

## DISCIPLESHIP COURSE: INTRODUCTION

### D & C 85:21:b:

And I give unto you a commandment, that you shall **teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom**; teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be **instructed more perfectly** in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in **all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God . . .**

### A MIGHTY CHANGE IN THEIR HEARTS

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin and Alma 1 refer to being converted to Christ as being “reborn,” “spiritually begotten” and a “mighty change of heart.” Jesus Christ is the door through which every person on earth must enter the kingdom of God and have eternal life.

### Mosiah 3:3-12 (being “born again” prior to the cross):

. . . we know of their surety and truth, because of **the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts**, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually . . . and we are willing to enter into **a covenant with our God**, to do his will, and **to be obedient** to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days . . . and the covenant which ye have made, is a righteous covenant. And now, because of the covenant which ye have made, **ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters**. For behold, **this day he hath spiritually begotten you**; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore **ye are born of him**, and have become his sons and his daughters. And under this head ye are made free; and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. **There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh**, therefore, I would that ye should **take upon you the name of Christ**, all you that have **entered into the covenant with God, that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives**. And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this, shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for **he shall be called by the name of Christ**.

In this passage, Alma 2 asks those who claim to be reborn to think carefully about what that means. He gives us a series of questions designed to confirm the validity of the commitment we have made.

### Alma 3:27-32:

- 27 And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, **Have ye spiritually been born of God?**
- 28 Have ye **received his image** in your countenances?
- 29 Have ye **experienced this mighty change in your hearts?**
- 30 Do ye **exercise faith in the redemption of him** who created you?
- 31 **Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality**, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God, to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?
- 32 I say unto you, **Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day, Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?**

## THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

As believers in Christ, with repentant hearts, we entered the waters of baptism so that the “old man” in each of us could die the same death that Christ experienced and so the “new man” in us could:

- walk in newness of life and no longer serve sin, and
- be resurrected at the last day to stand at the right hand of Christ.

### Romans 6:3-6:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? **Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.** For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, **we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection**; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, **that henceforth we should not serve sin.**

## THREE ASPECTS OF BAPTISM

The holy ordinance of baptism has three functions:

### 1. A COVENANT TO OBEY GOD

#### Mosiah 9:41 & 44 (Alma 1 at the waters of Mormon):

. . . If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being **baptized** in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you? . . . Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from Almighty God, as a testimony that **ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead**, as to the mortal body . . .

#### Acts 2:41-42 & 44-45 (converts appeared to be obedient):

. . . they that gladly received his word were **baptized** . . . And **they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship** . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and **sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.**

### 2. A REMISSION OF SIN

#### Mosiah 9:40 & 44 (Alma 1 at the Waters of Mormon):

. . . that ye may be **redeemed** of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life . . . and may he grant you **eternal life, through the redemption of Christ** . . .

#### Acts 2:38 & 40-41 (Peter on the day of Pentecost):

. . . Repent and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins** . . . **Save yourselves** from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were **baptized** . . .

#### Acts 22:16 (Ananias to Saul):

. . . Arise and be **baptized**, and **wash away thy sins** . . .

**John 3:3-5 (Jesus to Nicodemus):**

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**. Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**.

**1 Peter 3:20-21:**

. . . in the days of Noah . . . the ark was preparing . . . eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even **baptism doth also now save us** . . .

**3 Nephi 3:68-69 (under Nephi prior to Christ's arrival):**

. . . **there were none who were brought unto repentance, who were not baptized with water**. Therefore there were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them, should be **baptized with water**, and this **as a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins**.

**3 Nephi 5:34-35 (Jesus to 2,500 Nephites):**

And **whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved**; and they are they who **shall inherit the kingdom of God**. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

**3. A METHOD OF ENTRANCE INTO CHRIST'S CHURCH**

**Mosiah 9:50 (Alma 1 at waters of Mormon):**

. . . whosoever was **baptized** by the power and authority of God, was **added to his church**.

**Mosiah 4:1:**

And now, King Benjamin thought it was expedient, after having finished speaking to the people, that he should **take the names of all those who had entered into a covenant with God**, to keep his commandments. [but it does not mention baptism, only a covenant with God]

**Acts 2:41-42 & 47 (new testament church on the day of Pentecost):**

Then they that gladly received his word were **baptized**; and the same day there **added unto them** about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers . . . And the Lord **added to the church** daily such as should be saved.

**3 Nephi 12:13 (Jesus to larger multitude on second day):**

And **they who were *baptized*** in the name of Jesus, **were called the church of Christ**.

**CHRIST'S GOSPEL**

The gospel of Jesus Christ concerns those elements that have **the power to save souls and give them eternal life** (e.g., to live with Christ in eternity).

**Romans 1:16 (“gospel” is truths that have the power to save):**

For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**; for it is **the power of God unto salvation** to everyone who believeth . . . [a believer is one who has faith, repents, is baptized and endures to the end]

The gospel (truths that save us) includes the fact that we’ve all sinned and therefore cannot enter the kingdom of God. In order for us to enter that kingdom, Jesus took on flesh and came to die on a cross to pay the price for our sins that was demanded by God’s justice. Those who repent, are baptized and endure to the end will have eternal life. To help us endure to the end of our lives, God gave us the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit.

**3 Nephi 12:25-35 (gospel: faith, repent, baptized, endure to end):**

. . . and **this is the gospel** which I have given unto you, that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and **after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, I might draw all men unto me** . . .

And it shall come to pass, that **whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name, shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless** . . .

. . . **no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom**. Therefore **nothing entereth into his rest, save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood**, because of their **faith**, and the **repentance** of all their sins, and **their faithfulness unto the end**. Now this is the commandment, **Repent**, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and **be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost**, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily I say unto you, **This is my gospel** . . .

The following passage reiterates that Jesus came to be crucified and bear the sins of the world. Another aspect of Christ’s gospel concerns the fact that ultimately the only people who will be excluded from God’s kingdom are a group labeled “sons of perdition,” who have the testimony of Christ and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but then later deny the truth of those things.

**D & C 76:4g-1 (sons of perdition are only ones *not* saved):**

And **this is the gospel**, the glad tidings which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us, that **he came into the world, even Jesus to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved**, whom the Father had put into his power, and made by him; who glorifies the Father, and **saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition, who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him. Wherefore he saves all except them; they shall go away into everlasting punishment**, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the Devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment, and the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows.

The gospel of Christ is the saving message that we each embraced at the waters of baptism, which told us to exercise faith, repent of our sins, be baptized and endure to the end of our lives in that belief. By this we gained the assurance of salvation and we entered into the body of Christ. We now want to learn how we can become *disciples* of Christ (learning the disciplines of a believer who seeks greater sanctification).

**DISCIPLESHIP & SANCTIFICATION**

After entering into a baptismal covenant to dedicate their lives to Christ, many people wonder:

**“What is the next thing I should do?”**

Just as Jesus was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, you've followed that same path and become a born-again child of God. You have the *assurance* that you will be with him in eternity. You've received the gift of salvation, eternal life or justification.

At this point, the focus turns to **discipleship and sanctification**. The questions then become, "What can I do for him? What are the *disciplines* of a disciple? How can I enter into the presence of a holy God and have a relationship with him?"

### **Hebrews 6:1-3:**

Therefore not leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ **let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again the foundation of **repentance** from dead works, and of **faith** toward God, of the doctrine of **baptisms**, of **laying on of hands**, and of the **resurrection** of the dead, and of **eternal judgment**. And we will go on unto perfection if God permit.

### ***Salvation: God's Grace Operating in the Lives of Believers***

**Salvation**, also called "justification" or becoming a follower of Christ, required a power outside yourself. It wasn't something you did by your own efforts. The grace of God first had to draw you into a saving relationship with Christ. It was a supernatural act.

### **Philippians 2:13:**

For it is **God which worketh in you** both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

### **D & C 17: 6a-b:**

And we know that all men must **repent** and **believe** on the name of Jesus Christ and worship the Father in his name, and **endure** in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be **saved** in the kingdom of God. And we know that **justification** [salvation] through the **grace** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is just and true.

### ***Sanctification***

In like manner, **sanctification** (e.g., leaving the old pattern of sin and becoming more like Jesus) can only occur by a supernatural act of God. We don't have the ability to simply determine that we will be better people by sheer force of will. The Holy Spirit's work called "sanctification" requires that the grace of God intervene on our behalf, strengthening our faith and molding our character:

### **D & C 17:6c:**

And we know, also, that **sanctification** through the **grace** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength.

### **3 Nephi 13:5:**

Therefore what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, **Even as I am**.

### **Ephesians 4:13:**

**Till we**, in the unity of the faith, all **come to** the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**.

### **Hebrews 6:3:**

And we will go on unto **perfection** if God permit.

**Moroni 10:29-30:**

Yea, come unto Christ, and **be perfected in him**, and **deny yourselves of all ungodliness**, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that **by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ**; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, **if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God**, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.

***Sanctification: A Supernatural Act of God's Grace***

Changing the old pattern of sin and becoming like Christ can never happen without a *miracle* of God, a *supernatural* act. Only the grace of God can accomplish this. No one can do this in their own strength or by simply exercising their will. To understand this we have to understand the nature of mankind.

People are not “*totally depraved*” (e.g., incapable of choosing righteousness) as some Christian churches teach. However, the natural man is carnal, sensual and devilish. We have a **sin nature** in each of us that the enemy of our souls uses to prevent us from reaching our eventual goal: “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” But **by God's grace**, that *is possible!*

***Sanctification vs. The Possibility of Falling From Grace***

There is one more reason that discipleship and sanctification are so important. Some churches teach that, once you are saved, it is impossible to fall from grace and deny the faith. This concept is called “eternal security” or “once saved, always saved” or “perseverance.” The Restoration rejects this concept. The scriptures make it clear that it's possible to fall from grace and deny the faith. That is another reason why we are studying this course.

**D & C 17:6d-e:**

**But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God.** Therefore **let the church take heed** and pray always, lest they fall into temptations; yea, and even let those who are sanctified, take heed also.

**Hebrews 6:4-6:**

For he hath made it impossible for **those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift**, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, **if they shall fall away**, to be renewed again unto repentance; **seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.**

***Conclusion***

This series of lessons attempts to explain how God's grace works in our lives to perfect us and to show believers how they might be able to move toward a victorious life over sin (e.g., avoid returning to the old pattern of sin):

**Galatians 5:1 & 13:**

**Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free**, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage . . . For, brethren, **ye have been called unto liberty**; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but **by love serve one another.**