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Personal Revelation and Testimony

If we diligently keep the commandments and ask in faith, answers will come in the Lord's own way and in His time.

Many years ago when I was a college student, I was listening to general conference on the radio since we did not have a TV in our small apartment. The conference speakers were marvelous, and I was enjoying an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I remember well as one General Authority spoke about the Savior and His ministry and then bore a fervent testimony, the Holy Spirit confirmed to my soul that he had spoken the truth. At that moment I had no doubt that the Savior lives. I also had no doubt that I was experiencing personal revelation which confirmed to me “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”¹

As an eight-year-old child I was baptized and confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was a wonderful blessing then but has become increasingly important as I have grown and experienced the gift of the Holy Ghost in many ways since then.

Often as we grow from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood, we have challenges and experiences along the way which cause us to know that we need the divine help that comes through the Holy Spirit. As

struggles come, we may ask ourselves, “What is the answer to my problem?” and “How can I know what to do?”

I often remember the account in the Book of Mormon about Lehi teaching his family the gospel. He shared with them many revelations and teachings about things to come in the latter days. Nephi had sought the guidance of the Lord in order to more fully understand the teachings of his father. He was lifted, blessed, and inspired to know that the teachings of his father were true. That enabled Nephi to carefully follow the commandments of the Lord and live a righteous life. He received personal revelation to guide him.

On the other hand, his brethren were disputing with each other because they did not understand the teachings of their father. Nephi then asked a very important question: “Have ye inquired of the Lord?”²

Their response was a weak one: “We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.”³

Nephi took that opportunity to teach his brethren how to receive personal revelation. He said: “Do ye not remember the things which the Lord

hath said?—If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.”⁴

The way to receive personal revelation is really quite clear. We need to desire to receive revelation, we must not harden our hearts, and then we need to ask in faith, truly believe that we will receive an answer, and then diligently keep the commandments of God.

Following this pattern does not mean that every time we ask a question of God, the answer will immediately appear with every detail of what to do. However, it does mean that if we diligently keep the commandments and ask in faith, answers will come in the Lord's own way and in His time.

As a child I thought personal revelation or answers to prayers would come as an audible voice. Indeed, some revelation does come by hearing an actual voice. However, I have learned that the Spirit speaks in many ways.

Doctrine and Covenants, section 6, explains several ways in which we can receive revelation:

“Thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit.”⁵

“I did enlighten thy mind.”⁶

“Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter?”⁷

In other scriptures we learn more about receiving revelation:

“I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation.”⁸

“I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”⁹

“I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy.”¹⁰

Most often personal revelation will come as we study the scriptures, listen to and follow the counsel of prophets and other Church leaders, and seek to live faithful, righteous lives. Sometimes inspiration will come from a single verse of scripture or from a line in a conference talk. Perhaps your answer will come when the Primary children are singing a beautiful song. These are all forms of revelation.

In the early days of the Restoration, many members diligently sought revelation and were blessed and inspired to know what to do.

Sister Eliza R. Snow was given a charge from the prophet Brigham Young to help lift and teach the sisters of the Church. She “taught that individual women could receive inspiration to guide them in their personal lives, their families, and their Church responsibilities. She said: ‘Tell the sisters to go forth and discharge their duties, in humility and faithfulness and the Spirit of God will rest upon them and they will be blest in their labors. Let them seek for wisdom instead of power and they will have all the power they have wisdom to exercise.’”¹¹

Sister Snow taught the sisters to seek guidance from the Holy Ghost. “She said that the Holy Ghost ‘satisfies and fills up every longing of the human heart, and fills up every vacuum. When I am filled with that Spirit, . . . my soul is satisfied.’”¹²

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf has taught that “revelation and testimony do not always come with overwhelming force. For many, a testimony comes slowly—a piece at a time.” He further said: “Let us earnestly seek the light of personal inspiration. Let



us plead with the Lord to endow our mind and soul with the spark of faith that will enable us to receive and recognize the divine ministering of the Holy Spirit.”¹³

Our testimonies fortify us and strengthen us as we face challenges in our daily lives. Some people struggle with difficult health problems; some experience financial problems; others have challenges in their marriage or with their children; some suffer from loneliness or unfulfilled hopes and dreams. It is our testimony, combined with our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and our knowledge of the plan of salvation, which helps to get us through these times of trial and hardship.

In the book *Daughters in My Kingdom*, we read about Sister Hedwig Biereichel, a woman in Germany who suffered much sorrow

and deprivation during World War II. Because of her love and charitable nature, and even in her own great need, she willingly shared her food with starving prisoners of war. Later, when asked how she was able to “keep a testimony during all [those] trials,” she replied in effect, “I didn’t keep a testimony through those times—the testimony kept me.”¹⁴

Because we have a strong testimony doesn’t mean it will always remain that way. We must nourish and strengthen it in order that it will have sufficient power to sustain us. That is one reason why we “meet together oft”—so we can partake of the sacrament, renew our covenants, and be “nourished by the good word of God.” It is the good word of God that keeps us “continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits

of Christ, who [is] the author and the finisher of [our] faith.”¹⁵

Elder David A. Bednar has taught us: “As you appropriately seek for and apply unto the spirit of revelation, I promise you will ‘walk in the light of the Lord’ (Isaiah 2:5; 2 Nephi 12:5). Sometimes the spirit of revelation will operate immediately and intensely, other times subtly and gradually, and often so delicately you may not even consciously recognize it. But regardless of the pattern whereby this blessing is received, the light it provides will illuminate and enlarge your soul, enlighten your understanding (see Alma 5:7; 32:28), and direct and protect you and your family.”¹⁶

The Lord desires to bless us with guidance, wisdom, and direction in our lives. He desires to pour down His Spirit upon us. Again, for personal revelation we need to desire to receive it, we must not harden our hearts, and then we need to ask in faith, truly believe that we will receive an answer, and then diligently keep the commandments of God. Then as we seek answers to our questions, He will bless us with His Spirit. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 46:13.
2. 1 Nephi 15:8.
3. 1 Nephi 15:9.
4. 1 Nephi 15:11; see also verse 10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 6:14.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 6:15.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 6:23.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2-3.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 11:13.
11. *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society* (2011), 45.
12. *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 46.
13. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Your Potential, Your Privilege,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 60.
14. See *Daughters in My Kingdom*, 79.
15. Moroni 6:4-6.
16. David A. Bednar, “The Spirit of Revelation,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2011, 90.



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The Time Shall Come

With you, I stand in awe as this work moves forward miraculously, marvelously, and irresistibly.

I served as a young missionary for several months in the central areas of Lima, Peru. As a result, I crossed Lima’s Plaza de Armas many times. The Government Palace, the official residence and office of Peru’s president, faces the plaza. My companions and I invited people in the plaza to hear the restored gospel. I often wondered then what it would be like to enter the palace, but the thought of ever doing so seemed wildly remote.

Last year, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, a few others, and I met with Alan García, then the president of Peru, in the Government Palace. We were shown its beautiful rooms and cordially received by President García. My young missionary wonderings about the palace were fulfilled in a way that I would never have dreamed possible in 1970.

Things have changed in Peru since I was a missionary, especially for the Church. There were about 11,000 members of the Church there then and just one stake. Today there are more than 500,000 members and almost 100 stakes. In towns where there were just little groups of members, vibrant stakes and attractive meetinghouses now grace the land. The same thing has happened in many other countries around the world.

This remarkable Church growth deserves explanation. We begin with a prophecy from the Old Testament.

Daniel was a Hebrew slave in Babylon. He was given the opportunity to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Daniel asked God to reveal to him the dream and its interpretation, and his prayer was answered. He told Nebuchadnezzar, “There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. . . . The visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these.” Daniel said the king had seen a frightening image with a head, torso, arms, legs, and feet. A stone was cut out of a mountain without hands and rolled forth, gradually growing in size. That stone collided with the image, breaking it into pieces, “and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

Daniel explained that the image represented future political kingdoms and that “in the days of [those future] kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: . . . but it shall break” these kingdoms into pieces and consume them. “And it shall stand for ever.”¹

We now go to more recent times. The angel Moroni first appeared to