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KEYNOTE ADDRESS PRESENTED AT THE FALL 2000 AMCAP CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 6, 2000

“Spiritual Roots of Ethical Marital Therapy”

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What a privilege it is to speak with you today, especially because it's the day before General Conference. What a feeling to be right here! Right next to our ever-expanding Temple Square, where, for the next two days, heaven and earth will come together in a most profound way. This morning, I pray that I may speak with the Spirit and that you may listen with the Spirit, so that if there is a concern or question regarding spirituality and ethics that has been weighing on your mind and heart, you may have it answered—not necessarily because of anything I will say, but because of what the Holy Ghost will help you hear.

Brothers and sisters, as Mormon counselors and psychotherapists, we should be the most ethical therapists on the planet! Actually, we should be beyond ethical! We have had the privilege of being immersed not only in the waters of baptism, but in the grand truths of the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ! Are we living up to those privileges? Do our professional lives reflect our privileged view of eternal life?

I love the story of Konrad Lorenz, a famous ethnologist (Watzlawick, et al., 1967, p. 20). One day in his back yard, he experimented with “imprinting” baby ducklings—that is, getting them to respond to him as though he were their mother. To do so he walked in figures of eight as he crouched over, constantly quacking and glancing over his shoulder. Dr. Lorenz was congratulating himself on his spectacular feat of

getting these baby ducklings to follow him and attach themselves to him—and perhaps was thinking about writing up the results for a peer reviewed journal—when, at the very moment of self-congratulation, he looked up, right into the faces of a group of tourists passing by!

They looked horrified! Why? Because from the tourists' vantage point, the baby ducklings were hidden in the grass and could not be seen. Consequently, all they saw was a crazy old man with a long white beard waddling in circles and quacking! Without the fuller picture—that is, without seeing the baby ducklings and knowing the intent behind Konrad Lorenz' quacking and circling behavior—this brilliant ethnologist's imprinting experiment looked only like craziness!

As counselors and psychotherapists, we understand that a situation remains unexplainable, and can never really be understood, until our view is enlarged to include all the relevant elements. That's a basic axiom of our work. We understand that we need the widest angle lens possible to make sense of many situations. We know that if we only use a zoom lens, as helpful as that lens might be, there are crucial elements that will go unnoticed—and, therefore, our assessment of the situation, and our responses, will reflect an impoverished view.

For example, think about zooming in on a picture of a

young boy looking down, while eating a very small piece of bread. With only a zoom lens, we might conclude that this is a poor, sad child in need of food and companionship. But, with a wide-angle lens, we see the boy is sitting with his family on a church bench. And we realize we are witnessing a sacramental moment. What a difference a larger frame makes! What a difference being able to see more elements of a situation makes! What a difference being able to see the fuller picture makes!

As Mormon counselors and psychotherapists, we have access to a fuller picture. As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have access to grand elements of the eternal picture of life that can provide us with a fuller, richer understanding of whatever situation we are viewing. We have access to wide-angle lens truths about premortality, the Fall, the Atonement, resurrection, Priesthood power, saving ordinances, eternal life and eternal lives. These truths richly expand our view of this mortal life—its purpose, problems and possibilities, even in the midst of confusing difficulties.

Yet I wonder if, in our professional lives, we sometimes—metaphorically speaking—join the horrified tourists in the Konrad Lorenz story. Even though we've been given the eternal view, do we sometimes replace the wide-angle, gospel-truth lens with a worldly lens, blocking out our broader knowledge both of the baby ducklings and of Konrad Lorenz' imprinting intent—so that we can be accepted by the group of tourists (even if they are uninformed and myopic tourists),

Do we sometimes live professionally far beneath what the gospel lens has shown us? And, if we do, are we really being ethical? Is it ethical to settle for a picture of a situation which has been taken, developed and framed by the best the world has to offer, but is pathetically constricted when compared to the view afforded by wide-angle eternal vision and Spirit-enhanced perception? And, is it ethical, if after paying the price for the unobstructed gospel view, to then make clinical assessments, offer interventions, and conduct research based on an impeded view offered by the world's zoom lens—a lens which often is clouded, and sometimes totally corroded and distorted?

With the further light and knowledge we have received, is it ethical for us to only live by the world's ethical standards, and not by eternal standards? Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1985, p.699) pointed out that "ethical principles are born of doctrinal concepts." Years earlier he commented on this gospel-ethical connection when he said (1966, p. 240), "the more gospel doctrines accepted by a particular people, the

higher are their ethical standards."

What a marvelous truth: The more gospel doctrine we accept and live, the higher are our ethical standards. Think about that—as we increasingly understand and live Gospel principles, we increase our ethical understanding and behaviors. On a lighter note, considering that truth, perhaps we could receive professional continuing education credits for attending our Sunday School Gospel doctrine class! With the sure connection between ethical principles and gospel doctrine, as LDS counselors and psychotherapists, we certainly should be the most ethical therapists in our professions.

Considering the connection between gospel doctrine and ethical standards, perhaps we've found a new approach to sharing the Gospel with our professional colleagues. I wonder if those of our colleagues who are naturally drawn to figuring out professional ethical principles and practices, are actually seeking for the greater truth and knowledge available in the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ? Could our professional codes of ethics be keys to bringing the Church out of obscurity with our colleagues? Could the following question, focused on professional ethics, commence a marvelous missionary moment? Turning to your non-LDS colleague whom you admire you ask: "What do you know about our professional code of ethics. Would you like to know more?" With the gospel's influence on ethical behavior, think of how that conversation might develop!

It seems axiomatic to say that the Savior's teaching to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 19:19)) undergirds all professional ethics. Professional ethics involve being therapeutically loving. As we love our clients as ourselves, our ethical decisions naturally unfold. As we seek to bring our professional expertise to assist clients in moving forward in their lives, we are increasingly ethical as we respect our clients, value them, honor them—and as my Canadian colleague Lorraine Wright says—even "reverence" them (Wright, 1999).

However, at the same time that we celebrate the undergirding influence of gospel principles in the life of professional ethics, are we really being ethical as Mormon counselors and psychotherapists if we don't remember, and show we remember, that eternal gospel truths "go way beyond ... canons of good living" (Clark, 1975)? When the world's ethics grow out of some portion of gospel doctrine, is it ethical for us to look only to the world for direction in our professional lives, when we have the fullness of the gospel?

President J. Reuben Clark spoke passionately when he said,

“Christ’s teaching are in the highest degree ethical, but they ... are more than this” (1975, p. 50). Brothers and sisters, we are privileged to know more! We know that Christ’s teachings are more than just “ethical principles,” and we have been given more of his teachings. In our professional lives, are we living up to these privileges of knowing and having more? Is the fullness of the gospel reflected in our professional lives? Are we living professionally, as fully as we can, all the fullness that the gospel lens offers?

Let’s reflect on these questions by considering eight others:

1. Is it ethical for us to look to the world’s views on a professional power conflict, when we have the Lord’s teachings about power and influence (D&C 121) to help us?
2. Do our baptismal and temple covenants guide our behavior such that we are living so far above the “standard of professional competence and integrity”, that this particular professional standard is a non-issue?
3. Are gospel truths about personal agency guiding our professional practices such that we are therapeutically transparent, bringing our clients onto our “board of directors” related to their therapy so to speak, and therefore, queries about therapist manipulation and client compliance are laid to rest.
4. Do we really show that we know the 11th Article of Faith’s injunction to “let them worship how, where and what they may” so that professional struggles around “values conflicts” with our clients never arise?
5. Does the Lord’s counsel to “not run faster than we have strength” (see D&C 10:4) along with Moses’ experience of delegation (see Exodus 18), help us with professional boundary problems and burnout?
6. When we think about the Lord telling us (3 Nephi 13:24) that it is impossible to “serve two masters” for either we will “hate the one and love the other, or we will hold to the one and despise the other.” Could this be our key to avoiding and managing dual relationships, where the “two masters” in fact, are embodied in one person?
7. And could there be a better guide for all professional ethical practices than the 13th Article of Faith? Consider an ethical dilemma you have faced in your own clinical practice. Now, think about the 13th Article of Faith. “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all

things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.” Could the 13th Article of Faith have helped you with your ethical crisis? As you think about really being “honest, true, chaste, benevolent and virtuous,” would those truths have given you direction? As you really seek everything that is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy,” would you find the answer to the ethics question that plagued you?

8. If all the professional codes of ethics were suddenly lost, are we clear enough about life because of the restored Gospel lens, that we would be able to professionally function in a consistent and impeccably ethical and healing manner, a manner that is so much higher than just “causing no harm” toward those who are already harmed?

According to Bersoff & Koepl (1993) ethics are “articulated values and beliefs that help make sound moral judgments.” So what do we really believe? What do we really value? What are our own professional “Articles of Faith”? What do we really believe about clients, their problems and their possibilities? What do we really believe about our privileged role in the lives of people who are struggling and who come seeking help? What do we really believe about change?

And, what do we really believe about all these things, when we view them through our highly privileged, restored gospel lens? Consider this: If a qualitative study—perhaps an hermeneutic inquiry—were conducted of your teaching, clinical practice and/or your clinical research, would your practices show evidence that you have a fuller understanding of life because of the restored gospel lens?

Are we being ethical if there is no difference between our assessments and interventions and those of our colleagues who do not have the fullness of the gospel? Think of your approach to therapy. Think of your most frequently used assessment and intervention strategies. Think of your approach to research and teaching. Now the question: Are your spiritual roots showing? In fact are they shining through and guiding everything you do in your teaching, clinical practice and/or research?

President J. Reuben Clark (1975, p. 53) strongly denounced “any Latter-day Saint psychologist ... [who would] explain away, or misinterpret, or evade or elude, or most of all ... repudiate or deny, the great fundamental doctrines of the

Church in which he professes to believe." Instead, President Clark encouraged courage, moral courage and intellectual courage, which he termed "the courage to affirm principles, beliefs, and faith that may not always be considered as harmonizing with [scientific] knowledge" (1975, p. 52).

Our own Dr. Allen Bergin has demonstrated such courage. It was his valiant and pioneering efforts that assisted bringing the word "spiritual" out of the therapy closet and into the foreground of the field of psychology (see for example: Bergin, 1979; Bergin, 1980; Bergin, 1983; Bergin, 1988; Richards & Bergin, 1997). Building upon Dr. Bergin's efforts, other helping professions have commenced speaking about "spiritual strategies" and, happily now, in many professions it is almost the "in thing" to show sensitivity to the spiritual issues of clients and to demonstrate that you employ a "spiritual approach" in therapy.

So, what about our intellectual courage—yours and mine? If we each had just a little more intellectual courage, what would we be drawn to speak up about within our professional lives? If we lived just a tithing's portion, just 10%, more ethically—in terms of living up to what we really know to be true—what professional practices and issues would naturally fall away from our lives? What changes would arise in our assessments and interventions as we rise just a little higher as "men and women of covenant" who take seriously our opportunities to assist those who are burdened?

An internationally renowned non-LDS marriage and family therapist, Cloe Madanes, seems to live up to the light she has been given. She writes about sexual abuse this way: "Sexuality and spirituality are related. So a sexual violation is a violation of a person's spirit and that is why it is particularly wrong" (Madanés, 1990, p. 53). Cloe Madanes is a great proponent of apologies and forgiveness, declaring, "the only way we can survive from day to day without emotional breakdown is by forgiving and forgetting" (1990, p. 12). And her view of change involves performing unselfish acts that involve sacrifice. In fact she states, "To actually perform unselfish acts that involve sacrifice is more therapeutic than talking to a therapist about guilt and depression" (1990, p.13).

We have much to learn from our good, non-LDS colleagues who courageously speak up for what they firmly believe. Are we willing to speak up about the truths we are given? Are we willing to rise up to help with the present challenges in the psychotherapy field, and to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118) and then to speak up about what we learn?

There are indeed "law[s] irrevocably decreed before the

foundations of this world upon which all blessings are predicated" (D&C 130:20). Are we willing to study and fast and pray, to engage in temple worship and increased obedience, in order to distill down the laws which will assist clients to reach their goals and move ahead with their lives? Are we willing to live up to the privilege of hearing the voice of the Lord through the Spirit and through His prophets, so that we can discover and uncover the principles and practices which will be even more fully consistent with, and informed by, the fullness of the gospel?

Last evening we honored Elder Jeffrey Holland and Sister Patricia Holland. What a magnificent union of strength and vision, articulateness and courage they are! I believe each of them has taken the injunction of the Prophet Joseph Smith to heart, as each of us needs to do. The Prophet taught:

The things of God are of deep import; and time, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! If thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity—thou must commune with God. (Smith, 1976, p. 137)

Are we prepared to stretch and search and contemplate in order to distill down eternal principles and practices that undergird good mental health and great marriage and family relationships?

Elder Holland is. Years ago, he presented three grand truths about marital intimacy at a 1988 BYU devotional in his landmark address, "Of Souls, Symbols and Sacraments" (Holland, 1989, pp. 182-197). And he reaffirmed these same truths as an apostle of the Lord in the October 1998 General Conference (Holland, 1998). As I have wrapped my mind and heart around these three eternal truths, I am increasingly convinced that most husbands and wives are living far beneath their privileges related to sexual intimacy and love, because they have been under the influence of the world's view of sex and love, and in many cases duped by Lucifer's lies.

The three grand truths about marital intimacy as offered by Elder Holland are:

First, that physical intimacy is a soulful experience, involving the body and the spirit. The body is indeed the "great prize of mortal life" (Holland, 1989, p. 187) and we, as members of the Lord's Church, are doctrinally distinct in understanding that the body and the spirit are the soul of man (Talmage,

1913, p. 117). Physical intimacy is to involve souls—the husband's body and spirit joining with the wife's body and spirit.

The second grand truth offered by Elder Holland is that physical intimacy is a symbol of the total commitment and union a husband and wife have for one another in all areas of their lives. If the only time a husband and wife are uniting is during physical union, they are probably experiencing “counterfeit intimacy” as Victor L. Brown Jr. (1981, pp. 5-6) describes it. “Counterfeit intimacy” occurs when we relate to each other in fragments—a fragment of a wife here, connecting with a fragment of a husband there. Imagine how physical intimacy changes when a couple's life is truly intertwined in talking together, working on problems together, enjoying small moments just being together?

The third grand eternal truth is that physical intimacy is a kind of sacrament, a time to draw close to God, a time when we quite literally “unite our will with God's will, our spirit with His spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real” (Holland, 1998, p. 77). This is a spectacular truth! Sadly, however, it is the exact opposite, the antithesis, of what far too many have believed. Influenced by the adversary's lying lens of love, many couples have supposed that they were never further away from the Lord than when joining together in physical intimacy. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

So now, think of the real truth: Physical intimacy is a kind of sacrament! Elder Holland states that at sacramental moments “we not only acknowledge [God's] divinity but we quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves” (Holland, 1998, p. 77). I wonder if the Lord's counsel for us to not partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper unworthily (3 Nephi 18:28-29), because the blessings will not be there (in fact damnation will be there), applies to the sacrament of physical intimacy. I believe it does. In my clinical practice, I have worked with couples who have partaken unworthily of physical intimacy, or couples where one spouse has approached this marital sacrament with unclean hands and an impure heart. The outcomes are tragic and sadly predictable.

I salute the husband, who following disfellowshipment, chose on his own to wait for physical intimacy with his wife until he was more pure. Following this self-imposed, self-restraint, he read to his wife one evening Section 46 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Her heart was irresistibly drawn towards his. She experienced that moment as the most wonderful and effective prelude to physical intimacy they had ever shared in their 25 years of marriage.

On the other hand a woman spoke of times when her hus-

band, ravaged by self-doubts and collisions with the brutal world, felt unworthy in almost every way. She then said tenderly, almost reverently, “in those moments, physical intimacy was the only way I could really help him feel loved—worthy of love, worthy to love.” Perhaps there are many reasons why spouses can feel closer to the Lord as they unite in the marital sacrament.

Since Elder Holland offered these grand truths about marital intimacy—that marital intimacy is to be a soulful, symbolic and sacramental experience—I find that I'm naturally drawn to offering these truths to conflicted couples, through readings and through questions:

- One wife who was perpetually tempted to behave in an illicit manner pictured a question popping up on a neon sign when she felt herself weakening. The question that successfully started to assist her was, “If I were to remember that by acting on these illicit impulses I am actually toying with that person's very soul, their body and spirit, and toying with the very purpose and product of life, how would I quickly manage this situation?”
- For a man who struggled with many financial problems and with loosening the bands of pornography from his heart and mind, the following question assisted him: “If I were to discover that I was setting myself up for financial ruin by sinning morally, trivializing my own body and that of another's, and trivializing the Savior's atonement, how would I manage these illicit impulses?”
- One recently divorced woman experienced “always being caught off guard” by sexual advances from men. She found strength by being prepared to say, “I am so sorry that you don't know that this is wrong. I am so sorry that you believe that this is a loving request. It is not. It will ruin both our souls and it trivializes all that the Savior did for us through the atonement.”
- For a couple whose love was ravaged by his multiple affairs, the following question invited long sought-for changes: “If you were to believe that you are never closer to the Lord than when you as husband and wife are engaged in physical intimacy, what would you want to change so that you can begin to experience that kind of sacramental moment?”

I consider it a distinct privilege that an apostle of the Lord has given us these grand truths about marital intimacy. How can we demonstrate in our clinical practices that we are living

up to the privilege of knowing these truths?

Another privilege we have as counselors and psychotherapists who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the gift of the Holy Ghost. We can have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion! Imagine what that can mean for our therapy! Independent of our clinical approach, with His influence we can see what we would otherwise be blind to; speak with the tongue of angels; have all things brought to our remembrance; be smarter than we are; and more empathic than we are. We can discern ethical distinctions such as the difference between courageously speaking up and coercion. And the list of things the companionship of the Holy Ghost will do for us as counselors and psychotherapists, goes on.

I have come to believe that the most ethical therapy that we can offer as Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists is what could be called, "Spirit-saturated therapy"—therapy guided and influenced by the Holy Ghost. And, I believe that Spirit-saturated therapy is the only kind of therapy we really have time for, at this most crucial time in the history of the world and the Church. Spirit-saturated therapy occurs when the Holy Ghost is present to quicken our thinking, helping us make connections we have not previously made.

Therapy saturated by the Spirit increases our ability to hypothesize, enlarges our ability to be therapeutically creative in uncovering and challenging constraints in our clients lives, and in offering interventions to facilitate solutions. The Spirit expands our clinical abilities, brings previous scholarly learning to our minds, increases our ability to engage difficult, even "resistant," clients and allows us to see with benevolent eyes the good intents and great desires of those who outwardly seem devoted to inflicting and perpetuating conflict within their families. The Holy Ghost softens even the "hardest" heart, unstops ears that have neither been able to hear concerns nor love spoken by family members, and opens eyes which have been blind to the possibilities within themselves and their relationships. Change really is possible when the Spirit is present: hearts change, ears change, eyes change!

Parley P. Pratt wrote about the Holy Ghost, enumerating truths about the Spirit in a most eloquent way. I love his words and keep them close at hand in my office and in my heart when trying to do Spirit-saturated therapy. You know these truths as well, and can probably repeat the following quote by memory with me. Here are Parley P. Pratt's words:

[The Holy Ghost] quickens all the intellectual faculties; increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were: marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being (Pratt, 1965, p. 61).

I believe that Spirit-saturated therapy is only possible as we live up to the gospel principles we know. As we do so, we invite the Spirit into our therapy. We become co-therapists to the Spirit. He becomes our clinical supervisor and our consultant, our therapy guide, our ethical director.

Can you imagine facing a therapeutic dilemma, an ethical crisis with quickened and enlarged intellectual faculties and therefore, knowing what to do? That's what the Holy Ghost can do for you. Can you imagine having all things brought to your remembrance? All your laboring to refine your clinical skills, highlights of salient journal articles, relevant scriptures, words of the prophets—brought to your mind so that you can help a client? Can you imagine what happens when all things are brought together in a laser-like focus, when you plead to know, after studying it out in your mind, how to help a couple who have been struggling with marital intimacy for years? That's what the Holy Ghost will do when you invite Him, through your behavior inside and outside the therapy room, into your clinical practice.

And can you imagine the joy you experience when—on a day that may have started out with a prayer for cancellations—you find your passion for helping others increasing, your love of your work enlarging, and your love for those you work with expanding? That's what the Holy Ghost can do, and will do, as you live to offer Spirit-saturated therapy to your clients.

- * Can you imagine a high power businessman-husband who has a history of coldly and cruelly interacting with others, especially since being disfellowshipped, weeping with his wife every time he enters your office, indicating it is the only place he can speak from his heart and

where he can still feel the Spirit?

- Can you imagine non-LDS clients and students saying, “There’s just something different about your work, something spiritual,” and having a non-LDS colleague, a minister in another church, say “I would describe your clinical work as a ‘secular theology’”?
- Can you imagine a husband saying to his wife following a session about their sexual intimacy problems, “I felt truth spoken in the session tonight”?
- Can you imagine being able to see your assessments and interventions in a whole new light as you seek to discover if any one of them, in any way, denies the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ and His Atoning sacrifice?
- Can you imagine seeing your clients become more physically beautiful right during a session as you uncover constraining beliefs that have held their spirits captive all these years?
- Can you imagine being drawn to move physically and emotionally toward a raging husband, not in a “technique-ey” manner, but because for a brief moment you can almost see how wounded his spirit is?
- Can you imagine a 15-year-old saying to her mother, “There’s something different about Dr. Watson’s office; it feels peaceful there.”?
- Can you imagine a husband and wife who have been mired for years in the angst of pornography and the demoralization of years of non-successful interventions, being willing to entertain a whole new approach to marital intimacy, one that involves coming out of the world, leaving the world’s myths and Lucifer’s lies about sex, in order to co-create sexual experiences that are truly out of this world?
- Can you imagine a woman who has been troubled by her past, being willing to look way into the past, in fact, to imagine her pre-mortal past and what experiences she may have had there that prepared her for this mortal tutoring and sometimes tortuous earthly experience?
- Can you imagine a husband who, at the beginning of the session stated vehemently that he didn’t want to change, didn’t believe he could ever change, and didn’t believe he would ever be good enough for his wife, moving to a position of hope and belief and willingness and reaching out to his wife—all within 10 minutes?

I can imagine them, because I’ve experienced all these things! And, I believe they are evidences of the Holy Ghost guiding my best professional efforts. After all I can do, I

believe the Spirit rushes in because of the love Heavenly Father has for my clients and His concern for their marriages and families.

I believe in a team approach to therapy! And the most important team member, in fact, the only member whose team I always want to be on, is the Holy Ghost’s.

Years ago there was an advertisement for a credit card company that indicated one should never leave home without their card. Paraphrasing their ad, and trying to speak the truth clearly, and hopefully not irreverently, I would say: “The Holy Ghost: Don’t leave home without Him”—and my motto for therapy would be, “The Holy Ghost: Don’t do therapy without Him.” The Holy Ghost will tell you when to speak and when not to speak, what to say and what not to say, when to involve Him in a covert way and when to involve Him in a more overt way in the therapy.

My therapy approach involves uncovering and challenging a client’s constraining beliefs, and offering and supporting facilitating beliefs. The Holy Ghost has helped me many times in being able to identify beliefs that are at the heart of the matter. Most often this is a private prompting that I follow in order to move therapy along. In a few cases, however, the prompting has been to involve the Holy Ghost in a more overt way.

One example was a faithful, single, never-married woman who was dreading going to her younger brother’s wedding. It was going to be held just before Christmas in her hometown. She was growing increasingly distressed imagining all the people she would see. She anticipated their probing, painful questions about her own marital status. She wondered how she would manage the troublesome feelings during the temple sealing. She doubted her ability to even attend. She was considering every other option she could think of: Should she take a good male friend with her? What would the pluses and minuses of that be? And she even wondered about hiring an escort! She was desperate!

We talked about the reality of the Holy Ghost as her companion, as she had indicated previously her strong belief in His guidance in her life. We talked together in a manner that increased the reality of His presence in her life: Could she imagine Him being right there with her at her brother’s wedding? How would she want to be, with Him right there by her side at the reception? What would she be drawn to say and do, with the Holy Ghost as her constant companion during this difficult time? How would she feel? How would she look?

One month later she wrote the following email: “Wendy:

I've been so excited to come back to Utah for the sole purpose of giving you an update. Christmas was wonderful! I can't remember when I've enjoyed being with my family more. We laughed and cried and ate and talked. It was really great. My little brother's wedding was just beautiful and I absolutely knew the Holy Ghost was there as my companion. It was such a positive experience for me and I left the reception that night knowing Heavenly Father really, really loves me. I was more myself than I've ever been and people kept telling me how happy I looked. That was such a great compliment."

Considering all that the Holy Ghost will do for, and with us, how can we increase our ability to have the Spirit with us in our therapy sessions? How can we live so that we can be co-therapists with the Holy Ghost in bringing healing to individuals, marriages and families? Each of us have had various experiences with the Spirit when we knew that "something different, something unexpected" happened in a session—times when we were moved beyond our own abilities to do or say something that turned out to be a turning point in a session. We have watched "something different" happen to a client or between clients. Something we just couldn't explain and had never seen before.

How can we continue to co-create those Spirit-saturated therapy sessions? Let me offer just two processes which invite the Spirit to be present during therapy. They are: Prayer and Preparation

PRAYER

President Boyd K. Packer said (2000, p. 7), speaking of the gift of the Holy Ghost, "It is awakened with prayer." So, let's start with prayer.

Is it ethical to pray to have the Spirit with you? Or is it an unfair advantage? Or is it unethical not to pray to have the Spirit with you when you know it will make a difference to therapy? Dr. Larry Dossey, who has studied the healing effects of prayer, suggests (1993) that if a health professional believes that prayer works, not to use it is analogous to withholding a potent medication or surgical procedure. Are we willing to really pray for our clients, for ourselves, for the presence of the Spirit? Really pray?

Lately, I've been drawn to the word "whatsoever" as it relates to receiving answers to prayers. In 1 John 3:22 we read, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Well, I'm willing to keep His commandments and I

hope, actually I strongly believe, that Spirit-saturated therapy is pleasing in His sight. And, then in Mormon 9:1 there is that wonderful "whatsoever" word again: "Whoso [also a great inclusive word] believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever, he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ, it shall be granted him and this is the promise unto all." Does this really mean: *Whatsoever I ask for?* Yes, if I am obedient and don't doubt, and if I ask the Father in the name of Christ, I will receive.. *Whatsoever I ask, even to be able to do "Spirit-saturated therapy"?* Yes! I take the Lord at His word. Check out all the scriptures on prayer. It's amazing how many passages include the word "whatsoever." What a reassuring word!

Another aspect of prayer has caught my attention lately. I've always loved the account of the Brother of Jared in the book of Ether (see Ether 1-3). His request of the Lord to touch the stones has always taught me about the need to be specific in my requests to the Lord. But his experience with the Lord has taught me something else lately: In Ether chapter 3, notice what else the Brother of Jared does to receive an answer. He keeps telling the Lord

- (a) what he knows the Lord can do,
- (b) what he needs the Lord to do, and
- (c) why he needs the Lord to do it.

Thus, the specific request of what he needs the Lord to do is nested in between acknowledging all the Lord can do, and providing a rationale for why he needs the Lord to do it.

For us, acknowledging what the Lord can do regarding therapy may involve acknowledging that:

- (a) we know He can heal our clients without our help,
- (b) he can help us speak what He needs to have spoken,
- (c) He can bring our clinical conceptual/perceptual and executive skills, which we have studied and learned, to our memory through the influence of the Spirit—and can enlarge and enlighten those same skills.

We need to tell the Lord what we know He is able to do for us and our clients. Then, if we continue to follow the Brother of Jared's example we will ask specifically for what we need in this particular therapy session with this particular client, couple or family.

To be able to be specific about what we need will mean that we will have prepared and studied the case prior to going to the Lord. And then we need to provide the Lord with a rationale. Tell the Lord why we need His help. We need to explain to the Lord the

reason we need Him to do what we've asked Him to do.

I have practiced the Brother of Jared's formula of:

- (a) acknowledging what the Lord can do,
- (b) making a specific request, and
- (c) offering a rationale about the request, and I have experienced a change in my prayers when I do.

I was once prompted to offer this formula at the end of a session to a client who was struggling with a life-changing decision. Her vicious cycle of internal conflict was escalating. A successful business woman and returned missionary, she found herself knowing all the right things to do to find out what the next step in her life should be, but not being able to do any of them. She felt numb. In fact, the only feeling she was certain of was that the heavens seemed to be made of brass. She wondered why she should even bother praying—which was one of the things she knew she “should” do. She was beating herself up because she was not praying, and thus the downward cycle continued.

A few days following our session she emailed me, saying:

I had a very meaningful fast and prayer on Sunday. I have been reading about the Brother of Jared as you suggested. I took a small step at attempting that kind of prayer and was surprised at how it made me feel. I can't really explain it but once I started acknowledging all I knew the Lord could do, it was as if it was increasing my faith even as I spoke the words and I could feel that. I don't know if that makes sense, but it gets me excited to study and move on with my life.

We can't leave a discussion on prayer without noting that in the house of the Lord, His temples, we learn to pray with power. What a difference that makes in our lives! I've noted elsewhere (Watson, 2001, pp. 153-161) the benefits of what could be called, “Celestial therapy,” which is available in every temple. Celestial therapy prepares me for increased companionship of the Spirit.

PREPARE FOR THE COMPANIONSHIP OF THE HOLY GHOST

A second process that allows me to experience Spirit-saturated therapy is preparation! In my ongoing effort to live up to the privilege of having the gift of the Holy Ghost, I have found that I need to prepare extensively. We are

bio-psycho-social spiritual beings, so I have found I need to prepare in every way—physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually—in order to have the Holy Ghost guide my best therapeutic assessments and interventions.

Almost two decades ago I realized I needed to be very careful about the things I listened to on the TV or radio, especially prior to a therapy session. Listening to music and watching TV are great de-stressors for me, but I found I couldn't just turn my spirit over to a DJ or TV producer if I was to have the Spirit with me in a session. I knew I had to do something different. So, I started to listen to the Book of Mormon on audio-tape as I got ready in the morning. On a heavy clinical day I knew I needed every ounce of spiritual strength and therefore screened everything I listened to, even being mindful of what I listened to on my drive to work. The scriptures became music to my ears, as did the truths about Joseph Smith offered by Truman Madsen (1978). As I grew in my ability to hear the voice of the Lord as brought to me by the Holy Ghost, I found that I was naturally drawn to increased fasting and prayer, to more frequent and intensive temple worship, and to writing my reflections about life in a journal.

I felt that I couldn't plead with the Lord to help me to be the best therapist I could be, without doing everything I could on my part—from reading extensively in professional books and journals to immersing myself in the scriptures. If the Holy Ghost was going to bring all things to my remembrance, I needed to have something in my mind and heart for Him to activate. Over time the scriptures shifted from being something to read at night before falling asleep, to becoming my friends who were raised up to shore me up, and to help me understand another piece of the puzzle with conflicted couples—like the day I opened the scriptures just minutes before an initial session with a couple and was drawn to the following words: “they buried their weapons of war for peace” (Alma 24:19). That scripture confirmed an intervention approach I had studied, and I was able to assist this couple clear away the debris that had built up in their 20-year marriage.

I'm sure you've found as I have, that when we pray for the Holy Ghost to help us see what the Lord wants to teach us in the scriptures, our eyes are changed so that verses salient to our struggles come suddenly into focus. For example, in preparing to speak with you today, “ethics” has obviously been on my mind. I found that as I read and listened to the scriptures, I heard things I hadn't heard before. I experienced Ammon's response to King Limhi (Mosiah 8: 6,

12-13) as highly ethical. You remember that King Limhi brought Ammon some very important and precious records and asked him if he could interpret languages. Ammon told him that he couldn't, and he referred King Limhi to one who could—a prophet! What a marvelous example of ethical behavior: not practicing outside the borders of competence!

Another example when my eyes and ears and heart were opened to truth by the scriptures is the encounter between Captain Moroni and Pahoran (Alma 59 & 60). I'm sure I had read that account many times before, but it was one day when I was once again in the midst of trying to understand what constrained marital emotional intimacy that Captain Moroni's and Pahoran's interaction really opened the eyes of my understanding. As I read Captain Moroni's letters requesting reinforcements from Pahoran, the escalating accusations and recriminations taught me three things that constrain emotional intimacy:

1. Rushing to judgment
2. Accusing others of negative intent
3. Failing to remember that things are rarely the way they appear to be

Here's what I saw in their interchange: in Alma 59, Moroni writes his first letter—a legitimate request. Then conditions get worse and so does Moroni's outlook! He moves from request, to guilt induction, to blatant accusation and recrimination! By Alma chapter 60, Moroni is accusing Pahoran of all kinds of things: attributing malevolent intent to Pahoran and characterizing him as selfish and neglectful. And how does Pahoran respond? Pahoran didn't say: "Why are you taking me on. You are falsely accusing me and I shouldn't help you at all with an attitude like that! With that miserable temper of yours you deserve everything you're getting and I pity your troops!" He said nothing like that! After all that Pahoran has been falsely accused of, listen to his response (Alma 61:9): "now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart."

Pahoran acknowledged that indeed Moroni had censured him, but said, "It doesn't matter. I am not angry; I rejoice in the greatness of your heart"—not even the "goodness" of your heart, but the "greatness"! That kind of response heals relationships and facilitates emotional intimacy and invites the Spirit to be present.

Having briefly discussed two processes namely, prayer and

immersion in the scriptures, which can assist us as we prepare for Spirit-saturated therapy, obviously it will ultimately be the Spirit Himself who will teach each us what we need to do to have His presence in our therapy sessions. As we continually seek to heed the promptings of the Spirit and offer Spirit-saturated therapy, He will bring us the voice of the Lord. Our therapeutic offerings to our clients will increasingly demonstrate that we are living up to our privilege of having a restored gospel enhanced view and we will indeed be the most ethical therapists on the planet.

In conclusion, listen to the words President Gordon B. Hinckley offered during the conclusion of General Conference in April 1998:

May the windows of heaven be opened and blessings be showered down upon us ... as we walk with boldness and in faith before the Lord to accomplish His eternal work. (1998, p. 88)

Brothers and sisters, in our professional lives, we need to walk with boldness and faith in order to help the Lord accomplish His eternal work. As Mormon counselors and psychotherapists, we are needed in building the Kingdom. We have a special privilege in being able to help individuals, couples and families. I believe the most ethical principles, practices, and/or procedures will flow from our efforts to live up to this magnificent privilege. And, I believe the most ethical thing we can do as Mormon counselors and psychotherapists is to live up to this privilege.

This weekend our new Conference Center will be dedicated. President Hinckley has once again set the example of how to do the seemingly impossible. Listen to his steps to success:

The building of this structure has been a bold undertaking. We worried about it. We prayed about it. We listened for the whisperings of the Spirit concerning it. And only when we felt the confirming voice of the Lord did we determine to go forward. (Hinckley, 2000, p. 34).

Thanks to the Prophet's vision and his spiritual tenacity, 21,000 saints sitting in 21,000 seats will now have access to an unobstructed view each time a meeting is held in the Conference Center. Tomorrow and Sunday, President Hinckley and other servants of the Lord will offer over 11 million saints gospel truths which will enrich, expand and enlarge our unobstructed view of life, the Lord's love of each of us, and

His way-beyond-ethical plan of happiness. I pray that at this most awesome time in the history of the Church and the world, we may have the courage to boldly and faithfully walk and talk, such that our professional lives will reflect the unobstructed view the restored gospel lens affords us.

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