

Being in Tune: Minimizing Interference Beats

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March 20 of this year was a beautiful day. It was warm and the sun was shining. Some of the trees had started to bud, and early blooms were visible. I had been anticipating this day with great excitement and a good deal of apprehension from the time I received a phone call three months earlier asking if I would play the organ at one of the Provo City Center Temple dedication sessions. I had never dreamed I would have a chance to serve in this capacity, for I knew there were scores of talented and accomplished organists in our temple district, and I was also keenly aware of my own inadequacies.

Surprise and shock were some of the feelings I had when I got the call, but in the few seconds it took me to stammer out an acceptance of this assignment, I felt my Heavenly Father's love. And even though I was very nervous, I sensed that this was one of His tender mercies.

I was to have an experience similar to one that my beautiful paternal grandmother, Ethel Taylor Robinson, had had, and this created a sense of connection to her that I had not felt before. I never met her, as she died in her early thirties, but I knew of her and of her many talents. My home teacher made sure of that. He repeatedly told me what a wonderful musician she was and how much she was loved and missed by our community.

In October 1927 my grandmother directed a stake choir that sang at the dedication of the Mesa Arizona Temple. Although four of the songs she performed with her choir in that dedication were different from the ones I played at the Provo City Center Temple dedication, we both performed the "Hosanna Anthem." Realizing that we would both perform the same song in a temple of the Lord almost ninety years apart was a very sweet experience.

I had other sweet experiences while our choir prepared and rehearsed. Choir members shared their testimonies and tender feelings about the temple, the gospel, and our Savior both in words and song. Everyone was focused on offering his or her very best to the Lord.

In my personal practices I often felt inadequate and worried when I thought about performing in the celestial room, only a few feet away from the Lord's apostles and in front of millions of viewers. I tried to calm myself with the feeling that if I put the time into my practice, the Lord would help me. I therefore practiced every day. The footwork with the organ pedals was my biggest challenge.

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I drilled the arpeggios and foot crossings over and over and over—slowly at first, and then I would attempt to speed them up to the performance tempo. Some repetitions went well, and I thought, “I can do this!” But on the very next repetition I would land on a note just adjacent to the one I was aiming for. So I would try again.

One day as I was going through this process, I remembered something I had learned in an acoustics class many years ago when I thought I wanted to be a music teacher. The thought that came into my mind as I was practicing is the subject I would like to speak about today.

A Lesson on Sound Frequencies and Being in Tune

I remembered learning about sound waves and their frequencies. I am sure there were some more in-depth physics I was supposed to learn and remember from that class, but what came to my mind four decades later as I struggled to land on the right note was the effect of sound waves with different frequencies when they are heard at the same time. Let me illustrate with a rudimentary explanation.

When something vibrates, sound is produced. These vibrations, called longitudinal waves, have high- and low-pressure areas, and when they are diagrammed they look like symmetrical wavy lines. The frequency is the measurement of the number of cycles a sound wave makes in a second, and it determines the pitch of the sound. A pure tone is a sound wave with a single frequency.

When two pure tones with the same frequency are sounded together, their sound waves are the same. They are matched, and the tone you hear is the same pitch and sounds in unison. When two tones with different frequencies are sounded together, their sound waves are not in sync, and if we were to graph the waves, we would see how the variance between the two waves grows. If the two frequencies are different but fairly close, instead of a

unison sound we would hear a beating sound, often described as a wobbly or wah-wah-wah sound. These interference beats will decrease as the difference in frequency between the two sounds is reduced. The beating sounds will altogether disappear when the frequencies are matched and the sounds are in tune.

As I was practicing I thought about how these interference beats sounded when the difference in frequencies was only marginally off and how the dissonance increased the farther apart they were. I thought about how wonderful it would be if, as I was performing, the Spirit would cause the listeners to hear the right note—making their ears hear a sound with identical frequencies. In my wishful thinking I wondered how close the pedal notes I played would have to be to the precise one the composer had in mind to be heard in harmony with the other notes I was playing.

As I drove home from practice that day, I kept thinking about sound waves and frequencies—not just about how they applied to the music I was practicing but how the attributes of sound could apply to me and my efforts to be more like our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

If we were to represent our Heavenly Father—His qualities, His attributes, His thoughts, and His actions—as a sound wave with a single frequency, we would hear a pure tone. If we added Jesus Christ as a second sound wave, the two tones would have the same frequency and would be in tune. Jesus told us, “I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.”¹ We could say They are on the same wavelength. What would happen if we were to add our own sound wave to that of our Heavenly Father? Would there be minimal beat interference or would the variance be a greater dissonance?

With sound waves as an example, the waves start at the same point, and, depending on the difference in frequency, the sounds are either in unison or out of tune. In the premortal existence we were all one with our Father, and we

supported His plan—a plan that would give us the opportunity to become like Him. During the War in Heaven we were still one with Him and we fought for His plan. But just as there are many reasons that musical instruments can get out of tune, many of our life choices can get us out of tune with our Heavenly Father.

In 3 Nephi we read about the devastation that happened in the land after the Crucifixion of the Savior. There were great storms and tempests with terrible thunder and sharp lightning. There were earthquakes, fires, and whirlwinds. Cities sank to the depths of the sea. Great and terrible destruction deformed the land. During this major upheaval, many of the inhabitants were killed.²

After the devastation ended and the darkness that had lasted for three days dispersed, Jesus Christ visited the people who were spared. During His several visits, He ministered to and taught the people. He told them to search the scriptures, ponder His words, and pray for understanding. He healed their sick and blessed their little ones. He instituted the sacrament. He expounded all things unto them, and many saw and heard unspeakable things that could not be written.³ Before the Lord left them He asked, “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”⁴

They took His directive to heart. It didn’t happen overnight, but it wasn’t too many years later that all were converted unto the Lord, having all things in common. With their conversion, they were able to live in a society in which there were no contentions or disputations. They had become like our Savior. Their sound waves were in tune with His and stayed in sync for two centuries.

Who were these people, and what can we learn from them to help us be on the same wavelength as our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ? Their story gives us four clear directions or guidelines that we can follow to be more in unison with our Creators. If we follow

the Nephite example, we will grow more in tune. But, like everything in life, all things have their opposite, which means that if we do the reverse, we grow more out of tune.

1. Receive the Prophets and Stone Them Not

In 3 Nephi 10:12 we learn who these people were: “It was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared.” From this scripture we learn about the first way we can follow the Nephite example to be more in tune with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and that is to receive the prophets and stone them not.

Just last month we had the opportunity to raise our hands and sustain our prophets. Raising our hand is easy, and sometimes we do it without really thinking about what it really means. To receive the prophets and stone them not, we have to do more than casually raise our hand. We need to follow President Russell M. Nelson’s teachings and sustain our prophets by honoring them, standing behind them, defending their good names, striving to carry out their instructions, and praying for them.⁵

Another way we can receive the prophets and stone them not is to love them. President Henry B. Eyring, in his October 2014 general conference address, talked about the feelings of love we get for the prophet of God. He said:

[The love we feel] is far more than hero worship or the feelings we sometimes have of admiring heroic figures. It is a gift from God. With it [we] will receive more easily the gift of confirming revelation when he speaks in his office as the Lord’s prophet. The love [we] feel is the love the Lord has for whoever is His spokesman.

That is not easy to feel continually because the Lord often asks His prophets to give counsel that is hard for people to accept. The enemy of our souls will try to lead us to take offense and to doubt the prophet’s calling from God.⁶

The last sentence of this quote gives us a glimpse at ways in which we may stone the prophets. Sometimes they have to call us to repentance and tell us hard things. As Sister Carol F. McConkie told us in her October 2014 general conference address, sometimes their words may seem

*unreasonable, inconvenient, and uncomfortable. According to the world's standards, following the prophet may be unpopular, politically incorrect, or socially unacceptable. But following the prophet is always right.*⁷

When we choose to take offense or rationalize that the teachings of our prophets don't really apply to us in our unique circumstances or we doubt that their calls are from God, we stone them. But when we follow their words, love them, and pray for them, we receive them. Our lives are more like the lives of the Nephites, and we are more in harmony with our Savior and Heavenly Father.

2. Do Not Allow Contention

Following the model of the Nephites after Christ had visited and taught them, we learn a second way in which we can be in tune with our Heavenly Father: do not allow contention. In 4 Nephi 1:2 we read:

And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

In 4 Nephi 1:15–17 we are told that the Nephites had no contentions

because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders,

nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

“They were in one, the children of Christ.” To me this sounds like some very beautiful music, with everyone in tune with Christ.

Alma, at the waters of Mormon, commanded his people

*that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.*⁸

Alma's followers followed his teachings, and they had the blessings of unity in their lives.

Contrast the unity and peace of Alma's people with the contention among the Nephites after the chief judge and governor of the land, Pahoran, died. The scriptures describe this as a time of serious difficulty and serious contention as they decided which of Pahoran's sons should have the judgment seat. The people chose Pahoran the second to fill the judgment seat. But amidst the contention caused by his brother Paanchi—who rebelled against the people and tried to destroy their liberty—Pahoran was murdered, and another brother, Pacumeni, was appointed to take his place.

The contention in the land had weakened the Nephites, and when the Lamanites saw this, they came to battle with an army of innumerable men. Now the Nephites, “because of so much contention and so much difficulty in [their] government, . . . had not kept sufficient guards in the land,”⁹ which allowed the Lamanite leader Coriantumr to march with his army into the land of Zarahemla, slay everyone who opposed him, and take the city. The

contention among the Nephites at this time divided them as a society, separated them from God, and caused adversity and misfortune in their lives.

President Eyring told us how to avoid contention and how to be peacemakers and be unified. He said:

*The great peacemaker, the restorer of unity, is the one who finds a way to help people see the truth they share. That truth they share is always greater and more important to them than their differences. You can help yourself and others to see that common ground if you ask for help from God and then act. He will answer your prayer to help restore peace.*¹⁰

To be in tune, then, with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, we have to find a way to see the truth we share and work toward peace and unity.

3. *Be Humble, Not Prideful*

A third way the Nephites can teach us how to stay in tune with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is to be humble, not prideful. In 4 Nephi 1:24–26 we read:

And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world.

And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them.

And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.

For two hundred years the Nephites followed the Savior’s teachings and were one with Him, with their sound frequencies mirroring His. It was the sin of pride that started the dissonance and eventually led to their destruction.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught us about pride. Describing it as a very misunderstood sin, he said:

Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing.

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means “hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.” It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us.

Pride is essentially competitive in nature. . . .

Our will [is] in competition to God’s. . . .

The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. . . .

*. . . The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.*¹¹

Lucky for us, there is an antidote for pride. It is humility. President Benson told us that we can combat pride by being meek and submissive and by having a broken heart and a contrite spirit. When we are humble, we can receive counsel and chastisement, be forgiving, and give selfless service. We can love God, submit our will to His, and put Him first in our lives.¹²

President Spencer W. Kimball helped us think about humility by comparing it to a doughnut. He said that we are like the hole in the doughnut. We would be nothing without the Lord, or what is around the hole. Our everything is dependent on the Lord—our breath, our brains, our hearing, our sight, and our locomotion. Without Him, we are nothing. We are only crumbs. We are totally dependent on Him.¹³ When we realize our dependency on Him and when we are grateful for His help, that is when we are humble.

President Kimball used some great adjectives to describe humility. He said:

*Humility is gracious, quiet, serene—not pompous, spectacular, nor histrionic. It is subdued, kindly, and understanding—not crude, blatant, loud, or ugly. . . . Its faithful, quiet works will be the badge of its own accomplishments.*¹⁴

Bishop Richard C. Edgley, in his 2003 general conference address, told of an experience that illustrates the power and blessings of humility. He described a lesson in his high priests quorum meeting in which the instructor asked attendees to tell who their heroes were and why. Someone named the Savior, another spoke of Abraham Lincoln, another mentioned Joseph Smith, and still another said President Gordon B. Hinckley. When it was Brother Edgley's turn, he chose as his heroes members of his ward who had experienced tragedies and major setbacks in their lives yet had carried on in humility. They relied on the Lord and not on their own abilities to help them through their difficult life experiences.

One example of his heroes was Ken and Jo Ann Sweatfield, who for many years cared for their comatose son with love and patience. Their son Shane had been in a terrible automobile accident just two weeks before he was to leave for his mission. For twenty years his parents tended him, never taking a vacation. During the long years of their trial, they remained humble, maintaining “a spirit of faith, optimism, and gratitude” and never questioning God's purposes.¹⁵

Bishop Edgley went on to tell about more of his heroes who did not hold high or prominent callings in the Church nor were widely known to the general membership of the Church but who were all humble and relied on the Lord to help them meet life's challenges. They did not seek position, prominence, or fame but did the unnoticed and the unspectacular, humbly and righteously. He said, “Their humility leads to submissiveness to the Lord's will. And . . . in spite of the difficulties and trials of life, they are able to maintain a sense of gratitude for God's

blessings and life's goodness.”¹⁶ The people he described were regular people who were able to combat the prideful natural man and feelings of enmity by being submissive to God and acknowledging their dependence on the Lord. In this, we, like them, can be in harmony with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

4. Search, Ponder, and Pray

When Jesus visited the Nephites, He commanded them to search the scriptures diligently.¹⁷ He told them to ponder on the things He had said.¹⁸ And He taught them how to pray.¹⁹ They obeyed. The scriptures say, “And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them.”²⁰ Searching the scriptures, pondering, and praying helped them be more like Christ and live in peace for two hundred years. When we include this last example from the Nephites in our efforts to be one with God, we will be more in tune with Him.

Why are the scriptures so important that prophets of all ages have taken and continue to take the time to record the word of God? And why are we commanded to search them?

Elder Daniel L. Johnson gave us the key when he said, “One of the primary purposes of the scriptures is to help us know, understand, and become like the Savior (see 3 Nephi 27:27). Continually studying the scriptures helps us keep our eyes, minds, and hearts focused on Him.”²¹ The scriptures bring us to Christ and show us how to be like Him.

To get the full benefit of the scriptures, we need to not only search them but also ponder them and pray about them. These three separate activities go hand in hand. Doing only one of the activities by itself is not enough to move us in the direction we want to go. Doing only one will not reduce the difference between God's and our own frequencies.

Take Nephi for example. In his history we learn how he searched, pondered, and prayed. He had a great desire to know the mysteries of

God, so he cried unto the Lord.²² He searched the scriptures.²³ He told us that he pondered them in his heart.²⁴ He said, “For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them.”²⁵ His great knowledge and love of the scriptures allowed him to quote the prophets and use their teachings to teach and preach, call his brothers to repentance, and even at times confound them. But, more important, by searching, pondering, and praying, he was able to become more like the Savior.

Nephi’s experience was very different from that of his older brothers. Laman and Lemuel grew up in the same household as Nephi and were taught the scriptures by their father. Nephi read many things unto them that were written in the books of Moses.²⁶ Yet they were stiffnecked and murmured against their father “because they knew not the dealings of . . . God.”²⁷ They had the scriptures and they were taught from the scriptures, but they did not put forth the effort to search, ponder, and pray about them. They therefore were not in tune with the Savior.

If they had included the companion activities of pondering and praying with their scripture study, perhaps they would have had experiences like those described by Sister Cheryl C. Lant in the October 2005 general conference. She said of the scriptures, “‘My heart pondereth them.’ How I love to carry the scriptures with me in my heart! The spirit of what I have read rests there to bring me peace and comfort.”²⁸

When we ponder the scriptures in our hearts and let them rest there, it is like they settle there, where they can influence our decisions and actions throughout the day and give us comfort as well as ideas and thoughts. Sister Lant went on to say that when she ponders the scriptures, something happens to her. She said, “I have a stronger desire to live close to my Heavenly Father. I long to serve Him. I want to live the principles that I learn in the scriptures.”²⁹ She then added prayer to the mix and said:

I find that if I pray not only to have a witness of the truthfulness of the scriptures but also to have the Spirit with me as I read, my sensitivity is heightened, and I see ever so much more clearly. I can see where I am in my life and where my Heavenly Father wants me to be. I can understand principles of truth, and I can see how to make the needed changes in my life. I can feel assured that the Lord will help and strengthen me to accomplish the task.³⁰

Searching, pondering, and praying are hard work and take practice. We cannot get to be in tune by merely asking or by simply reading or by just thinking about things. We need to combine all three and work at it. Trying to take the easy way would be like Oliver Cowdery in his efforts to translate the Book of Mormon. The Lord told him, “Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.”³¹ To have the blessings promised us when we search, ponder, and pray, we need to do the work.

Following the Example of the Nephites

Preparing for the temple dedication gave me the chance to work and practice so that I could offer the Lord my best, and even though my best wasn’t perfect, it was a beautiful experience. The gift I was given of being part of a wonderful choir, performing at the temple dedication, and having a special connection with my grandmother has increased my desire to be in tune with my Heavenly Father and Savior.

As each of us considers what changes we can make in our lives in order to be more like our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and match our desires and actions with Theirs—to be on the same wavelength—let us remember the example of the Nephites who were visited and taught by the Savior. These people received the prophets and stoned them not. They did more than just raise their hands. They loved their prophets; they prayed for

them, and they adhered to their teachings. These people did not allow contention. They dealt justly with each other and were “one, the children of Christ.” These people were humble, not prideful. They had no enmity toward God or their fellowmen. These people also searched the scriptures, pondered the word of God, and prayed. They understood the importance of the scriptures in helping them know, understand, and become like the Savior by keeping their eyes, minds, and hearts focused on Him. These people did the things the Savior asked them to do, and He asks us to do the same.

May we be like these righteous Nephites and heed the Savior’s commandment when He said, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”³² In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. D&C 93:3.
2. See 3 Nephi 8–9.
3. See 3 Nephi 11–26.
4. 3 Nephi 27:27.
5. See Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign*, November 2014; quoting George Albert Smith, *CR*, June 1919, 40; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 64.
6. Henry B. Eyring, “Continuing Revelation,” *Ensign*, November 2014.
7. Carol F. McConkie, “Live According to the Words of the Prophets,” *Ensign*, November 2014.
8. Mosiah 18:21.
9. Helaman 1:18.
10. Henry B. Eyring, “Our Hearts Knit as One,” *Ensign*, November 2008.
11. Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989.
12. See Benson, “Beware of Pride.”
13. See *TSWK*, 233–34.
14. *TSWK*, 233.
15. Richard C. Edgley, “The Empowerment of Humility,” *Ensign*, November 2003.
16. Edgley, “Empowerment.”
17. See 3 Nephi 23:1.
18. See 3 Nephi 17:3.
19. See 3 Nephi 13:5–13.
20. 3 Nephi 26:20.
21. Daniel L. Johnson, “Hold Fast to the Rod,” *Ensign*, February 2016.
22. See 1 Nephi 2:16.
23. See 1 Nephi 5:21.
24. See 1 Nephi 11:1.
25. 2 Nephi 4:15.
26. See 1 Nephi 19:23.
27. 1 Nephi 2:12.
28. Cheryl C. Lant, “My Soul Delighteth in the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, November 2005; quoting 2 Nephi 4:15.
29. Lant, “My Soul Delighteth.”
30. Lant, “My Soul Delighteth.”
31. D&C 9:7.
32. 3 Nephi 27:27.