

Understanding Your Soul

Transcript of a Talk Delivered to the Youth

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I'm actually using a new set of the Scriptures that came as a sample set. The ones that are finishing up now will be slightly better than these sample sets because the spine on this one is not reinforced; they missed that step. So, these have floppy spines, but they are (other than that) exactly like what the finished product will be. And I get to use them today.

Can you hear me in the back? Is there a problem? Okay, good. I think the time's arrived, shall we start?

I've written a word up on the board—"glory"—and tried to illustrate that with some coloring. There's a verse I wanna read to you out of the book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament (in the new Scriptures, it's chapter 21 verse 27):

Afterward, he [this being the angel of God] brought me to the gate, even the gate that looks toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like a noise of many waters, and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar. And I fell [on] my face, and the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up and brought me into the inner court, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house. (Ezekiel 21:27 RE)

That's a description of an event involving the prophet Ezekiel, in which he's in the presence of God; but what he refers to is the **glory** of God, not the **person** of God. The Scriptures in many places refer to "the glory of God" as a substitute for God Himself.

I went on a hike; it had been snowing earlier that day, and the ground was covered with snow. And it just so happened on this particular day on this particular hike, I wore my sunglasses for no particular reason (because I never wear my sunglasses when I'm hiking). And a break in the clouds happened, and the sun shone down on the snow, and it was blinding if you didn't have your sunglasses on. But on this occasion, I just got lucky.

Sometimes when you've been in a dark place and you step into a light place, the light is blinding. Oncoming headlights at night when you're driving (particularly if the driver coming toward you has their lights on bright) can blind you. Light can prevent you from seeing what is past the light.

The glory of God doesn't allow you to **see** God; as the Scripture tells us, no man hath seen the Lord except he be quickened in the spirit. You have to get your sunglasses on in order to not be blinded by the glory of God.

So, the “glory” of God is a substitute for describing the person of God Himself (even though that passage in Ezekiel is about God coming and going into a specific place in the temple). We have a definition of the glory of God in Teachings and Commandments section 93, paragraph 11: *The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth.*

Intelligence is the glory of God. Keep that thought in mind for a moment while we look at another couple of Scriptures about where we find ourselves right now, today—living in these tabernacles of flesh that are made of the dust of the Earth (and after your life ends, these tabernacles will turn back into dust eventually). This is what it says about occupying these “things”: *Men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish, and are shut out from the presence of God* (Genesis 4:7 RE). Well, that doesn’t sound good: carnal, sensual, devilish. Those words sound like we’re just inherently bad.

- But the word carnal means that the body has appetites. You get hungry. You get sleepy. You get tired. You get sick. You get weak. You get sore. All of those things are carnal.
- Sensual means “indulging an appetite.” You oversleep. You overeat. You do things that satisfy the appetite of the body, and you do it in excess so that you become addicted/subordinate/a slave **to** the appetite.
- And devilish means you’re at odds with God.

So, when you look at the words and you realize what they’re describing, it’s not that we’re all really, really corrupt; it means we are all vulnerable. Every one of us is weak and vulnerable and **can be compromised** if we don’t work to protect ourselves against that compromise.

Well, there’s another Scripture (probably equally distressing), *For the natural man...*

See, that word “natural” is actually used in a lot of advertising as something really good. You want natural hair color (or at least natural-looking hair color out of a bottle, which is not natural at all). You want natural-healthy skin. You want natural-looking eyes, and therefore, you use something artificial to put over your eye in a contact lens. But everything is supposed to look natural. “Natural” is advertised as the great wonder product of whatever it is you’re doing or selling; it’s natural.

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be for ever and ever but if he yields to the enticings of the holy spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a little child: submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 1:16 RE)

“Enemy of God” means the same thing as devilish. It means you are at odds with God. You’re not in sync with Him. If you’re not in sync with Him and you’re out of the way He would like

you to live, you're at odds with Him—and He's inviting and enticing you to change what you're doing and to become more like Him.

Well, there are two parts to **you**. This is in Teachings and Commandments; this describes the two parts of you: *...and the spirit and the body is the soul of man* (T&C 86:2). The soul consists of two parts: the spirit and the body. Everything that I have read from the Scriptures talking about being carnal, being sensual, being devilish, being at odds with God, being an enemy to God, all of that is a description of the condition of the weakness of the physical body.

The spirit **isn't that**. The spirit is called "intelligences" that are organized by God (see Abraham 6:1). Intelligence or the glory of God (the Scriptures tell us) cannot be created or destroyed; it is co-eternal with God Himself. So, when God becomes God and is a Being of Glory (or intelligence, or light and truth), that intelligence coexists with God. He emanates that. From the moment He is God, He emanates intelligence. But that "light and truth" can be organized **itself** into "intelligences." Your spirit—that that is inside you, that which is eternal in you—is made of the glory of God, it is co-eternal with God, and it is filled with light and truth. That's one part of you.

The other part of you is a body made of dust, which—in the book of Genesis (I won't bother reading it; it'll go quicker if I don't)—in the book of Genesis, describes how God created man, organizing him out of the dust of the Earth. He made man, and then He made a companion for man. And He called the man "Adam," and the man Adam called the woman "Eve." And the description of the Creation is: *...in the image of [God] created [He] him. Male and female created [He] them* (Genesis 2:8 RE). So, this is the image of God that was created after the same pattern **as God**, and therefore, the image of God is Adam and Eve in their physical bodies modeled after God (male and female). God the Father and a female counterpart to Him created mankind after the image of God Himself.

Well, we have a description of what the body is like and what its characteristics are like. And we also have a description of our spirit and what our spirit is like and what its attributes are. This was written by the apostle Paul: *Now the works of the flesh...* (that's this body of dust that has all these weaknesses)...

...the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel[ing], and such like....
(Galatians 1:21 RE)

So, what you've got in the body of flesh is a lot of weakness, temptation, and what I will just call generically "sin"—because all of those things are simply at variance with/contrary to/opposed to God and what God would want to you. So, that sounds rather pessimistic.

There's another part of you. Your soul does not consist merely of this weak body. Your soul also consists of a spirit.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Ibid., ¶ 22)

So, the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, kindness—in a word, “godliness.” And why is it that your spirit is like that? It’s because your spirit is composed of something that is natively already inclined to **this**.

Look, when you came into this world, when you were born here, the spirit was fused into the body. Admittedly, that’s not gonna last forever. That body of dust is gonna wear out. It’s gonna fall apart. It’s gonna droop and sag before you get to the end of the finish line. You’re gonna find stuff you don’t like. It’s gonna start to creak and groan and complain. And eventually, if you live long enough, you’ll say, “Hey, death is kind of merciful, really. I get to vacate this crappy apartment built out of dust that I’m living in.” Now, if you die young, of course, you die in health and vigor, and you don’t wanna vacate that particular body. But eventually, all of us are gonna wear out, wear down, and it’s gonna lay in the dust.

Because your spirit is fused into that, the only way in which you, in this life, gain any understanding is through the brain that operates this mechanism. But the brain is exceptionally literal, vulnerable, and all of these things. If you watch a TV show and you see a murder, your brain cannot tell that that’s just story-telling. If you play a game in which you shoot and kill other people or *Walking Dead* or you hash off the head of a zombie in your game, to your brain, part of your life’s experience is shooting and killing, chopping and destroying, and so far as the body is concerned, every bit of that that you take in is **real**.

Now, your spirit knows the difference. But there are actually two voices going on within your soul at any given moment. At any given moment, your brain has the capacity on its own to gen up all kinds of foolishness, mistakes, improprieties, submission to the lusts of the flesh. Your brain can do all that on autopilot. And if you catch yourself doing that, you also have the ability, in the spirit, to say, “I hate that thought; I reject that thought.” In fact, if you take any of the wretched, sinful thoughts that come into the mind and you allow your spirit to ask the question, “Well, what’s the consequence of pursuing that? What’s the consequence of doing that? What’s the consequence of acting on that impulse?” within your soul, you have the ability to discipline the body, to call it back into a form of godliness in which the acts that you commit are governed by the light and the truth that is the glory of God or intelligence.

If you have a bad thought, that’s pretty normal. In fact, with the entertainment that we watch, with the games that we play, with the social media that is out there, everything is designed to stir you up to envy and jealousy and ambition and carnality and to look for sensuality and to be at odds with the will of God and, therefore—because of your odds to the will of God—to make you, by definition, “devilish.” And your spirit has the capacity to interrupt that and to say, “Not so! I’m not that. I don’t do that. I don’t believe that. I don’t act on that.”

Inside of that approach of the spirit, there is peace, there is joy, there is happiness. King Benjamin said wickedness was never happiness. But wickedness is really the playground in which, because of this environment, our bodies are naturally vulnerable and inclined to those failings. Your body gets tired. Your body gets sleepy. You have to go to sleep at night in order to give this frail body an opportunity to rest. Does your spirit need to sleep? Does your spirit get tired? Does your spirit wear out? It's co-eternal with God. Very often, what's going on at night when you're having dreams is not your body—but it's the fact that your body can't contain the activity of a spirit that never sleeps. There are **numerous** instances (in the Scripture) of God communicating a message to someone in a dream. There are numerous instances of God appearing in the night vision.

The apostle Paul talked about how he was caught up to the third heaven. And when he was caught up to the third heaven, he makes the observation: *...whether in the body...or...out of the body, I cannot tell* (2 Corinthians 1:41 RE). But he was caught up to the third heaven because the bodies of your first parents (Adam and Eve and all of us as descendants of them) are made in the image of God. If you are in the presence, caught up to the third heaven, all of the things that you have now—fingers and toes, a body composed of intelligence and made of light and truth—appears to be the same thing that you're walking around here that's composed of dust. You can't tell the difference between the two. Everything about that is just as physical in its appearance/in its experience as is what we experience here in these bodies of dust.

But he was caught up, and he experienced the presence of God, and he saw and he heard unspeakable things. Well, why are they unspeakable? They're unspeakable for largely the same reason that Ezekiel describes the "glory of God" instead of "God"—and the glory of God inhabiting the place in the temple that God went into. Because it's hard to get past the limitations of this dust in order to get your hands around and to describe what it is that gets experienced there. It is "unspeakable" because the only way I'm able to communicate to you today is either using my mouth or writing letters on a board. That's pretty limiting. What Paul experienced was not limited in that way. **You** have the same capacity as Paul. **You** have the ability to take into you, through the spirit, the light and the truth or the intelligence that is coequal and coexistent with God Himself.

In your physical body, there is one and only one organ that allows you to see. Now, you get a side-by-side in order to have depth perception—because the only way you can perceive depth is if you have two points of origin in order to see that you're closer and you're further away, and depth comes from the triangle. It gets used in order to triangulate to figure out distance all the time; computers do that for us all the time. But in this physical body of dust, the only way you can see is through your eyes. If we injure your eyes, we can blind you. Do you think that your spirit can only see with eyes? Well, the answer to that is your spirit can see as a native part of every bit of the person of intelligence or light and truth. If you were in the spirit and you could behold God, and God were at your side (or above you or behind you)—in the spirit and quickened, so that you weren't blinded by the body, but you could behold—you would not need to turn your eyes or to turn around; you could behold the presence of God in the spirit from every source. All of the powers of the body that are

limited to the particular organs are a function of **this** organization [referring to the body]. The spirit has capacities far, far greater than the body.

When you say (assuming you sing that old song) that you are a child of God, you are **literally that** in the sense of your spirit. It was and it is connected to that couple who created you, that image (male and female) that organized the first parents—it's part of them. It resides within you. It was organized to exist and to experience things to help it grow and increase in understanding. You have to come down here and to live in a body of dust in order to spend a time experiencing things that let you comprehend the difference between light and darkness, goodness and badness, weakness and strength, eternal life and mortality. This body is going to go (that you occupy), it's going to go through not only a lot of changes, but it's also going to be riddled with mistakes and errors, some of which are going to be relatively serious. That body is going to experience a lot of regrets. Well, the regrets are because the spirit has learned something from the error or the mistake that got made and will wish that it had not happened, it was not done, you did not fail. But you did. So, how in the eternal scheme of things does God's will play out in your life, in my life, with this body of dust that has made mistakes and made errors? Temporarily, while we're still here, we have the opportunity to repent and return to God and be forgiven.

There's a book (...has a great title), and the title really does profess a profound truth; title of the book is *The Body Keeps the Score*. You simply, within your body, keep the score of all this. The spirit can forsake, repent, and be forgiven of that, but the body still keeps the score. A merciful God allows that body, at some point, to be laid down, and all of those weaknesses and all of those frailties and all of those appetites and all of those mistakes and errors to dwindle into dust and to be put behind you. And what your spirit **takes** from that is the wisdom, the understanding, and the intelligence to go on, to look back, and to say, "From that experience, I have gained. From that experience, I understand."

Throughout your life, you're going to encounter problems, dilemmas, challenges, and thoughts (some of which are going to be not just challenging but quite ugly). You still have within you something connected directly to God that can extract itself, that can call you back to repentance. Don't think the thoughts that come to you, if they are offensive to God, originate in the mind of the spirit. Much of the fight that you're going to undertake in this life is a fight that will be **inside of you**. Overcoming the weaknesses of the flesh and gaining experience to understand the difference between "carnal, sensual, devilish, and an enemy to God" (at odds with Him) and "love, joy, kindness, mercy, forbearance, goodness"... You see examples of the difference between these two in the Scriptures.

Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane preliminarily to being crucified and struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane ~~with the~~ dealing with the sins of mankind. He asked three of the apostles to accompany Him a little further. And then He asked them to stay there and to keep watch with Him while He engaged in this struggle. He went and separated Himself from those apostles, and He came back, and they were all asleep. And He woke 'em up, and He asked them again, "Please, keep watch with me." And he makes this statement to them: *The spirit...is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Matthew 12:9 RE). "I know you guys want to do this," Christ is saying to Peter, James, and John, "I know you would like to be able to stay

there with me, but I recognize you're weak, and your body's weak." And when He came back again and He saw that they were asleep, this time he said, *Sleep on* (Ibid.), and He returned to the task of the atonement.

When mankind submits to the weaknesses of the flesh and are controlled by these appetites, the Scriptures call this "a beast." Ecclesiastes talks about how this is a beast or, in our vernacular, an animal. Well, why is the body of man (when he submits to this side of his soul) considered an animal or a beast? It's because man's doing the same things that animals do: They eat, they sleep, they mill around, they fight, they reproduce, they do animal things, much of which is done thoughtlessly. When a man does not awaken to the spirit within him, the Scriptures regard him as a beast or as an animal. You are not a man (and man includes both male and female), you aren't that until you awaken to and submit to the spirit and the inclinations of the spirit. Until you do that, you're regarded as an animal or a beast.

Thoughts originate both in the dust, and thoughts originate in the spirit. And when you allow the spirit to control and lead you back towards God, that's often referred to as "the heart of man" in Scripture—the heart of man where these things originate or "the bowels of the spirit." **We** don't tend to view the heart as anything other than an organ that pumps and the bowels as anything other than something that processes food. But in the Scriptures, referring to the heart and the bowels very often is referring to the inclinations of the spirit—because the spirit is filled with intelligence. And the reflection of what the appetite of man is—if he submits to the spirit—is a reflection of the will of the spirit.

Now, there's a couple of points I wanna make, and then I'm hoping some of you young people have questions. And if so, we can talk for a few minutes on that (but we wanna get out of here on time).

There was a fellow from the East who came to actually set up shop in California—Yogi Bhaajan—who was a very successful spiritual teacher who came here and began teaching in the 1970s in California. He taught until 2004 when he died. And after he died, it now appears beyond all dispute that he was involved with sexual, physical, emotional, and financial abuse. And a lot of the accusations against him appear to be proven at this point.

So, here you have someone who is enlightened and has some great spiritual truths to share, but he gets into a position of influence, and he succumbs to the appetites of the flesh. Why is it that you can have someone who has absolutely astounding spiritual capacity who winds up submitting to the appetites of the flesh? Well, it's because the spiritual capacities were developed in isolation. Going alone in a mountaintop and meditating and having profound spiritual breakthroughs doesn't make you a good neighbor. Going out and dealing with God in reflection and meditation does not equip you to live alongside other people. Living with other people is a challenge all its own.

There are so many profound, great, spiritual leaders who succumb to adultery. Why is that? It's because their spirituality was developed in isolation and not in community. That's one

of the reasons why we need fellowships so that we labor alongside each other to become civilized, both body and spirit, among others.

I think it is an absolute distortion of the record of the history to say that Joseph Smith succumbed to adultery. I've studied his life. I've read all of the accusations. I've gathered all the material that exists to this point in publication, and I'm satisfied that Joseph Smith was a virtuous man who was surrounded by men who were **incapable** of disciplining **their** bodies.

Well, there's a Buddhist story that I think's worth telling about an enlightened monk who lived near a city that had a lot of infighting, conflicts, and difficulties in the city. People from the town asked the monk to come into town and to guide them so they could resolve their conflicts, but he refused to go. He preferred living alone and meditating. The town sent more representatives to ask again, and the monk refused again. Finally, a great crowd of people went to ask the monk for his help because, without it, they could never reach peace. He at last relented. On the way back to town in the joyful crowd, an old woman stumbled into the monk and pushed him to the ground. This made the monk very angry.

It's far easier for a hermit to live in quiet meditation than for the **same** hermit to live in harmony within a community. We're not called into a dispensation of only individual salvation. For the salvation of souls today, the primary focus of God's religion is to gather a community. God's purpose for the end-times is focused on making **people** of one heart and one mind. In order to do that, your **soul** needs to be disciplined by, subordinate to, controlled by the glory of God or the spirit or the intelligence that is inside every one of you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Do any of you kids have any questions that...? Yeah, yeah!

[Youth Question]

It can be, but...

The question is: Is being quickened in the spirit like the baptism of fire?

It can be, but what you're talking about in "no man hath seen God at any time," you can have the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost and have your mind opened up so that you comprehend things that were not comprehensible.

One of the best descriptions that we've got of this in the Scripture is what happened after Joseph and Oliver went out and baptized one another based upon the commandment that they were given by John the Baptist. Afterwards, Joseph makes the observation in his history, T&C 1: "Our minds being enlightened, we were able to comprehend the more mysterious passages of scripture in a manner we could never previously attain to" (see Joseph Smith History 14:4). What that meant was: Having been quickened by the spirit,

having been enlightened by the baptism of fire, having received the Holy Ghost, this awareness came to mind.

See, the Scriptures become an extraordinarily valuable basis for unlocking (with the power of the Holy Ghost) the understanding of eternity, whether it's opened up in a vision or simply comprehension as you read the Scriptures. Scriptures got composed by people under the influence of the Holy Ghost. And so, they reduce what their understanding, comprehending, or "having opened to their mind" to words on a page. But the words on the page are **not** the content. The content was what the spirit inspired. So, if you **read** with the power of the spirit like Joseph and Oliver were doing, then what comes **alive** in these passages is the same extended view, comprehension, light, and truth that extended knowledge as a result of that.

But being "quickened in the spirit in order to behold God" is actually dealing with an impediment that we have in this [the body] because the glory of God in a fullness is actually dangerous to this body. It's toxic and destructive. It would be like stepping in front of a—you know—a thermonuclear explosion. I mean, God is capable of occupying everything within His creation. He can occupy any of it. Temperature at the corona of the sun is what? Twenty million degrees? God is not damaged by that. Well, if He were to unveil all His glory (which He intends to do at some point around the Second Coming), it will be destructive of anything that He doesn't pick out to preserve and to save by quickening—which is the same thing as wearing sunglasses in the bright, sunny, snow-filled terrain.

I think we've got time for maybe one more. Does any... Yeah?

[Youth question]

Why is God displeased with premarital sex?

The commandment—the first command that was given to these two [Adam & Eve]—was to multiply and replenish the Earth. Therefore, it's an obligation to marry and to multiply. But the obligation to marry and to multiply does not attach until the union of the male and the female has been put together by an oath or a covenant of marriage. That's because the effect of sex is reproduction.

Every child that comes into this world is entitled to have the image of God (or the father and the mother) be the one that introduces them into the world—because every child enters this world very much like Adam and Eve entered this world: innocent, without sin, in a physical body, but protected and guided and insulated against the dangers that attach.

There's no more vulnerable creature in nature than a human baby. A giraffe—moments after the giraffe is born—can run. The same would be true of a horse. I mean, human babies are exceptionally vulnerable. Therefore, if you're going to take an innocent and vulnerable new life and introduce them into this world, you need to introduce them like Adam and Eve were introduced into this world: in a state of innocence that's protected and watched over (in the biblical analogy, it's called the Garden of Eden). But every child comes into this

world cuddled, held, warmed, protected, fed, clothed, kept dry, kept warm by parents—much the same as the Heavenly Parents watched over and protected Adam and Eve in the Garden. If—contrary to that model—a child gets introduced into a bickering, uncertain, unstable, warring couple that extends outward to parents that are offended on both sides, then you have not followed the divine pattern of introducing life into this world.

(And in case the thought occurs to the body that there are ways to prevent conception, I can tell you that there is no such thing as a foolproof—doesn't matter which option is chosen—nothing's foolproof in terms of preventing pregnancy.)

And therefore, the model that was set by God in the beginning (which is the model that ought to be followed, the one that will bring joy and love, kindness, peace, and represents godliness) is to refrain from premarital sex but to get married, in part, in order to have sex and to produce offspring and to introduce them into the world and to care and nurture and raise them.

I can tell you that children... They're maddening. They're frustrating. They're delightful. They're hilarious. They're funny. They're stupid. They're an experiment. They're extraordinary... Children make the life of parents ten-thousand times richer, experiencing joy that comes from no other source in as great a magnitude...**and** pity and anger. It's just... It's a rollercoaster ride. But your children create **in you**, as parents, a whole new life. It's the most marvelous undertaking that you can have, to produce children. **And** there is nothing that will matter more to you in your old age than your posterity.

Thank you for coming. We've about used up all of our time. What?

Audience Member: Can I ask a question?

Denver: No, you're not a kid! [Laughter.]

Audience Member (continued): I know. But I think it would be interesting.

Denver: You think it would be interesting? [Laughter.] Well, he doesn't. He doesn't want to hear anything about that. What is it?

Audience Member (continued): When the Book of Mormon says that God put a curse of the skin of blackness on someone, what would that be in terms of the body or the spirit?

Denver: Yeah, okay, so now we've got the question that comes up forever about, oh, what's the curse of the skin of blackness?

Look, these guys were (for lack of a better word) Bedouins. K? They're Bedouins. How does one dress? I mean, essentially, you wear a headdress, and you wear a robe. And how did the rebellious Lamanites dress? Well, they wore a loincloth made out of lambskin. And when they weren't decorating themselves with blood, they were otherwise naked.

What happens to you when you strip down to a Speedo and you hang around outside all summer? It's cultural. It's behavioral. It's... You darken. It just happens.

And the Nephites didn't dress that way. They didn't behave that way. They kept the culture from which they reckoned. And their [the Lamanites] behavior reflected that they'd gone back to the natural man, and they indulged what the natural man indulges—which is generally at odds with God and, therefore, an enemy to God.

So, see, he wasn't interested. He didn't care about that. [Laughter.]

Thank you for coming, and I hope this made sense over the Zoom. I could see the reflections coming off the board. They probably... You should take a picture of this and put that up so that they can see what was written. Thank you.