

How to Learn Truth

I have been reading a set of novels the last few days that describe a world heavily influenced by magic. One of the abilities that some people have is the ability to see in the dark. As I came downstairs last night to check on something just before going to bed I looked into the darkened front room, and thought, "Too bad I don't have that power." That led to the thought that it would be really interesting if there were such things in the world. I was actually starting to think about that in a somewhat serious mode, considering what it would be like if some people had these superior powers.

It was at that point that I was strongly impressed by the Spirit to realize that such a thing would be contrary to the nature of heaven, because it is vital that all men have equal access to the powers of heaven¹. For a moment I pondered what a fundamental truth that is, and then I was interested that I had learned such a thing by reading a novel, in particular since spending too much time on novels is something I have specifically been counseled not to do.

So then I thought about how I might have reinforced that thought in a more righteous fashion, and immediately was led to the story of the old king in Alma 22²:

And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: what shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy. But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

The king appealed to a royal road to heaven: "I will forsake my kingdom," but Aaron referred him back to the same steps anyone can, and must, take to access the powers of heaven: "...bow down before

1 The doctrine itself is quite interesting. The essential concepts of the gospel, those that are necessary to achieve salvation, must be simple enough to be grasped by a child, and so fundamental that no amount of human experience or learning makes them more accessible.

2 Alma 22:15,16

God, yea, ... repent of all thy sins, and ... bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive.”

As I pondered this experience I was struck by the thought that, although I was taught a principle while doing something other than what the Lord has commanded, I could have learned it more purely and clearly if I had been taking the Lord's approach to slearning. Our God is willing to teach us in any circumstance or at any time that we are willing to turn ourselves toward him, but the greatest blessings are available only when we are continually turned toward him.