

*Eye That See, Ears That Hear*

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So I hope you don't mind I'm going to go first. I'd like to say that, yes Polynesians are fun. However, even like the Native American's we may be quiet at first you get to know us and we get pretty loud, especially if you bring food.

My name is Quintina Bear-Chief Adolpho. My Blackfoot name is "Natoi Moo ni sa ki", which means holy otter woman. Yes I have a PhD, but I don't consider myself a scholar by any means. If you knew me you wouldn't believe that I got a PhD. I do know how to work. I know how to put my head down and get to work and I am persistent. My husband might call that hardheadedness. I just wanted to have you get to know me a little bit. I was talking to Heavenly Father and I was like, "Why are you wanting me to speak? I don't like speaking in front of people, especially white people." But He said, "Well they need to get to know you a little bit." And so okay I agreed.

The common question I get asked by fellowships that I meet for the first time is, "How did you become a member of the church in the first place?" I have come to recognize that what they really want to know is how an American Indian became a Mormon. So I'll start there.

In 1975 my father was a drunk. Having suffered being forced to live on the reservation and then forced to assimilate into the white culture, being beaten, abused, and brain-washed in boarding school. His identity was taken when they tossed his moccasins, cut his braids, drenched him in Lyme and beat him for speaking his first language, Blackfoot. Wandering through life at the age of 36 with 5 children was where he found himself. He was on his last leg, and my mom threatened to leave him. He sought an answer from God and the missionaries appeared at the door. When I was a year old my parents and my family converted to Mormonism. I never got the chance to learn Blackfoot, and while I had the benefit of being raised in a Mormon home I wasn't free of the social problems of reservation life. However, because of my membership in the LDS church I met my husband at BYU. I can't begin to express the value the scriptures have

had in my life. I was plucked from the ashes of a miserable existence and led to joy, peace, and happiness. Two years ago made 40 years since my father's conversion in 1975. I will always express deep gratitude for being Mormon because of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith.

The theme of my talk, *Eyes that See and Ears that Hear*. In Nibley's book, Temple and the Cosmos, he teaches the difference between a sign, a name, and a token as a drawing nearer and nearer to God. He states that a person can wave a sign and it can be seen from a far distance, but if they were to yell a name they must be closer for it to be heard, and finally the exchange of a token can only be done in an intimate person-to-person setting. In my mind, I can connect eyes that see with being able to see a sign and ears that hear with being able to hear a name. I will use the allegory of the Olive Tree in Jacob 5 to expound on this point, but I will attempt to persuade you by first sharing with you my perspective.

Having been raised on the Blackfoot reservation in Alberta, Canada, I have been immersed in a box mentality for most of my life. I was told, by the dominant white world, how I was supposed to think. I was placed in this box when the government put us on the reservation deciding outward boundaries and reducing our freedoms. We got so used to it that we now identify ourselves by their boundaries. When our traditional boundaries included a much larger land of inheritance than the reservation I was raised on. You see our traditional territory ran from the Saskatchewan River in the north to the Yellowstone River in the south, the Rocky Mountains going from Yellowstone up, to the sandstones to the east. Natives like me now claim with pride our reservations, our tribal numbers, our oppressive conditions, and our limited property rights. Boarding schools made that box even smaller trying to erase our identities as people of the land. I don't define these boundaries as being into the mountains and over the hills. Again I repeat myself; I don't define these boundaries as being into the mountains and over the hills. Although I am extremely grateful for the Mormon Church, as stated above, even within it I was placed in a box when the LDS religion told me that my culture was blasphemous and that I needed to be more like them in order to be connected to Christ. Boxes within boxes trip me up and cause my

eyes not to see and my ears not to hear. The truth within the restoration, although the stories were all familiar, did not have the ability to penetrate my box.

My PhD dissertation directly relates to the box mentality. It is called the *brain drain*. The *brain drain* is a study to identify why tribes pay millions of dollars to educate their people. But once completed, like me, they are either denied a way to return or are recruited away to benefit a larger more developed economy in the more populated cities and communities. Tribes supporting this study wanted to know what they can do to reverse the effects of *brain drain* producing a *brain gain*. The *brain gain* is where I focus my dissertation.

Studies have indicated that a greater educated population promotes the elimination of poverty. I interviewed educated natives who returned to live on the reservation to discover why they returned and what they would recommend to promote a greater returning educated population. It was no surprise to me that relationships were the common reason for all the subjects that chose to return to reside on the reservation, despite the difficulties of reservation life. However, this was not what surprised the dissertation board. My experience on chief-in-counsel gave me an insight unnoticed by other PhD's. I observed that when subjects were asked to recommend promoting a greater returning educated population each of them suggested "more government programs". Although they came back because of their deeply rooted relationships, their minds were stuck in an institutionalized box, totally dependent on government solutions, box solutions.

Since my dissertation I have observed that our entire world is in institutional bondage.

Institutions come in many shapes and sizes, academic, financial, occupational, governmental and social institutions. Whether it is a reservation or occupation, they are all institutions of bondage. Within institutional bondage we exchange knowledge and wisdom for rank and power producing a blind eye to the truth and a deaf ear to the voice of God. This environment rewards robots, yes men and brown-nosers. My dissertation has shaped my perspective for the rest of my life as I realize that the solution to institutionalization is relationships.

There are two relationships that matter most to native people, your relationship with God and your relationships with God's creations. This is emphasized in the two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor. A relationship-centered culture is commonly labeled spiritual.

Religiousness and spirituality are often confused as one and the same, but it is not so. A person can be spiritual and not religious or they can be religious and not spiritual. Someone can be connected to heaven through a personal relationship with the Creator and His creations without following a main system of religious beliefs. Another person can be highly religious, doing their visiting and home teaching, attending meetings, paying tithing, etc. and have no connection with the Creator or His creations. Surprisingly religion and spirituality don't always get along. The idea seems conflicting, but I have experienced them both. Being raised in the Mormon religion, attending meetings every Sunday, taking the Sacrament, attending the temple, and following those tenets; yet although I thought I did, I had no real connection to the Creator. I was religious. However, when I finally started a relationship with the Creator I approached things very differently. Rather than going through the religious motions I actually studied, prayed, and pondered my studies. I adjusted my actions to align with what I understood. That's when I obtained a connection to the heavens.

Interestingly enough when I went to church on Sundays, rather than watching the time tick away until we could eat supper, I found myself engaged in what was being said. I would speak up using my own spiritual experiences as my foundation of understanding. I was finally considered a contributor rather than a wallflower, and for that my husband and I were cast out by 2-300 pound Samoans. Yes 300 pounds. They were huge. They were like football players. Actually they were professional football players.

My husband and I had our temple recommends revoked in December 2015 because we declared to be full-tithe payers but the bishop's financial records showed a zero balance. The bishop didn't believe our declaration and revoked our recommends. When my son turned 16 years old the bishop asked if we were going to ordain him to the office of a Priest. We said we would if he gave our recommends back. He said, "You don't need a recommend for that." My husband

responded by saying, “How can I not be worthy to enter into the house of God and yet still be worthy to give the power given to man to act in the name of God?”

After that experience the bishop convened a formal, but secret meeting where he stated that my husband and I were in apostasy. His reasoning was three-fold: 1) you pay your tithing anonymously 2) you follow no man but Christ 3) and you follow this man John Denver Snuffer. He obviously did not know what he was talking about. I really had to bite my tongue. The restrictions he placed on us was: 1) you cannot tell anyone I took away your temple recommends 2) you are not allowed to bear testimony on fast and testimony Sunday, and 3) you cannot share your apostate views in church. When the voice of the Lord spoke to my husband and me it said, “The next fast and testimony meeting you will bear testimony of me.” When we approached the podium 2-300 pound Samoans cast us out. After being cast out we remembered that the lesson in gospel doctrine class assigned that day included 3 Nephi 18, where the doctrine clearly states that you cast no one out of your synagogues or you will suffer condemnation. The bishop was blind and deaf because he was religious, but failed to be spiritual.

I follow no man, not a prophet, a stake president, or a bishop. I follow Christ alone. And because I follow Christ I have paid very close attention to what the prophet, stake president, and bishop or anyone who claims to have keys have said so that I might know that Christ who I claim to believe. In so doing I bear witness that what Denver Snuffer has taught is the words of my Christ. I have had my eyes opened and my ears unstopped by the words spoken by that servant and witness. Now I can see in the scriptures the intentions of those authors, and I have the ability to hear the voice of the Lord in me personally. We are currently under evaluation for excommunication because religion is often threatened by real spirituality. Please don't think I am anti-religion. I am not. I have no animosity towards Mormons, Baptists, Methodists, or the like. The truth is religion presented me material preparatory for my spiritual growth. Each person's path is significantly tailored for their own growth. In the effort of being clear I'm going to use the terms spirituality/ free from religion and define it as a personal relationship first with the Creator and second with His creation.

Now I'd like to quickly summarize the allegory of the Olive Tree with a graphic. The allegory begins with the original tree. The top of the tree is not producing fruit and it is decaying. The master instructs the servant to cut off the top, transplant a few branches to the nethermost part of the vineyard and the rest of the bad branches are burned. Here is where the story splits into two, the original and the nethermost part of the vineyard. After it splits there are two harvests for both. The original tree gets wild branches grafted in, first harvest, good fruits, like original tree because it got its moisture from the roots. Second harvest, top of the tree grew faster than the roots, overpowering the roots and producing all types of fruit, which are all bad. The top of the tree is high and lofty, gaining strength from itself. Master wants to burn the vineyard, but servant asks for it to be preserved. Now as they go into the nethermost part of the vineyard the Master and servant visit the nethermost part of the vineyard. They plant in four types of ground: poor, poorer, another, and good ground. The first harvest: good, good, and then some good and some bad. The second harvest: bad, bad, bad, and bad. Master wants to burn the vineyard but servant proposes a last grafting. Original and nethermost parts are grafted into one another. Servants work the vineyard one last time and remember the Lord tells his servant to go and call other servants to help out. They preserve the roots and promote the graft to take hold. Branches that get their moisture from the roots will produce sweet fruit. Top and roots of the tree grow together. Little by little the bad branches are all cut off and all the fruit are equal, reflecting their original, natural fruit. Servant works by digging, which means agitating the soil or you can say it is the heart, pruning, cutting back branches that produce no fruit or branches with fruit are cut back further to promote sweeter fruit, dunging, fertilizer is added to nourish the fruit. The good are gathered out and the bad are gathered to be cast out or burned.

Consider the allegory of the Olive Tree as a battle between religion and spirituality. Whenever the top of the tree grows larger and faster than its roots it is a clear indicator that religion has overpowered spirituality. Religion tends to enforce outward rituals, which often grows into traditions as spirituality or the roots lose emphasis. The root is where the words of Christ is located that's where the revelation comes from. It's a place where heaven and earth can connect. The root is a temple where all creation flows out into the world. The description of Zion is the roots and the top growing together, equally, as opposed to the top growing faster than the roots.

Religion can be associated with any institution, academic religion, financial religion, government religion, occupational religion even social religion. Religion is merely another term for institution. Institutions or religion may have been rooted in true principles at first, but have taken on a life of its own interpretation and departed from its original intent. I believe that institutionalism is a large and spacious building in Lehi's dream.

Cultural traditions of Blackfoot have changed from having deep spiritual meaning and more into empty rituals void of its true spiritual intent. Likewise, among the LDS, Sacrament and temple worship have morphed into a poor excuse of a meal and a two hour nap void of its true potential, pointing to ascension. When religion overruns spirituality, eyes become blind and ears become fat and we cannot see clearly to discern or hear the voice of the Lord. Spirituality is the only escape from the bondage of institutionalization.

I've come to understand how we can open our eyes and ears. I believe it relates to the parable in the book of St. John concerning the ministering of 100, 50 and 3. Jacob's counsel is appropriate to the ministry of the 100 or in other words the many. He teaches that you must repent and come with full purpose of heart by first feasting upon the words of Christ. And be nourished by it all day long. When you have been nourished by the words of Christ then you must receive an understanding by the Holy Ghost, demanding revelation to know the truth of all things, within its meaning the intent of the author who was inspired by God. In this manner you will become a beggar before God with an outstretched hand in cupping shape pleading for light and truth. Only when you recognize that you're truly blind and deaf to the heavens can you be sufficiently humble to be the beggar that is healed, that is the objective of the ministry of the many.

When you receive the words of Christ you will be able to receive Christ's servant or the ministry of the 50 year old servant. By writing the words upon your heart you are now prepared to hear the voice of the Lord presented by His servant. Now you must do an experiment by listening to different people who call themselves servants of the Lord. Listen to their argument and judge the matter for yourself to assess what you are being offered. Is it pure truth or a watered down mixture? Are you persuaded to come unto Christ? When you have found yourself a source that you can trust hearken to that servant, which literally means to hear and to know it is true, only

can you then transition your trust from that servant to hear the voice of the Lord yourself so that no man need say to you “know ye the Lord”.

And finally when you have received Christ’s words and Christ’s servant you are promised that you will receive the Lord Himself. This is the ministry of the 3. Study His words. We have new scriptures that will provide clarity to the older scriptures. Use a new revelation as a looking glass to understand the older texts. As it says in 2 Nephi 28:2, “The book shall be of great worth unto the children of men and especially unto our seed, which is a remnant of the House of Israel.”

This book is of great worth to me. It has developed me spiritually. It has taught me about the ascension. It contains the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The moisture provided by it is living waters in Lehi’s dream. Lehi’s family depended solely on their ability to hear the voice and see the way. I testify to you that the book St. John will help you understand the Book of Mormon and the older texts. Let us remember there is a difference between being religious and being spiritual. Religion changes over time and eventually no longer gets its moisture from the roots. Religion grows too fast for the roots but the branches take over the roots taking strength unto themselves. Spirituality is obtained by getting moisture from the roots. If you think you can be spiritual without reading and knowing His word, I would suggest you are being religious. Read His words so you can hear Him. Read His words so you can recognize truth when you see it and hear it. Read His words so that you can have eyes that see and ears that hear. Let us be wise and build our house upon the rock of the words of Christ so that you can make your connection with the Creator and be one with His creation. In the name of our Creator, Jesus Christ. Amen.