

Good morning brothers and sisters! My name is Elder Clayton, and I am a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I am from Bountiful, Utah, and it is such an honor to be here in Forest City, North Carolina.

I want to begin with a quick story. When I was much younger, I was given a homework assignment in my science class to grow beans. The purpose of this assignment was to get me to think like a scientist and to test some things out. I chose to place various bean plants throughout my house based on how much sunlight they would get. I supposed that the ones I had placed closer to the sun would grow the most. However, none of them ended up growing all that much, because I forgot one critical aspect of growing: constant and consistent watering. While the consequences of my assignment are long gone at this point, I learned a valuable lesson that not only applies to beans, but to us as human beans, err I mean beings.

Beans, like lots of plants, begin as just a small little seed. By putting them in the right conditions and nurturing them, they can become converted into a fully grown plant. This conversion is a process which takes plenty of time. It also requires certain resources, such as nutritious soil, sunlight, and water.

We know from the scriptures that we are God's children, and children are often referred to as "seed." Just like the beans, we need a few things to grow into our divine potential which we qualify for, being God's children. Knowing what we can become isn't enough to make us into what we can become. Our testimony of the Gospel and of Jesus Christ is important, don't get me wrong, but having true faith inspires us to act on it.

I am reminded of the apostle Peter. Being with Christ since the beginning of His ministry, Peter gained a testimony like no other. He not only knew of Christ's character and teachings, but he also knew of Christ's central role as Savior of all mankind. Peter was even gifted the power of sealing families for eternity because of his rock solid testimony of the Christ.

However, Peter lacked the same thing my science project beans lacked. In Luke chapter 22, Christ says, "Simon, Simon, (Simon being a different name for Peter) behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." For a bit of context, this is during the last supper, after all that I had mentioned about the apostle Peter. There is no doubt that Peter had a testimony. However, Christ knew that testimony was not enough.

The conversion process requires living the gospel of Jesus Christ. By following in His footsteps, and truly trying to live like He did, we start to become like Him. I want to testify that I've seen these blessings in my life. I wouldn't be here on a mission, talking with strangers, teaching people our beliefs, and using my talents, if it weren't for the converting power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am a very different person than I was one month ago, one year ago, and especially one decade ago. And best of all, I'll be a very different person than I am right now in one month, one year, and especially one decade. The gospel inspires change for the better, if we are willing to let it work within us.

Like the beans, we need our own sunlight, water, and nutrients, that being faith in Jesus Christ and His atonement, repentance, and covenants. These principles are our nourishment that helps us grow. Beginning with faith, we will feel that desire to build ourselves up through Christ. He is the rock we build our foundation on.

Repentance is the key here. I want to make it clear that repentance isn't meant to be a sad thing, but a joyful thing. We have the opportunity through the atonement of Christ to align ourselves more with Christ and become like him. Essentially, we are tuning our radio to His station.

Lastly, when we are more aligned with him, we bind ourselves and commit to making and keeping covenants. Our Heavenly Father wants to give us so much. When we show that we love Him and are willing to do what he has asked of us, he will open the floodgates and bless us. These blessings, my favorite being the gift of the Holy Ghost, encourage us to repeat the process and show more faith, repent more, and keep more covenants.

From here it's a cycle where we improve on each round. This upward spiral helps us live up to our divine potential. It changes us to be like our Savior. We are literally converted as we live this gospel. We not only have more joy, more peace, more hope, and more love, but we also just feel more natural in helping others and keeping up our end of the covenant with God.

This brings me back to what Jesus told Peter, "and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." As part of our covenant to keep the commandments. We are asked to help one another. I love this line from the primary songbook in *He Sent His Son*, "What does the Father ask of us? What do the scriptures say? Have faith, have hope, live like His son, help others on their way."

Lucky for us, this call to strengthen thy brethren will come naturally. We will have that desire to help others. This gospel is not a selfish gospel. When Lehi partook of the fruit from the tree of life in his vision, his first thought was to share it with his family. We can do this in so many ways. A couple of my favorites include: inviting a friend to come to church, sharing scriptures through social media, praying for those close to you, and reaching out to someone you haven't talked to in a while. Whatever you may feel the call to do in this very moment, I want you all to do it! We know that if it's good; if it has the intention to spread joy and love, then it is of God. You will never have regrets from being generous, but you will have regrets from withholding.

I want to leave you all with my testimony. I know that Christ lives. I know that through Him we can do unimaginable things. We can change in ways we never knew were possible. I have seen this in myself as I've grown into the young man I am. I know that Christ's gospel is simple, and brings the best kind of joy: eternal joy. I know that the Book of Mormon teaches this, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet called of God in these latter days. I know that Christ is my redeemer. He loves me, and you, and you and you and you and all of you! I leave this with you, in His name, Jesus Christ, amen.

