

SECTION 126

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 2013 | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

Given in Nauvoo, Illinois, on July 9, 1841, this section addresses Brigham Young shortly after his return from a pivotal mission to the British Isles. In the text, Joseph Smith, speaking as the Lord, formally releases Young from the requirement to leave his family for long-term missionary journeys 'as in times past.' The text validates Young's previous sacrifices, declaring his 'offering is acceptable,' and pivots his stewardship toward local administration and domestic responsibility. This revelation marks a significant transition for Young, moving him from an itinerant apostle to a central administrator within the growing Nauvoo community. It underscores the Mormon concept of stewardship, where specific callings can be altered by prophetic decree, and introduces a tension between the demands of church service and the obligations of family care, ultimately prioritizing the latter for Young at this specific juncture.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Speaker), Brigham Young (Recipient), Joseph Smith (Prophet/Revelator)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. ACCEPTANCE THROUGH WORKS

Assertion: Divine acceptance is contingent upon the completion of assigned labor and toil.

"My servant Brigham... your offering is acceptable to me. I have seen your labor and toil in journeyings for my name. (D&C 126:1-2)"

Evangelical Comparison: In this text, the Lord's acceptance of Brigham Young is explicitly linked to his 'labor and toil.' The phrase 'your offering is acceptable' suggests a transactional dynamic where service renders the servant pleasing to God. In Evangelical theology, a believer is 'accepted in the Beloved' (Ephesians 1:6) solely through faith in Jesus Christ's finished work. While evangelicals believe good works are a fruit of salvation (Ephesians 2:10), they are never the basis for the believer's standing or acceptability before God. This text implies that Young's standing was secured or validated through his missionary exertions.

2. PROPHETIC PREROGATIVE OVER VOCATION

Assertion: God, through a living prophet, dictates the specific life movements, career focus, and family arrangements of individuals.

"it is no more required at your hand to leave your family... I therefore command you to send my word abroad, and take especial care of your family (D&C 126:1, 3)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text demonstrates the Mormon doctrine of continuous revelation through a hierarchy. Joseph Smith has the authority to alter Brigham Young's life trajectory—stopping his travels and reorienting him toward family. In Evangelicalism, the 'priesthood of all believers' (1 Peter 2:5-9) implies that every believer has direct access to God for guidance. While evangelicals value pastoral counsel, they reject the notion that a church leader holds the authority to issue binding divine commands regarding a member's personal logistics or family management.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the mechanism of relationship with God. In D&C 126, the relationship is mediated and transactional: Joseph Smith mediates the will of God, and Brigham Young's 'labor and toil' constitute an 'offering' that makes him acceptable. This creates a triangular relationship (Believer-Prophet-God) and a merit-based standing. Evangelicalism posits a direct relationship (Believer-God) mediated only by Christ (1 Timothy 2:5), where standing is based on Grace (Sola Gratia) received through Faith (Sola Fide). Furthermore, the text elevates family care to a divine command 'forever,' which in Mormon theology hints at the eternal nature of the family unit, a concept distinct from the biblical teaching that marriage is for this age only (Matthew 22:30).

Shared Values:

Importance of family care; Value of missionary work; God sees and appreciates human labor

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Claims new, binding revelation from God outside the Bible.
2. [Major] Sola Fide – Implies acceptance by God is the result of 'labor and toil' rather than faith in Christ alone.
3. [Major] Universal Priesthood – Interposes a human mediator (Joseph Smith) to direct the personal life and ministry of another believer.

Semantic Warnings:

"Offering"

In Text: Personal labor, toil, and missionary service presented to God.

Evangelical: Primarily refers to the sacrificial system fulfilled by Christ (Hebrews 10:10-14) or the 'sacrifice of praise' (Hebrews 13:15), but never the basis for redemptive acceptance.

Example: *In D&C 126, Young's work is the offering. In the Bible, Christ is the offering that makes the believer acceptable.*

"Forever"

In Text: Likely alluding to the eternal duration of family units (sealing).

Evangelical: Eternal duration, but usually applied to God's attributes or the state of the soul, not the marital family unit.

Example: *Take care of your family... henceforth and forever.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implicitly defined here as being 'acceptable' to the Lord.

How Attained: Through obedience to mission calls and the offering of labor.

Basis of Assurance: Prophetic confirmation ('Verily thus saith the Lord... your offering is acceptable').

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text bases assurance on the prophet's word regarding the believer's works. Romans 8:16 states the Spirit testifies with our spirit, and Romans 5:1 states we have peace with God through justification by faith, not through the completion of a mission.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Do not leave your family as in times past (D&C 126:1)
2. Send my word abroad (D&C 126:3)
3. Take especial care of your family from this time, henceforth and forever (D&C 126:3)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's authority to dictate personal schedules and family priorities
2. Transition from field missionary work to administrative oversight (sending the word rather than carrying it)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In this passage, the Lord tells Brigham Young his offering is acceptable after his labor. How do you know when you have done enough labor to be acceptable to God?
2. Do you feel that God's acceptance of you fluctuates based on how well you are fulfilling your current church calling?
3. How does the command to take care of family 'forever' impact the pressure you feel as a parent or spouse?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Need for Rest – Jesus offers a greater rest: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). [Matthew 11:28-30]
2. The Priority of Family – God cares for the family unit. The ultimate care for the family is leading them to the grace of Christ, who secures their eternity not through sealing rituals, but through His blood. [Acts 16:31]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety [Severe] – The believer must constantly perform 'labor and toil' to ensure their offering is 'acceptable.' There is no concept of finished work; acceptance is always contingent on the next assignment.
2. Dependency on Hierarchy [Moderate] – The believer cannot know God's specific will for their life (even regarding family care) without the external validation or permission of the church leadership.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation (Authority).

Verification Method: The recipient (Brigham Young) is expected to accept the validity of the message based on Joseph Smith's office as Prophet.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the illumination of the written Word (Bible) by the Holy Spirit (Psalm 119:105), rather than the dictates of a modern intermediary.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: July 9, 1841

Authorship: Joseph Smith (dictated)

Textual Issues: No major textual variants; the text is a straightforward administrative revelation.