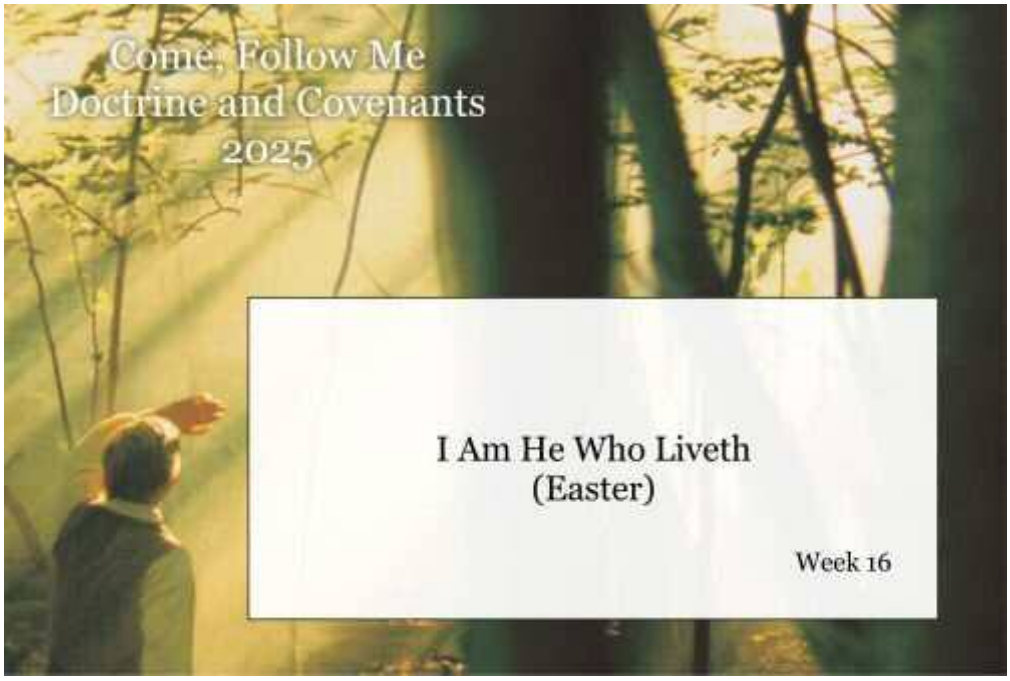

Reality can be perceived in many ways. We may not have laid eyes on our Savior yet, but that doesn't mean we can't know of his reality in other ways.

Ways to know Christ

Testimonies are interesting things. Some things we know because we saw or heard something with our own eyes or ears. Most things we know in this world come from experiences, instead of direct exposure to something. We interact with someone enough times that we come to learn that they are trustworthy or can't be trusted. It may be difficult to pin our feelings on specific situations, but we just know it is true. There is a lot to be said for cumulative experience - experiences had over a long period of time.

When it comes to gaining a testimony of things of a spiritual nature, our feelings lead the way to the knowledge we seek. We may have had some impressions that something is true, but listening to others bear their testimonies that what we have experienced is very similar to what they have experienced strengthens our own belief and commitment to our personal experience.

Oddly enough, stating our experiences and beliefs out loud cements what we know about that thing. If we have a feeling, but never say it out loud, there is a good chance we will eventually dismiss our belief in that thing. When we make the effort to declare our feelings, we become more committed to the path we appear to have chosen. This is

why bearing our testimony to others is so important. The act of doing so solidifies our own feelings about that testimony. Somehow saying it out loud brings clarity and helps us eliminate the fluff that we might have felt, but never really considered as important before.

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

The hymn of this title is one of the first I memorized in my youth. I thank the writer for making things rhyme, that really helped a lot. For decades I have sung this hymn and tried to hold it together while singing. As long as I don't actually think about what I am saying I am fine. It is when I allow myself to feel the meaning of the words of this hymn that I choke up and can no longer sing it.

I haven't seen my Savior, but I have had experiences that tell me he is behind the scenes of my life. He is actively aware of me and what I am doing, even though he has never shown himself to me. It can be a little unnerving to know that someone is always aware of everything you do. Good thing he loves me more than I love myself.

I would like to take a few moments and talk about some of the individual lines of this hymn and what they mean to me. You may have had some similar feelings about this or other hymns.

> 1.I know that my Redeemer lives.
> What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
> He lives, he lives, who once was dead.
> He lives, my ever-living Head.
> He lives to bless me with his love.
> He lives to plead for me above.
> He lives my hungry soul to feed.
> He lives to bless in time of need.

Each of these lines can be the source material for an entire sermon, so I need to keep it short. "He lives, he lives, who once was dead." In the time of the Apostles called by Jesus two thousand years ago, the idea of someone rising from the dead was the stuff of science fiction. It had never happened before, and people were so concerned about burying someone who wasn't actually dead yet that they would often wait to bury them three days just to be sure they were actually dead. Along comes Jesus who promised

them that after he died he would raise himself from the dead, never to die again. That was a bit more than those around him could wrap their minds around.

We have all been raised with the idea that it is possible to rise again from death, because Jesus set the example for us. He showed us that resurrection is not just a possibility, but his promise to each of us. As wounded as his body was when it was finally taken down from the cross, when he showed himself to his followers three days later there was not a scratch on him, except for the wounds of the crucifixion itself. He promised those would be with him always as part of his covenant with his people. After all, he promised we would be written in the palms of his hands so we are before his face always.

"He lives to bless me with his love. He lives to plead for me above." Christ's atoning sacrifice fulfilled the mission for which he was sent to earth. Without his payment for our sins we would all be eternally lost. Since he is the only one who can approach God, our Father and expect to have his prayers answered affirmatively, we are commanded to pray in Christ's name. He continually petitions our Father in Heaven on our behalf, because he is God's only worthy child. We rely on his worthiness to gain access to God's mercy and love in our prayers. God does all things that benefits us for the sake of His Son. What a debt of gratitude we owe to Jesus for actively seeking to bless us each and every day.

> 2.He lives to grant me rich supply.
> He lives to guide me with his eye.
> He lives to comfort me when faint.
> He lives to hear my soul’s complaint.
> He lives to silence all my fears.
> He lives to wipe away my tears.
> He lives to calm my troubled heart.
> He lives all blessings to impart.

How can anyone read verse 2 and not tear up? Who else do you know who is so consistently seeking to save our soul? Who else is so attentive, patient, willing to sacrifice his all, and to bring comfort to our souls than is Christ? Jesus may not be walking physically beside us each day, but he is certainly "with" us at all times. We are his responsibility in God's great plan for our salvation. God gave Jesus the job to bring us back home. To do so he must love us every bit as much as God, Himself loves us. No

sacrifice is too great. He never sleeps. Jesus is ever looking out for our welfare. All he wants for us is to be happy. He knows what is required for us to experience the happiness God wants for His children. No expense is spared for the ruler of the universe's children to have whatever is needed to return to God if that is their wish. We have but to believe and live according to that belief.

> 3.He lives, my kind, wise heav’nly Friend.
> He lives and loves me to the end.
> He lives, and while he lives, I’ll sing.
> He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.
> He lives and grants me daily breath.
> He lives, and I shall conquer death.
> He lives my mansion to prepare.
> He lives to bring me safely there.
>
> 4.He lives! All glory to his name!
> He lives, my Savior, still the same.
> Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives:
> “I know that my Redeemer lives!”
> He lives! All glory to his name!
> He lives, my Savior, still the same.
> Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives:
> “I know that my Redeemer lives!”

The first two verses recount all the reasons for how Jesus loves us and what he does to take care of us. The last two verses are our response to those sacrifices made by our Savior. We get a chance to do some rejoicing! These are the verses where we let ourselves go and sing his praises. We should always be joyful in our praises of our Savior and King. We have no reason to withhold our admiration and adulation. In all the world there is no one who loves us more and has done more for our personal happiness than Jesus has and is doing for us. Sing it loud!

Different

Each of us has had a different experience with Jesus of Nazareth. For many of us learning to rely on Christ's atoning sacrifice has been difficult. We want more than anything to be able to change ourself and not have to turn to another for help. That was my problem for many years. I was like a petulant child who wanted to do what I was not capable of doing, but do it on my own. Failure was the only inevitable outcome. When I

finally realized that I can't be worthy of God's grace in my life without turning to His Son for guidance, I was at first offended. Actually, insulted might be a better word. I had to think long and hard on my own position of weakness before God in order to finally understand that Christ's omnipotence is a real thing, and that he is willing to do whatever it takes for me to improve myself and better myself so I can return to my Father. It is the willingness of Jesus to do that for me - poor unworthy, stubborn me, that finally turned me around.

The world too often dismisses the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice and his continued efforts in our behalf. We can't afford to do that. His efforts in our behalf never wane, never slack, and never stop. His love is never ending, always present, and constant, even in the presence of our own disinterest, stubbornness, or indifference. Our hearts should overflow with gratitude for the depth, breadth, and scope of Christ's love for us. It's okay. Let the tears flow at the thought. Feel his love as deeply as you can. Know that he is always on your side, and always wanting what is best for you, no matter what decisions you make. And when we make poor choices he is ready to forgive us as soon as we repent and turn to him for help to fix the mess we just got ourselves into.

Praise be to God, our Father for His Son Jesus the Christ, our Messiah, our Redeemer, our Lord, and our Intermediary - He who sacrificed his all that we could have it all when we return home.

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