

Learning to Loving Your Soul

Spiritual and Emotional

Not dealing with the root cause of a problem within our body, whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual, will eventually cause something, somewhere to BREAK.¹ For if our foundation is not sure and steadfast, we will be as the one who built his house upon the sand, so when the rains descend and the floods come, our fall will be great. The consequences of which might not only affect our eternal life in the world to come, but will greatly impact our happiness, joy, and peace in this present life as well.

2:74 And now my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye **must** build your foundation, that when the devil **shall** send forth his mighty winds; yea, his shafts in the whirlwind; **2:75** Yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have **no** power over you, to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a **sure** foundation, a foundation whereon if men build, they **can not** fall. [Helaman 2:74-75]

The Lord Jesus Christ is that sure foundation, and when we build and center our life upon Him we recognize the great goodness of God, His love, His mercy, His grace, and His justice. And while it is important to recognize that man is unworthy in the light of God's goodness, we must also know that man is not worthless. For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.² The measure of man is not what they are worth in the eyes of the world, but what they are worth in the eyes of God. In this truth, we see that we are all worth the same, for Christ both died and lived for all who will come unto Him.

Man *is* the pearl of great price, for God gave His everything to purchase us, even His Only Begotten Son. Yet when our foundation is not sure and steadfast, we begin to lose sight of this truth. And while some are still able to **see** the truth, they are not able to **experience** it. Sadly, others become blinded altogether. The effect in both instances is sorrow and pain. For without a knowledge and remembrance of the great goodness of God and of our own nothingness before Him, it is impossible to retain a remission of our sins. Without that remission, how can we rejoice, grow in the knowledge of the glory of God, and always be filled with His love? How can we fulfill the two greatest commandments, to love God with all our heart, might, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves? This is the foundation of Zion, "For this is Zion, THE PURE IN HEART."³

How then can we judge if we have truly built our foundation upon the Lord Jesus Christ? First, we must ask ourselves, "Do I always have the Spirit of God to be with me?" If not, then our relationship with the Father cannot be made perfect, and some portion of our soul will begin to weaken and suffer. If our

¹ Please note that the physical aspects of this work were compiled using Eric Wong's Precision Movement

² John 3:16-17

³ DC 94:5c

relationship with God, and thereby the Holy Ghost, is not reconciled, the weakness and suffering will continue to magnify. For those who continue to struggle in our relationship with the Lord, this pain can quickly turn into a self-hatred.

As the hatred for our self grows stronger and deeper, so does our pain, which ultimately begins to manifest itself into anger, depression, despair, and even sin. While some may be able to press forward, albeit slowly, all become ineffective in their life and ministry (at least in comparison of what they could become) and enter into the risk of breaking altogether. If we cannot love our self as Christ loves us, how can we love our neighbor? And if we cannot love them, how can we serve them, share with them, and ultimately point them to Christ and His Kingdom so that we might bring souls unto God?

If we cannot love our self, how can we love the God who made us? God never intended us to harbor a hatred for our soul. This is perhaps one of the greatest trials or threats that a son or daughter of God will face in their life as they seek to remain faithful to their covenant and endure unto the end. How then can we reconcile with our own soul so that we might build our foundation upon the Rock, who is the Son of God? For if we cannot correct this foundational relationship, how then can we be effective in our mission to establish Zion and to take part in God's great and marvelous work?

The utter necessity to love ourselves is clear, but the means to do so is often murky. How does a person learn to love themselves? Can we find the answer to this question in Scripture or through testimonies? Yes, we can. However, we can also find the necessary steps to love our own souls by examining our physical selves. Thereby, if we will combine these tools together, we begin to see a clear path forward in a way which ought to bring hope and encouragement. The way to Zion and to her King, the Lord Jesus Christ, must start within every heart and mind.

While searching for ways to improve my physical fitness, the Lord lead me to a group of exercise routines based upon kinesiology, which is the study of the mechanics of body movements. As I began to participate in the routines, I could not help but notice how they relate to our spiritual life. For example, the program is constructed upon the principle of building a functional foundation of correct movement and activation patterns (M/APs). This is important because, overtime, we can develop both dysfunctional muscles and dysfunctional structural alignments that alter our M/APs through excess strain and inefficient movement pattern choices. Eventually these dysfunctional M/APs produce compensational and dysfunctional movements which can result in pain or worse, in injury.

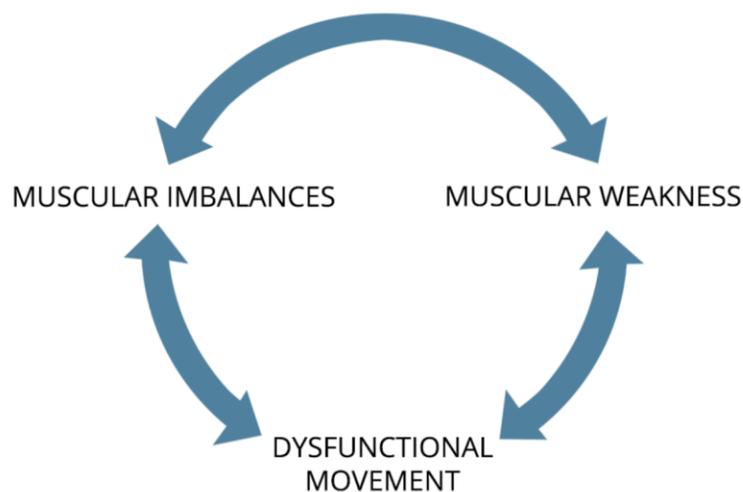
In the fitness world, people often attempt to treat the symptom of their weakness or pain, but fail to address the source of the problem. Thus instead of trying to sort through the different compensations that can layer upon each other, kinesiology teaches that one must go to the source of all movement. In other words, the structure and function of joints and muscles, and everything that functions to create movement.

The same is true spiritually and emotionally. For as we live in this present world and as life lays hold upon us, we tend to form dysfunctional responses to the situations we experience. If these are not addressed, we tend to fall back to them when certain events arise. Thus it feels as if we have no agency or choice, causing confusion, hurt, pain, and further hatred for ourselves. For some, we are left asking, "Why can I

not overcome this?” The answer is because we have not properly addressed the root cause, which is our relationship with God, with ours self, and with others as illuminated by the light of Christ and the Holy Ghost.

Dysfunctional and Compensatory Movement

Kinesiology explains that we form dysfunctional M/APs through three primary root causes, muscular imbalance, muscular weakness, and dysfunctional movement, with each cause influencing the other. Muscular imbalances are often a result of two things: repetitive positions or repetitive movements. Weakness also occurs, in part, as a result of repetitive positions or movements. If we start to engage in the same positions or movements repetitively, then our body struggles to respond when it is asked to do something different. However, weakness can also occur from the simple principle, “Use or lose it.” Finally, dysfunctional movement occurs as a result of either of the first two root causes, but it also occurs due to incorrect knowledge, coaching, or training of a movement. If someone is learning a movement but they learn a dysfunctional pattern instead and then continue to train that pattern, they are programming their neuromuscular system with this dysfunctional pattern so this becomes their default way of executing this movement.



For example, professional cyclists saddle their riding bikes for hundreds, if not thousands, of miles per week, which they often do for years or decades. Doing so results in the adaptive shortening of the hip flexors due to both position (sitting without ever moving the hip into full extension) and activation (everything is strengthened in this limited position) to the point where true extension of the hip cannot be achieved. This also impacts their internal and external hip rotation, causing it to shorten and weaken. Ultimately, this creates muscular imbalance and weakness and limits their hip movements during those times when they are off the bike. Thus, because they have lost both range and strength in various movements and muscles, any task which requires the abilities that they have lost will result in some type of compensation or dysfunctional movement. Over time, moving in a compensated way can result in pain or injury.

To continue with this example, certain muscles may weaken because the cyclist is not achieving full extension as stated previously. Thereby, when they attempt an activity which requires this muscle to create or stabilize movement, it is too weak to contribute properly. In response, their neuromuscular system finds an alternate way of achieving their movement goal. This is defined as a compensatory movement pattern. However, this will effectively program the cyclist's neuromuscular system with a dysfunctional pattern so it becomes their default method for executing this movement.

Nevertheless, dysfunctional movements can also occur either because of incorrect knowledge, coaching, or training of a movement, or because of injury. For example, when a person sprains their ankle, the lateral ankle ligaments are partially or completely torn, which immobilizes the ankle in order to give time to heal, and thereby causes the ankle and foot muscles to weaken from not being used. If this person does not allow for proper rehabilitation, they risk compensatory and or dysfunctional M/APs, which may lead to issues in the calves, knees, hips, lower back, and even shoulders. If the source is not corrected, these M/APs will cause pain and or further injury.

3-Step Process to Healing

A person may restore proper function in their feet, ankles, knees, etc. with the following process, which includes (1) addressing structural limitations, (2) activation and dissociation, and (3) functional integration. First, if the active and passive structures of a person's joints do not allow proper movement, no amount of training will correct it. Thus the first step is to address joint mobility and tissue quality while simultaneously working on the techniques for the next step, activation and dissociation.

Before one can move properly, they must break their old, dysfunctional patterns. There is a saying in the neuroscience world which states, "Neurons that fire together, wire together." Neurons are the brain cells that store the information that control every process in our body, including all movements from blinking to wiggling our baby toe. If certain movements are always performed together, they can become associated through repetition. Dissociation is the act of breaking associated patterns, which we can accomplish by performing the opposite movement. This is done in order to open up one's neuromuscular system so that they can independently control every joint, movement, and even muscle. Doing so creates a plethora of smooth, controlled movements to choose from in order to accomplish whatever movement task is at hand.

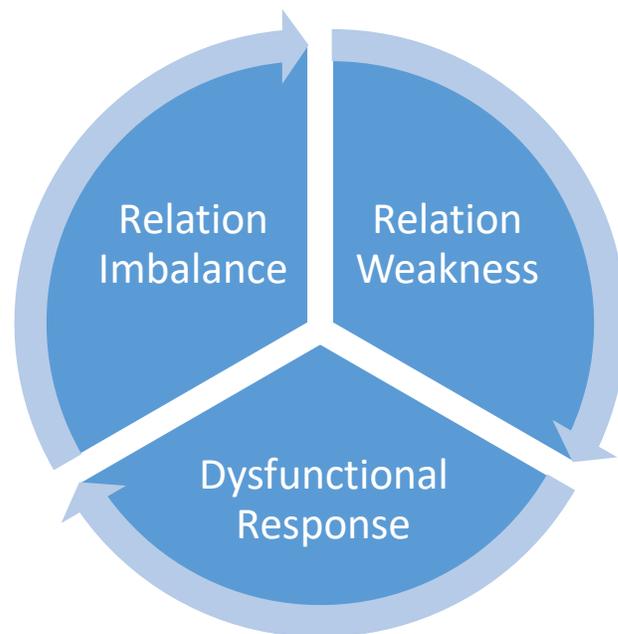
Through dissociation, our body now has more options which increases our chance to move in the most optimal way, whether executing the movement as fast as possible, with minimal energy lost, minimal tissue strain, etc. Dissociation gives us the power to choose the right M/AP for the job. However, once a person breaks their old patterns, they must ensure that all their muscles are active and strong enough to perform the tasks demanded of them. Some muscle may have atrophied due to dormancy. Building strength is the next step in the activation process. This is done by repeatedly applying the principle of progressive overload. Then one must combine these steps together in a way that serves their life and movement pursuits.

Finally, now that a person's slate is clean in regards to their M/AP, they are ready to integrate everything into functional M/APs so that their body can move freely and without pain. All of one's previous work

culminates into creation functional M/APs so that when they navigate their life, they will have solid M/APs from which to move from, minimizing injury risk and maximizing performance.

Spiritual and Emotional Dysfunctional Movement Patterns

While the above information might be interesting, how does it apply to our spiritual, emotional, and mental welfare? The truth is that our spiritual and emotional state seems to act in the same way that our bodies do, meaning that we, through incorrect relationships with our Heavenly Father, our self, and or our neighbors, tend to form compensatory and dysfunctional responses. We form these responses through three primary root causes, namely, relation imbalance, relation weakness, and dysfunctional response. Again, just as in kinesiology, each root cause influences the other.



Life in this present world consists of relationships, whether it be with God, our self, or others. The truth of this concept is evident in the two great commandments, that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as our self. Jesus defined this love further by saying, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you... Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends... A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”⁴ As the light and truth of Christ penetrates our heart, it ought to illuminate the verity that we are worth something to God, and because He gave us His Only Begotten Son, God is calling us to a higher standard of living, which is His Kingdom.

After Jesus taught the two greatest commandments, one of the scribes answered Him saying... “Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but Him. And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength; and to

⁴ John 15:9 and 13; John 13:34

love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.⁵” Jesus responded by saying... “Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.⁶” How far are we from the Kingdom? What is the state of our relationship with God and with our neighbor?

According to the Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, the word relation is ... “the connection between things... or what one thing is with regard to another; as the *relation* of a citizen to the state; the *relation* of a subject to the supreme authority; the *relation* of husband and wife, or of master and servant; the *relation* of a state of probation to a state of retribution.”⁷ In part, the Gospel is about the quality of our relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is displayed through our relationships with our self and our neighbor.

However, while our relationships ultimately conclude with God, it is difficult to relate to this level of relationship, especially at first. Therefore, the first level of relation that we will focus upon is the relationship we have with our own self. The foundation for this relationship is our sense of self-worth and value. If this relation is imbalanced, it will also affect how we value others. This imbalance occurs in one of two ways. One, we believe that we have little or no worth. Two, we believe that we are worth more than others. In either situation, our relation with our self and our neighbor will be effected.

Relation imbalance coincides with relation weakness. The more we struggle to believe or to see that we have value or that we are worth the same as our neighbor, the greater our relations will weaken and become unstable. The more unstable our relations become the more susceptible we are to dysfunctional responses, such as anger, doubt, envy, fear, guilt, hatred, jealousy, lust, mocking, pride, self-abasement (in a negative sense, not true humility), self-pity, etc. If we continue down this path, we begin to respond to life and to God in a spiritually, emotionally, and mentally dysfunctional way without even realizing what we are doing. This creates the illusion that we do not have a choice nor do we have self-control. Thus our agency becomes compromised as our intelligence, meaning our ability to discern good from evil, becomes darkened. This will inevitably lead to pain, indifference, or even sin, unless this pattern is broken.

It is important to recognize that these three root causes are not always initiated by the person themselves, but by outside forces, such as other individuals or environments. Nevertheless, as difficult as it may appear, we always have a choice. The purpose of this work, in part, is to reestablish our agency so that we can make a godly choice. Apostle Arthur Oakman once said, “Nobody is anybody until someone loves them.” Without the reception of love from our families, friends, or peers, it is difficult to establish the proper relation balance. If a person grows up from a toddler, to a teenager, to an adult without ever receiving love, whether truthfully or perceived, this will obviously have a profound impact upon their life. It will effect both their relationship with their own self and with others.

For example, a person who has never felt loved might have a very low perception of self-worth. As this imbalance persists, it will become engraved in their heart and mind. Their natural default to life might become, “I am worthless, no one loves me, why should I even love myself.” Such dysfunctional responses might easily turn into self-loathing. However, such a person might also, because they have never felt

⁵ Mark 12:37-38

⁶ Mark 12:39

⁷ <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/relation>

loved by those who were closest to them, go above and beyond to try and get those around them to love them. Such a dysfunctional response might lead to insecurity and cause them to forget that it is also important to love others. Observably, the number of possible scenarios based upon these three root causes is perhaps limitless. Admittedly, not everyone will relate to these broad examples, so let us examine the following scenario:

The other day, while driving to work, I realized that I forgot my breakfast and lunch at home. If anyone knows me, they know how particular I am when it comes to food. So of course, I was instantly upset and angry. How could I do something so foolish. I cannot do anything right. I am worthless. After a few moments of calming myself down, saying, "It is okay, I will not die." I started to feel a little better. However, after I walked from my car to the building, and then to my desk, I again started to think on what I had done. Almost instantly I was back to my anger. This anger was directed at myself, but now it had put me in such a state where I was short with my co-workers...

Whether we experience anger, pride, hatred of self, self-abasement, lust, etc., these spiritual, emotional, and mental dysfunctional responses can be traced back to a relation imbalance, a relation weakness, or a dysfunctional response that has become our default. This dysfunction can quickly create the illusion that we have no choice or control over ourselves, and worse, they tend to separate us from the Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. This pattern can swiftly snowball and perpetuate itself until we feel all is lost. We become discouraged, frustrated, and lose all hope. So what can we do to stop this destructive pattern?

3-Step Process to Spiritual and Emotional Healing and Restoration

The purpose of the Restoration movement is centered upon Jesus Christ our Lord. It is only in and through Him that we can become restored to our proper image by the power of the Holy Ghost. In the parable of the prodigal son, we read the story of a certain man who had two sons. The younger son asked his father for his portion of the inheritance, to which the father readily obliged. Upon receiving his inheritance, the son quickly departed from the home and wasted his substance with riotous living. After he had spent all his wealth, a terrible famine came upon the land, forcing the young man to work for a pig farmer. It is important to note that Jews view swine as terribly unclean, thus the fact that the son was working in the fields to feed the swine indicates the low state in which he found himself.

At this moment, while the young man was arguably at lowest point of his life, something profound occurred. Jesus records that... "he came to *himself*.⁸" In other words, he realized that this was not the man he was supposed to be. He was not the servant of a pig farmer who had once been a rich and beloved son, he was a rich and beloved son who had lost sight of himself because of his riotous living. The same principle applies to us, for in the Lord Jesus Christ we see clearly who we are, we are children of God. For He made us, purchased us, and seeks to redeem us. In order to restore proper spiritual, emotional, and mental response patterns in our life so that we might become one with Christ and pure in heart, we must (1) address our limited view and understanding of our true worth, (2) dissociate our dysfunctional patterns

⁸ Luke 15:15

by applying prayer, study, and fasting, and (3) walk in a newness of life through faith, hope, charity, and humility.

Address Our Limited View and Understanding of Our True Worth

First, if we do not understand what we mean to God, no amount of Church related activities, while certainly a good start, will ever set us completely free. For these things alone will not bring us to our true self. In the situation with the young son, it is noticeable that he had an elevated sense of self-worth, as he felt entitled to his inheritance and demanded his father to give it to him on his terms, rather than his father's. As these desires and ideas began to settle within the young man's heart and mind, his relation with his father and with his true self became imbalanced and weak, causing him to forget, or even ignore, the love that his father had for him. Without the true weight of his father's love in mind, perhaps it became easy for the young man to no longer respect his father or his authority. As these thoughts grew deeper, perhaps the son questioned, "Why should I wait for my inheritance when I want it now. Why would it be such a bad thing to receive it?" Thus the relation imbalance created a weakness in the young man's spiritual sight and perpetuated the dysfunctional response, pride.

While the possible circumstances and scenarios that we might face in our lives today are endless, we can easily follow a similar path with our Heavenly Father. Undoubtedly, the son never set out to hurt his father or himself, but as the sight of his true self grew dim, so did his willingness to obey his father diminish until he was completely swallowed up by life due to his riotous living. It is crucial to understand however that not everyone's path is as egregious as the young man's. But like him, very few set out to be desperately wicked. Unfortunately, if we do not see how much our soul is worth, whether we lost sight of this truth or never gained it to start with, the instability which comes in the wake of such an imbalance can lead to pain, suffering, and even sin. For the young man, he had to hit bottom before he came to himself and thus was able to truly reconcile with his father. Hopefully, that is not the destiny which we will choose.

To begin the process of restoration, we must first gain a true sense of self-worth. However, this is incredibly difficult for many of us. For how do we truly learn to love our self? We have heard of the Father's love for us in countless classes and sermons, and yet this fundamental principle of the Gospel is so hard to truly feel within our own soul. While we might study the scriptures regarding the love of God, we do not always connect them to ourselves as individuals. And though it is important to read these scriptures as they can help us to understand God's love in an academic way, unless the Spirit is present as we feast upon them, the veracity surrounding our true value will inevitably escape us. So how do we gain this insight? And how do we feast upon the scriptures which testify of our Father's love?

The young man did not come to himself simply by reading about his father's love, but as he recognized his dire circumstance, he remembered what it was like when he lived with his father. As this realization struck him, the young son set his life to return to his father in the hope that his father might forgive him. When the young man returned home, he received a perfect knowledge of his father's love by the way that the father embraced him. This example is true for us as well. We know that we have great value in the eyes of God because of the gift of Jesus Christ, but how will we ever gain a perfect knowledge of our worth unless we exercise our faith by coming unto the Father in the name of the Son? To come unto the Father

so that we might comprehend how much we mean to Him, we must not only believe in Jesus Christ, but receive Him.

“**50:8e** Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me; and none of them that my Father hath given me shall be lost; **50:8f** and the Father and I are one; I am in the Father and the Father in me; and ***inasmuch*** as ye have ***received*** me, ye are ***in*** me, and I ***in*** you; wherefore I am ***in*** your midst; **50:8g** and I am the good Shepherd (and the stone of Israel: he that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall), and the day cometh that you shall hear my voice and see me, and know that I am. Watch, therefore, that ye may be ready. Even so. Amen.” [DC 50:8e-f]

The Lord Jesus Christ promised that inasmuch as we receive Him, we are in Him and He is in our midst. It is the Father’s desire that we might fully understand how precious we are to Him. For He has expressed that He remembers and loves each individual through the testimony of His Son. This testimony teaches that no man, woman, or child is above another, for we all rely upon the grace of God, yet we also see that we are not inconsequential to the Lord. King Benjamin testified that we will always have a relation balance and an exceeding great joy in our souls if we will remember two things. First, that we always retain a remembrance of the greatness of God, and second, that we remember our unworthiness before Him. However, we must never confuse unworthiness, with worthlessness. They are not the same. Why would Jesus Christ choose to live, die upon a cross, rise from the dead, and return to the earth for something that was of no worth?

Dissociate Our Dysfunctional Patterns by Applying Prayer, Study, and Fasting

As we start the process to restoration and healing by seeking our true self-worth, we will undoubtedly notice dysfunctional spiritual, emotional, and mental patterns in our lives. In the parable of the prodigal son, the young man became aware of his pride once he reached rock bottom. However, there are other avenues to break our destructive patterns. Namely, a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is through this relationship that we are able to receive light upon our pathway so that we might know the way we ought to walk and live, as well as the strength to do so. For as we discover our dysfunctional responses, we also see that it is often difficult to break them. So how do we develop our relationship with God in such a way that we have power to overcome all things, even ourselves?

“**12:1** And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon, southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met the sons of Mosiah, journeying towards the land of Zarahemla. **12:2** Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly, to see his brethren; **12:3** And what ***added more*** to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had ***waxed strong*** in the knowledge of the truth; **12:4** For they were men of a ***sound*** understanding, and they had ***searched*** the scriptures ***diligently***, that they might know the word of God. **12:5** But this is not all: they had given themselves to much ***prayer***, and ***fasting, therefore*** they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God.” [Alma 12:1-5]

Study, prayer, and fasting is essential in our walk with Jesus Christ, as well as for our life in His Kingdom. Through study we learn of God, through prayer we commune with God, and through fasting we rejoice in God. These three principles are not merely good habits of behavior, but they are key in order to dissociate ourselves from current and past destructive patterns. Consider the following scenario from our brother Nephi:

3:29 For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children. **3:30** Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

3:31 Nevertheless, the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me His great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth, O wretched man that I am; yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh.

3:32 My soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. **3:33** I am encompassed about because of the temptations and the sins which doth so easily beset me. **3:34** And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

3:35 My God hath been my support; He hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep. **3:36** He hath filled me with His love, even unto the consuming of my flesh. **3:37** He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake before me.

3:38 Behold, He hath heard my cry by day, and He hath given me knowledge by visions in the night time. **3:39** And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before Him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and angels came down and ministered unto me. **3:40** And upon the wings of His Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceeding high mountains. **3:41** And mine eyes have beheld great things; yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them.

3:42 O then, if I have seen so great things; if the Lord in His condescension unto the children of men, hath visited me in so much mercy, why should my heart weep, and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?

3:43 And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh? **3:44** Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart, to destroy my peace and afflict my soul?

3:45 Why am I angry because of mine enemy?

3:46 Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. **3:47** Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. **3:48** Do not anger again, because of mine enemies. **3:49** Do not slacken my strength, because of mine afflictions. **3:50** Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee for ever; yea, my soul will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

3:51 O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? **3:52** Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? **3:53** Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin? **3:54** May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite?

3:55 O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road? **3:56** O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness? **3:57** O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies? **3:58** Wilt thou make my path straight before me? **3:59** Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way? **3:60** But that thou wouldst clear my way before me, and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.

3:61 O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee for ever. **3:62** I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. **3:63** Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm. **3:64** Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. **3:65** Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss: therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. **3:66** Behold, my voice shall for ever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen.”
[2 Nephi 3:29-66]

Even though Nephi was man of God, one who had received countless experiences, he still struggled with sin and temptation just as we do today. How was he able to overcome? The answer is in his testimony above. For we read that Nephi studied (“...For my soul *delighteth in the scriptures*, and my heart pondereth them...”), he prayed (“...And by day have I waxed bold in *mighty prayer* before Him...”), and he fasted (“...*Rejoice*, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul... *Rejoice*, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say, O Lord, I will praise thee for ever...”).

Ultimately, these principles allowed Nephi to see the destructive patterns he might have had in his life, and the strength to dissociate himself from them. In so doing, Nephi’s relationship with the Lord went beyond faith and into a perfect knowledge, insomuch that he exclaimed... “He [God] hath ***filled me*** with His love, even unto the consuming of my flesh...” There is nothing that keeps us from having this same relationship with God except ourselves. There is great hope in the light of this truth, for we see that we only need to overcome our self, which is more than possible in Jesus Christ.

Walk in a Newness of Life through Faith, Hope, Charity, and Humility

As we begin to dissociate our dysfunctional patterns through study, prayer, and fasting, we must ask, “What is all this for, why are we doing this? Is it only for me as an individual?” While we are focusing on our self in these processes, the ultimate objective in doing so is not only that we might live joyfully in the Kingdom, but so that we might also assist God in Zion. For Zion is crucial to our restoration and healing, in that it provides the avenue for us to exercise our faith, hope, charity and humility. This is the beauty of God’s great and marvelous work, for God saves men by bestowing upon them the dignity of great tasks. In this, we are not simply striving for healing and restoration for own sake alone, as this would be selfish, which is opposite to Christ’s selfless nature. Instead, our hope in doing so is to find joy and happiness in this life, and the life to come, by seeking to promote the joy and happiness of God.

The final process of our restoration is to gather all that we have learned in the first two steps, and integrate them into a new life. God has called His children to mortify their old man, and... “put on the new man,

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”⁹ The Lord explained the way to do so in His answer to Moroni’s prayer concerning the weakness of his writing.

“**5:27** And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying, Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; and if men come unto me, I will shew unto them their weakness. **5:28** I give unto men weakness, that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. **5:29** Behold, I will shew unto the Gentiles their weakness, and I will shew unto them that faith, hope, and charity, bringeth unto me the fountain of all righteousness.”
[Ether 5:27-29]

While each principle of faith, hope, charity, and humility, is important, and though each principle is a study in and of themselves, humility is the key to establishing a right relationship with both God and our self. A humble person is one who has control over their own heart and mind, which is why Mormon wrote to his son, saying... “And again, behold I say unto you, that he can not have faith and hope, save he shall be meek and lowly of heart; if so, his faith and hope are vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly of heart.”¹⁰ As we strive to humble ourselves before the Lord, we must begin to ask ourselves the difficult questions. The purpose of which is not to berate ourselves for our mistakes or sins, but instead to see the steps we ought to take so that we can walk in a newness of life. In so doing, we will be able to respond with the pure love of Christ in any situation that we might find ourselves in. Please ask yourself the following questions:

Faith: Do you have faith that God loves you? Do you have faith that God loves the world? If no, what steps ought we to take in order to exercise our faith that God is love? How do we discover the truth for ourself? Have you spent time in prayer, study, and fasting? If the answer is yes, how should we respond to God’s love?

Hope: Do you have hope in the promises of God? Do you have hope in the atonement of Christ? Do you hope that He will answer your prayers and your questions? Do you have hope in a better world? Do you have hope that Zion will be? Do you have hope in the resurrection and eternal life? If you do not hope, what assurances will you have? “...hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.”¹¹

Charity: Do you have charity, or the pure love of Christ? Have you experienced it in your life? Have you prayed...“unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love which He hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of His Son Jesus Christ...?”¹² If we have not done so, when will we start?

⁹ Ephesians 4:24

¹⁰ Moroni 7:49-50

¹¹ Ether 5:4

¹² Moroni 7:73

Humility: “Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble?¹³” If we have not, then Jesus would counsel us, saying... “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.¹⁴” Have we delayed our coming unto Christ? How much longer shall we delay?

Conclusion

The truth is that though we frequently hear the message of Zion and Christ’s Kingdom, many of us are struggling with all sorts of trials. Some are of our own making, while others are outside our control. These tribulations can beat us down, leaving us discouraged and defeated. And yet God is calling us to do more for Him and for His creation. The question inevitably comes, “How can I do more when I am... [fill in the blank]?” Yet the way for healing and restoration so that we are no longer filled with anger, doubt, envy, fear, guilt, hatred, jealousy, lust, mocking, pride, self-abasement (in a negative sense, not true humility), self-pity, etc., is come unto the Father through Jesus Christ, His Son.

When we fall into these dysfunctional spiritual, emotion, and mental responses, it feels as if we lose all self-control, and even worse, our agency. Perhaps we have spent countless hours in prayer, asking God to take these things away. However, the Father has promised through His Son, that He will never infringe upon our agency. He cannot necessarily take them away, but He can provide the strength for us to give them away if we are ready and desiring. Whether it be depression, anxiety, self-centeredness, homosexual desires or feelings, excess laughter, or even slothfulness, God has provided a way that we might overcome, that we might endure, that we might stand fast, that we might have joy and happiness, that we might have freedom, that we might learn to love our self.

Loving ourselves rightly is truly the way to eternal and everlasting happiness. What is more, it is also the way to Zion and to abide in the Kingdom of God forever, to go no more out. However, to love ourselves we must (1) address our limited view and understanding of our true worth, (2) dissociate our dysfunctional patterns by applying prayer, study, and fasting, and (3) walk in a newness of life through faith, hope, charity, and humility. These steps require that we discover and address the root causes of our dysfunctional responses. To do so however, we must be vigilant in our heart and mind. These processes are not for the casual glance, to pick them up and put them back on the shelf. Our eye must be single upon them. It will require discipline, desire, and commitment, just as when we entered into the covenant of baptism, saying, “Father, I want to be a disciple of Christ.”

¹³ Alma 3:48

¹⁴ Matthew 11:29-30