney Bastow





been known in all the land; And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder; and there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land. And the city of Zarahemla did take fire; and the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof were drowned; And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city thereof, there became a great mountain; and there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward: for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempests, and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth; And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough, and many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shook till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate. (3rd Nephi 4:6-11) I think that's what happened. That's how we got the Grand Canyon.

That evening we stayed and watched the sunset before going to our hotel. You've never seen anything so majestic as watching the sun go down and the shadows falling onto the walls of the canyon. There were lots of people there but it got quiet and you could feel the Spirit and a closeness with our Heavenly Father.

I was sitting between Debbie and Diane on a bench and Diane got a call from her daughter saying that their computer had been hacked. I don't normally do this but I could tell that Diane was concerned so when she sat down I took her hand and Debbie's and said a prayer out loud right then that everything would be OK and that she could be at peace and know that God would take care of it.

The next morning Debbie and I got up to see the sunrise. We didn't quite make it but we got close. There weren't

many people out, which was really nice. We started around the trail on the other side of the canyon. We hadn't gotten very far and here came some deer coming up out of the canyon just walking right beside us. They didn't care if we were there. We saw a sign WORSHIP SERVICES at 7 o'clock. It still amazes me that if you go to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon at 7 o'clock there will be a worship service.

As we went on around we saw an altar that had been built that looked down on the canyon. You could sit there and watch the sunrise and think about the Lord. It was so neat and such a great experience. It amazed me that this is a National Park and we have a sign there saying Worship Service. Things aren't so bad are they?

We spent two days at the top of the canyon. I loved it. Just looking out at it and taking pictures. I probably have hundreds of pictures of the same thing. I look at these pictures and they are basically all the same. Then we did something a little different. On the third day we took a van, which they called a jeep, down to the bottom of the canyon to the Colorado River. We got to wade in the river which was a neat experience. You're down in the river looking up and you are not seeing the Grand Canyon. You are not seeing the walls of the canyon. You are in a gorge. What you can see is just part of the gorge.

The canyon is on up there. What is amazing is that the road that we took was barely passable. We went slowly and it was still rough. The guide said that last year when they took this trip down to the bottom the road was up here so the land is constantly changing.

**W**hen I saw the Colorado River I got that same feeling again because it was rapids. It was really moving but yet a ways a way was a calm spot where we could go wading. I wondered how God did that. That was a neat experience too. If you get a chance hike down to the bottom of the canyon and look back up to see what it looks like.

We got to the final day and took a two hour drive to Phoenix which was kind of fun too. I'd never seen big cac-

tuses. In fact we saw four or five different cactuses. We stopped at one rest stop and looked over the valley. It was really pretty but there was a sign that said Dangerous Snakes.

We got to the airport in Phoenix and got ready to get on our plane to go home. Of course, we're not used to flying in planes and don't know the procedures or where to go and what to do. We tried to stay with the group. When we got to where we would get our boarding passes and check in our luggage Don's wife Betty wasn't there. She had somehow gotten separated from the group and we didn't know where she was.

Betty is kind of a unique character. She's not the type that you could miss in a crowd. We got ahold of her and got her back to the group and everything was good again. We got our boarding passes, checked in our luggage and went through security. We noticed an older couple had been pulled aside when they went through security because they had water bottles that they were going to carry on. I didn't know that you couldn't do that. If it had not been for buying that knife and deciding to check our luggage we would have had something similar happen to us.

When it got close to the time we were to leave we heard, 'Attention Flight 301, your flight has been delayed until we can find a pilot. We've called one at home and he should be here in an hour or so. Oh, wait! Here's one in the lounge here that can fly the plane. Just give him ten minutes and he'll be here.' We got loaded on this big plane and I sat in the middle seat and let Debbie have the window seat because I was afraid I would have problems with my motion sickness. It was starting to rain about that time and when the plane took off once again the old stomach started acting up.

I was afraid if I needed to go to the bathroom that it was probably already crowded. They served us some little chips and some 7-Up. I was afraid to try it but I did decide to have some chips and a little bit of 7-Up. It was like an answer to a prayer how my stomach settled down. When Debbie got up to go to the bathroom I took her place at the



window. The scenery from the plane was just amazing. Looking down from above the clouds was just an experience that I really enjoyed. Then when we got to where we could see the land and where they had irrigated it was just awesome.

This amazed me too. It took us 24 hours to get there by train. It took us two hours to go by bus to Phoenix and the flight home took two hours. We flew all the way from Phoenix to Omaha in two hours. It's amazing and I think that flying is the only way to go.

The whole time we were gone, five days, I only got two calls. One call was from a guy who had built this pond over here and he was wondering if the government had come through with any money for him yet. Another one was from the wrestling coach wondering about starting practice. Normally I can't get away for a weekend. 'Rod, your cows are out. Rod, you have a dead cow over here. Rod, they're going to combine your beans today.' Nothing like that happened while we were gone.

I had one fall calf born which is probably the last one of the season and it was fine. There were times when Tucker couldn't do the chores but he got someone else to do them and everything was well taken care of. Isn't God good? Isn't that great how He took care of me and answered those prayers?

I will say this about the people in our group. I'm normally a very shy person. I know that's hard for some of you to believe. Until I really get to know someone it's hard for me to talk to them. I've always been like that. It wasn't that

way on the trip. We had one couple that we adopted right in. They were practically like family. Every time we went to eat they went with us. Of course, it helped that I had Deb's brother and sister with us too. It was just like we were family.

I really enjoyed the trip. I'm really glad I went. I thank God for being with us and I thank Him for answering our prayers. Deb's sister Diane asked me if anything on the trip had inspired my sermon. Won't she be surprised.

After I got home I was looking at some pictures. I was looking at the pictures on Facebook that Betty had posted and some others. I saw one. It wasn't one of our pictures but it was a sunset out here at the lake and it was so beautiful. It dawned on me that you don't have to go to the Grand Canyon to see God's beauty. You don't have to go there to feel His presence. You just have to take the time to look around you and take the time to feel it.

I have a lot of times when I have 'Thank you, Jesus' moments. I just have to remember what He has done for me and what He can do. There's a song by George Strait called I Saw God Today. The chorus says, I've been to church, I've read the book I know He's here but I don't look Near as often as I should .. yeah I know I should.

His fingerprints are everywhere I just slowed down to stop and stare Opened my eyes and man I swear I saw God today.

George almost had us sing Hymn 172

## Efforts to help needy

Instead of our regular monthly food drive, we will be helping families for Thanksgiving through the MATURA Neighborhood Center this November.

This year there are several options for preparing these boxes.

Persons can purchase food items and prepare bags as done in previous years, bringing the bags to the center.

Grocery stores in Mount Ayr will have bags assembled for people to purchase and take to their churches for a blessings and then will be delivered to

the Center. HyVee plans to have a display in the store.

For \$10, you can purchase a bag of the food to be prepared and delivered by the store. The person purchasing the bag then signs a paper tag/turkey which will be posted in the store.

The food purchases as the grocery store can be made from November 1 - 14. Then those taking their bags to their churches can have them offered on Nov. 15. All items bags/boxes need to be taken to the Center the week of November 16th, so the Center will know how many

called "God Who Touchest Earth With Beauty." Listen to these words.

God, who touchest earth with beauty, Make my heart anew; With thy Spirit recreate me, Pure and strong and true.

Like thy springs and running waters Make me crystal pure; Like thy rocks of towering grandeur Make me strong and sure.

Like thy dancing waves in sunlight Make me glad and free; Like the straightness of the pine trees Let me upright be.

Like the arching of the heavens Lift my thoughts above; Turn my dreams to noble action-Ministries of love.

God, who touchest earth with beauty, Make my heart anew; Keep me ever, by thy Spirit, Pure and strong and true.

I thought that kind of fit in. Back to Philippians again, *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.* (Philippians 4:8-9)



it has to distribute.

Operation Christmas Child is coming right up too. Collection week is November 16-23. It is so much easier to start early to collect items and pack your boxes. I will have boxes available at church. Here is the web site for ideas and directions for preparing the boxes that bring such joy to children around the world. <http://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/>. Items do not necessarily need to be Christmas items, since the boxes are distributed throughout the year.





### Annual Hayride

The annual hayride was held at the farm of Jim and Linda Barber near Bethany, MO again this year. Jim took everyone for a ride on a hay wagon behind his tractor, people played yard games and visited, a cookout was served and the evening ended with a campfire. An added bonus was that people had the chance to tour Jim and Linda's new home under construction at the farm.



# November 2015 Schedule

Date	Nov. 1	Nov. 8	Nov. 15	Nov. 22	Nov. 29	6-Dec-15
Speaking	Steve Smith	Ed Anderson	Alan Smith	Rob Rolfe	Song Service	Sherm Phipps
Presiding	Sherm Phipps	Jim Barber	Rodney Bastow	Ed Anderson	Tony Crandell	Michael Jordison
Pianist	Cheryl Phipps	Bonnie Major	Cheryl Phipps	Bonnie Major	Bonnie Major	Cheryl Phipps
Special Music	Alan Smith	Steve Smith	Diane Anderson	Michael Jordison		Sue Beck
Family Devotions	Jim Major	Joel Loving	Alan Smith	Tony Crandell	Rob Rolfe	Rodney Bastow
Greeters	Rodney Bastow	Jim Major	George Knotts	Michael Jordison	Jim Barber	Joel Loving
Custodians	Sherman Phipps	Alan Smith	Michael Jordison	Joel Loving	Rowland family	Gordon Winkler
Sunday Evening	Ron Smith	Joel Loving	Bob Rowland	Steve Smith	Ron Smith	Rowlands
Wed. Prayer Svc.	11/4/2015	11/11/2015	11/18/2015	11/25/2015	12/2/2015	
Location	Bob Rowland	Steve Smith	Ron Smith	Rowlands	Ron Smith	
Presiding	Ed Anderson	Ron Smith	George Knotts	Steve Smith	Alan Smith	

#### Special Events

- November 1st Potluck following communion
- November 14th Men's Saturday morning fellowship
- November 22nd Thanksgiving Dinner following service
- December 6th Potluck following communion
- Priesthood Meeting at church - 8:30 AM
- Priesthood Meeting at church - 8:30 AM



NOVEMBER  
Happy Birthday to Jim Barber (6), Joshua Jordison (10), Yvonne Galusha (13), Alan Smith (14), Samuel Jordison (20), Doug Calford (20), and any others we missed.



NOVEMBER  
Happy Anniversary to any one we missed.

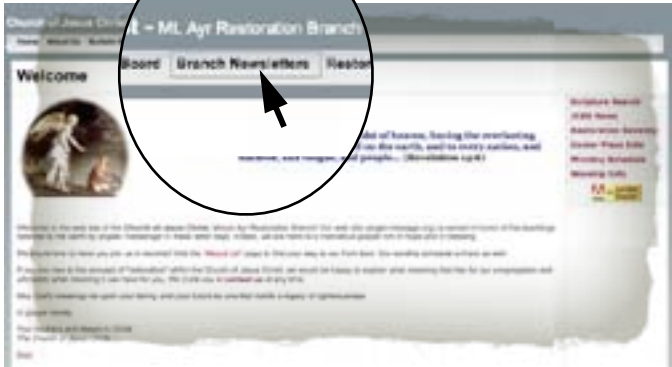




### Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps  
15581 270th St  
Lamoni, IA 50140

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[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)



### CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)*

## MORE NEWS AND NOTES

### Fall JCRB Conference

National Joint Conference of Restoration Branches conference was held October 15-18 in Independence, MO.

Focus of the conference was how to minister to youth and young adults to keep them part of the church. "Chosen For Such a Time" was the theme.

Several from the branch shared in ministry during the conference.

Reports of the activities will be available in a forthcoming Beacon magazine. If you are not a Beacon subscriber, check with Alan Smith.

of Ed and Diane Anderson on Saturday, Oct. 24.

### Skeet Shoot

A skeet shoot was held at the home