

FROM THE PULPIT

# Listen and you'll hear God calling

By Brad Bryant

FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

God spoke through ancient prophets, and continues to speak today! The Community of Christ "encourages" God to continue speaking, by having an open, growing set of scriptures. In latter-day revelation, God said,

"My spirit is reaching out to numerous souls even now, and there are many who will respond if you, my people, will bear affirmative testimony of my love and my desires for all to come unto me." (Doctrine & Covenants 3:9b 1978)

Today's world often separates us from each other, and rates us from each other, and from God. American society says "solve your own problems," "don't ask for help." But God did not design us to be individual "superheroes." He designed us to be nurtured and supported within his family. In Genesis, God said "it is not good that (people) should be alone." We are created to be in relationships: with spouse and family, with friends, with our God!

Today, God is inviting us back. He created each person

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uniquely, and for specific purposes. He put you in this time and place to allow you to help build his kingdom, based on Jesus' model of joy, hope, love and peace. You have a role in God's plan!

This same God who said in 1978: "My Spirit is reaching out ..." is still reaching out, inviting you to grow into closer relationship with him.

How do we recognize the "voice of God"? God speaks in many ways, including:

- ▶ "Thoughts and ideas" for us to act upon.
- ▶ A voice or sense of direction.
- ▶ An unfulfilled need/desire.
- ▶ Words of Scripture.
- ▶ Counsel from wise, God-centered friends.

Any of these can help you better understand God's de-

sires for you.

God wants everyone to be part of his family. He invites, but he will not force anyone to "come home" to experience his peace, healing and hope. Each person must learn to "listen to the voice that echoes across the eons of time and yet speaks anew in this moment." (Doctrine & Covenants, 162:1b 2004)

The voice who guided Adam, Moses and Jesus invites you to "listen and follow." God has not changed in wanting to build relationships with his children! But it is often hard to "hear" God, when we're enmeshed in our own problems and distractions. To better

"hear" him we need to regularly "step out" of our "normal" world and into relationship with God's family (the

church).

People often respond to spiritual "emptiness" with "things." God says: "Many are fearful and believe their security is to be found in the accumulation of possessions. The answers you seek are not inherent in the things of this world, but in a faith that places its trust in the promises given to all who would follow Jesus Christ." (Doctrine & Covenants, 162:7b 2004)

Following Jesus releases promises, because Jesus enables a new encounter with God: the source of all blessings. By choosing to respond to Jesus' invitation, we experience scriptural blessings:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Does following Jesus make your problems go away? No! But when you choose to be baptized in water, God forgives the sins and mistakes in your past, removing your burden of guilt or shame. Rest!

When you choose the second part of baptism (baptism of the Holy Spirit), you enter into a covenant (a two-way, un-

breakable promise), where God promises "I am with you always." (Matthew 28:19)

That's powerful! God will live with you!

God continues: "Do not be discouraged. You have not been promised an easy path, but you have been assured that the Spirit that calls you will also accompany you." (Doctrine & Covenants, 162:3a 2004)

"Continue to be strong in faith. To you who hear my voice and know my promises, I will reveal myself and give my peace, even in the midst of your uncertainties." (Doctrine & Covenants, 158:11a 1992)

Jesus' message is for you today: God loves you unconditionally, and wants you to find Him and choose to be with Him. Search until you find a church family that helps you meet the "living, loving God," who knows you personally, and wants to travel through your life with you. It is in this relationship that you will find the blessings you seek.

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