

Our Primary children sing “I’m trying to be like Jesus.”⁹⁷⁰ Whatever we call it, this journey is the gospel’s central concern.

Some non-LDS observers of our Church think we haven’t made this concept very clear. One of them said that while Mormons emphasize “Christ’s dying for humanity,” they don’t go on and “link the Atonement to that part of the [LDS] ‘plan of salvation’ that involves progression toward godhood.”⁹⁷¹ In other words, she thinks we haven’t explained what the Atonement has to do with becoming like Jesus.

Another prominent observer recently chided us for not explaining in a public way what he called our “doctrine of the perfectibility of mankind into divine form.”⁹⁷² In fact, however, the Restoration answers these questions with stunning clarity...

Let’s clarify a point here that we sometimes miss. Some describe the entire spiritual growth process as faith, repentance, baptism, and the Holy Ghost—as if once we’ve received the Holy Ghost, the hard work is done and our exaltation is assured, so long as we don’t do something seriously wrong. “Endure to the end,” we say, as if that means relaxing in some eternal rocking chair.⁹⁷³ God will just reel us in, like a fish hooked on a line. But it’s not quite that simple.

On the contrary, receiving the Holy Ghost marks the *beginning* of our real spiritual growth, not the *end* of it.⁹⁷⁴ Baptism and the Holy Ghost only let us enter “in by the gate.”⁹⁷⁵ Then the Holy Ghost leads us along the “strait and narrow path”⁹⁷⁶ of becoming sanctified disciples—not as narrow spectators but by our straining every spiritual muscle, drinking in the power of temple ordinances, and feasting actively on Christ’s words to nourish us in becoming ever more holy.⁹⁷⁷ And the long-term goal of that journey is to become like Him.

Does the Atonement have anything to do with this higher, developmental part of the journey or is it limited to the forgiveness part? Moroni taught that Christ’s grace helps us move well beyond forgiveness toward becoming like Him, or sanctified. He wrote, “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.”⁹⁷⁸

So, after weeding out our worldly ways, Christ’s perfecting grace helps us replace those weeds with the divine flowers of Christlike attributes. You might say He wants to plant a garden in us. But we must satisfy certain conditions for this growth to occur, just as we had to satisfy the condition of repentance in order to receive forgiveness....

As we approach the second barrier of sacrifice, we move symbolically from the moon to the sun. All of the moon’s light is reflected from the sun—it is borrowed light.⁹⁷⁹ Heber C. Kimball used to say that when life’s greatest tests come, those who are living on borrowed light—the testimonies of others—will not be able to stand.⁹⁸⁰ We need our own access to the light of the Son.

970 *New Songbook*, pp. 78-79.

971 J. Shippy, *Sojourner*, p. 112.

972 N. Feldman, *Mormonism*.

973 See *Endnote 5-72*, p. 451.

974 See *Endnote 5-73*, p. 452.

975 2 Nephi 31:18.

976 2 Nephi 31:19.

977 See 2 Nephi 32:3-6.

978 Moroni 10:32; see also v. 33.

979 See book of Abraham, Facsimile 2, figure 5.

980 O. F. Whitney, *Kimball*, pp. 446, 450.