

The “Why” is Transformative

We are all familiar with the scene. A man or woman taken out of time and/or out of their culture and they witness things that seem strange to them and they react to the situation inappropriately- to the point of confusion and inevitable humor of those watching. A man from the past sees a toilet in action for the first time and panics, a woman from another culture walks in on a western woman putting on makeup for the first time, an old Norse God puts down his hammer on a clothes rack, someone unfamiliar walks into a gym and thinks they’ve walked into a torture chamber, a prince from a cartoon finding himself in the real world jumps on a bus and “slays it” with a sword thinking it’s a monster that just ate people.

What makes these scenes so understandable to us as an audience that it allows us to find them comical while at the same time, those experiencing them are “suffering” in some way?

I get asked “how is my everyday life different because of the Gospel”?

The answer to the question is a simple one, and one that has already been answered by King Benjamin of the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin while giving some of the last great advice that he could to his sons:

“And it came to pass that [King Benjamin] had three ^asons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be ^btaught in all the ^clanguage of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And [King Benjamin] also taught [his sons] concerning the records which were engraven on the ^aplates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these ^bplates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ^cignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.”

We often, in the church, like to point out “this or that’s” or “binaries” such as “we are either actors or being acted upon” or “righteous prosper wicked get cut off” or “wicked unhappy obedient happy” or “you are with Me or sow abroad” or “you cannot serve God and mammon” etc. etc. etc. but I feel King Benjamin here teaches one of the more powerful and definitely one of the least appreciated binaries which is:

“Those without knowledge suffer in ignorance those with knowledge endure tribulation with gladness.”

Going back to the example above of the person in the gym and the person looking in thinking it’s a torture chamber- what if everyone was required to actively participate in the “gym activities” but not everyone knew the reason why? Would it not be easy to see and to understand how those struggling beneath the weight and those sweating on the treadmill without the understanding of the “why” would literally be “suffering in ignorance?” Note also, that in the same gyms, we see people who are joyful,

who are bearing their loads with a pleasant countenance? They are enduring the tribulation with gladness and patience, why? Because they *know* the “why” and they desire the “outcome”.

Elder Uchtdorf said in his talk “The Why of Priesthood Service” in 2012

“Understanding the why of the gospel ... will help us to see the divine purpose of all of this. The *what* of [the gospel] teaches us what to do. The *why* inspires our souls. The *what* informs, but the *why* transforms.”

In the example above the “what” would be running, doing bench press, squats, etc. which would be “informative” but the “why” is what transforms people, and brothers and sisters let me testify that it is truly a “transformation”. People that understand the “why” and “endure the tribulations with patience and gladness” even though they might be doing the exact same task, could not be any more different than those that choose to “suffer in ignorance”.

Some might be right now, suffering in ignorance not knowing why certain things are happening in their lives, and yet the Lord might have already clearly revealed the why to your specific question/suffering.

What are some examples of things revealed that we could be suffering in ignorance over today? I have ten examples, but I ask that you remember as I go over these three things:

1. The Lord said “Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and bcome unto me; for mine carm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.” The Lord wants us to repent, to not suffer, he wants us to get better

2. Nephi taught that “[you can speak] hard things against the wicked, according to the truth; and [you can justify] the righteous [and testify] that they should be lifted up at the last day. [But], the guilty (or in other words, those that suffer) might take the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center.” Nephi continues “the righteous hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, that [they] might walk uprightly before God.” Or in other words, the wicked wish to remain suffering in ignorance while the righteous want to hear the truth so that they might hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, so that they can endure tribulation with gladness.

3. Every point I will go over was something I suffered from/with or experienced personally on my mission. If it sounds like you or that I am talking specifically about you or someone you know I’m not. That’s the Spirit of the Lord talking to you. We should **all** know someone suffering from the following:

1. “I am struggling with a question that I just don’t know the answer to- which church is true, is the Book of Mormon true, etc. etc.”: in the book of James we learn “if any of you lack

- wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and [won't get upset at you for asking] and it shall be given him", Moroni teaches "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."
2. "I know someone, who I love, but they are always asking for a sign from God and won't listen!": The Lord has made it very clear that those that "seek after a sign" are those who are adulterers, and when you find any man or woman seeking after a sign you can know with a surety that they are involved in this sin. Knowing this "why" would be transformative as it would change every spiritual interaction you had with the individual from that point on- you wouldn't be able to lead the individual away from the spiritually destructive behavior of seeking after signs without first addressing and solving the infidelity.
 3. Similar to point 2, "how did this member that had such a wonderful testimony, who I loved, such as a brother, daughter, etc., become an atheist who no longer believes in God, someone who now is a pagan or agnostic who denies the true faith of God who now is fearful and unbelieving?": The Lord taught that lusts of the heart are the cause of this transformation. The Lord said "verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear." If you are suffering from this or know someone who is, the lusts of the heart must first be conquered before your or their faith can be restored.
 4. "I'm keeping the commandments of the Lord but I am not receiving the promised blessings!" or "Someone I know and love lost their faith when they said they kept the commandments and were not upheld or blessed": Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught, "Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don't come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, they come." And the Lord taught "For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward. But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned. Who am I that made man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments? Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing. Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above."
 5. "Myself or someone I love, suffers from a physical ailment": The Lord taught "If thou art called to pass through tribulation; if thou art in perils among false brethren; if thou art in perils among robbers; if thou art in perils by land or by sea; If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can't you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if

then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be dragged to prison, and thine enemies prowl around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb; And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good." The question is then "why or how will it be for our good?" Alma taught of the Savior "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." And finally the Lord taught "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

6. "I suffer from/in a cyclical abusive relationship": The Lord taught "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. By this ye may know if a man [or woman] repenteth of his sins—behold, [they] will confess them and forsake them." Those familiar with addiction recovery programs will understand the importance and eternal truth taught here.
7. "Why does God, if there is a God, let bad things happen to good people, sometimes by the very hands of the wicked?": Lehi explained "And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself." Alma and Amulek, were carried forth to the place of martyrdom, where they had to witness the destruction of those who believed on Christ as they were consumed by fire. And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames. But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day. Captain Moroni further explained "For the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; therefore ye need not suppose that

the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God.”

8. “My friends, family, branch, ward, or even Stake are spreading rumors about myself or someone I love- rumors that are not true and worse yet, rumors that the people spreading them themselves know to be not true!”: We are taught when we join the church that “if we are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called *his* people, we must bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life”(Mosiah 18). We learn from the story of Job that even Job’s closest friends and most likely “church going friends” accused Job of committing some serious sin or sins that Job himself never actually committed, they told Job to “curse God and die”. The Lord teaches that “inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me” and that “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, ye never knew me: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The Lord told Joseph “these are they who are of the terrestrial: these are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness. These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father. These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God. Those who *shall* come forth in the resurrection of the just are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name ... and overcame *all* things.”
9. “Why am I, my family, my branch, my ward, or even my Stake, in a constant chronic state of unhappiness?”: King Benjamin taught “And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it”. So we learn here that if we are in a chronic state of unhappiness it is due to disobedience, but disobedience in what way? Paul taught a chronically unhappy group of saints “Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” A sin that one “allows” to happen is a “sin of omission”. If you find yourself chronically unhappy, or your branch, or you ward, or even your stake, ask yourself what you are allowing to happen around yourself that you know is wrong but which you don’t speak up against- even when those around you are speaking evil of good.

10. "Why am I personally, or my family, branch, ward, or even stake, seemingly withering and dying away?" Elder H. Verlan Andersen taught "missionary work *is* the life blood of the church" he further explained "A number of years ago, the late President Spencer W. Kimball, who was then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, visited the stake in which I was living and made the statement that missionary work is the lifeblood of the Church. He also said that were it not for missionary work, the Church would wither and die on the vine. That statement doubtless applies as much to us as individuals and families as it does to the Church as a whole. A failure to utilize our endowments and fulfill our callings as the salt of the earth may indeed cause us to wither and die on the vine."

IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "why/how does the gospel bless and change my everyday life"? The gospel teaches me the why, which transforms me from a person who suffers daily in ignorance to someone who endures tribulation with gladness.

A personal example that happened to me in my life recently, where learning the why "transformed" myself was that of the story of Jesus healing the deaf man with the speech impediment found in Mark, it reads:

"And they bring unto [Jesus] one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain."

When I first read this story years ago I knew that Christ had healed the man, but I didn't understand the "why" of touching ears, tongues, spitting, etc., I might have perceived what Jesus was doing to be "voodoo magic" sticking fingers in ears, and tongues, spitting, etc. I read years later the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie explaining that the Lord speaks to everyone at their personal level and in their language, and that was shown in this story when the Lord was SPEAKING to the deaf man in the language he would understand, that is of "sign language". When I learned the "why" it transformed the entire story and meaning in an instant and a story that was always a tad weird to me became one of my favorites.

There is a reason brothers and sisters that the righteous prophets of the Book of Mormon all taught "and my father was a righteous man, **because** he taught me the language/learnings of my fathers", it is found in 1 Nephi 1:1, 2 Nephi 2: 1-4, Enos 1:1, and many, many others. If you are suffering from something I plead and commit you to search after the "why" so that your life will be transformed as well, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.