

HOLD ON TO THE Light



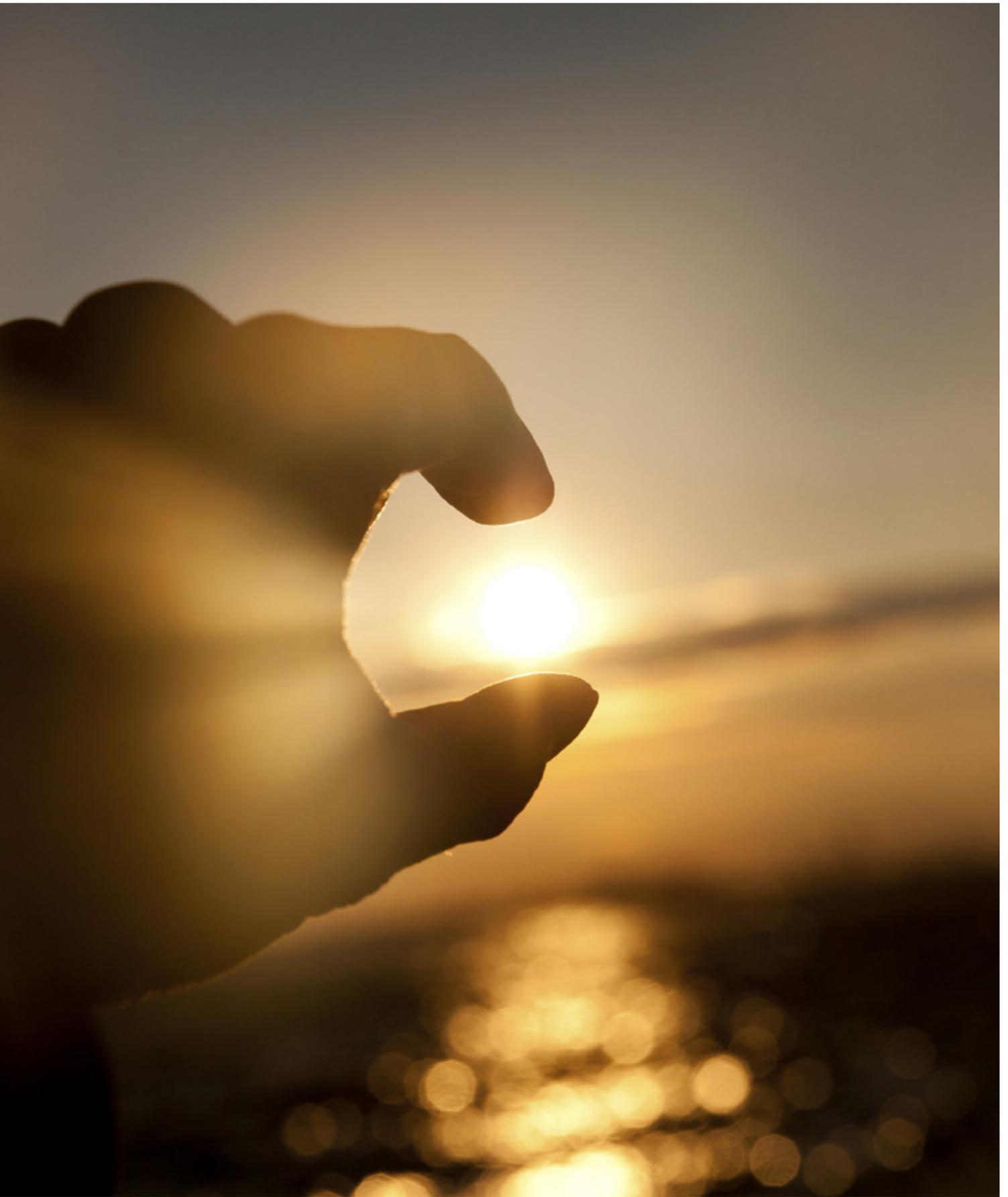
Cling to the light of your testimony while seeking answers to your questions and doubts. The Holy Ghost is the key.

By LaRene Porter Gaunt
Church Magazines

Is it okay to have questions about the gospel? Of course. That is how we gain a testimony. The prophet Moroni in the Book of Mormon gave us a pattern for finding answers. He exhorts us to read and to ponder (see Moroni 10:3). Then we “ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ,” if what we are praying about is true; and if we “ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto [us], by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4).

Moroni makes it clear that answers come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This is the key to dealing with our doubts. Clinging to our testimonies while patiently searching for answers will bring success over time. Praying, studying the scriptures, attending the temple and our Church meetings, listening to living prophets, and striving to live the commandments all provide opportunities to receive inspiration from the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, separating ourselves from gospel living limits our opportunities to receive such inspiration. As a result, we are left open to the negative influence of Satan, which can cause us to look “beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14), weakening our testimonies.

Such was the case with Mary Anne, a Latter-day Saint mother of two. “I married in the temple at age 19,” she explains, “but before long I began having doubts about the gospel as my marriage fell apart. I stopped praying and reading the scriptures. Each time a member’s well-meaning comments hurt my feelings, I blamed the Church. How could the gospel be true if my husband and the members acted the way they did?”



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Soon Mary Anne's bitterness pushed the influence of the Holy Ghost out of her life. "I convinced myself I was being a hypocrite to remain a member," she says. "I divorced my husband and asked to be excommunicated." Mary Anne left the Church behind as a way of dealing with her doubts. She began "looking for truth in worldly sources and joined another religion."

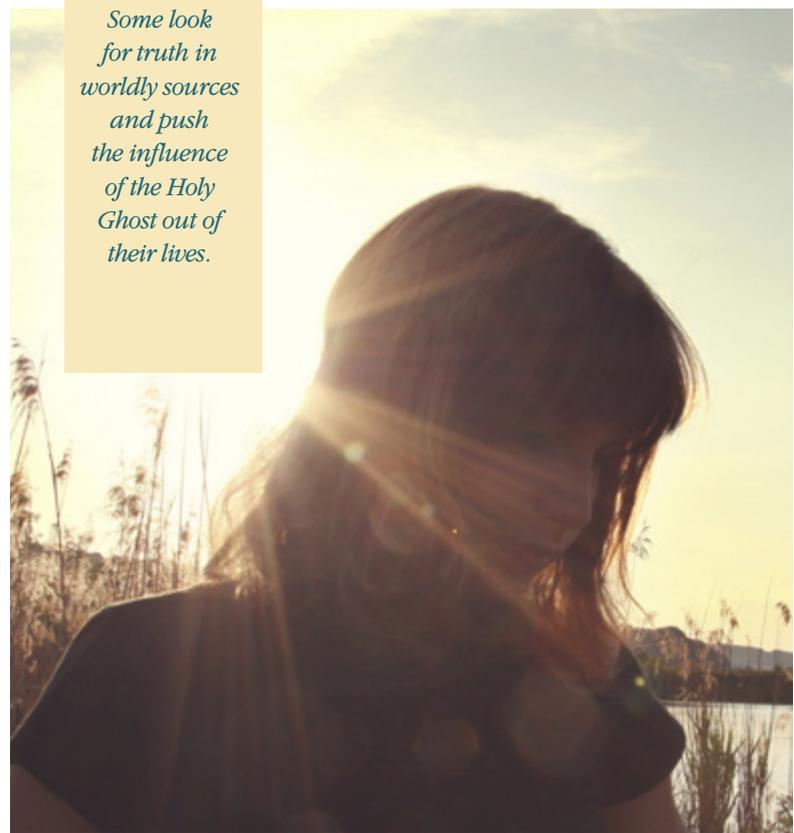
On the other hand, Michael, who was a missionary at the time of the following story, found answers to his questions using Moroni's pattern of faith. He says, "In 1976 I was temporarily serving in the Nevada Las Vegas Mission until my visa arrived. I was excited to be there, but after only a few weeks, I had been called everything from a liar to a bigot and confronted with difficult questions. Since joining the Church as a teenager, I had studied Church doctrine, read the Book of Mormon, and kept the commandments. My testimony was strong; however, I could not answer all the questions that confronted me."

Michael sought direction from Heavenly Father as he centered his personal study on finding answers.

"During a missionary discussion, a sincere young woman named Dorothy expressed reservations because black members of the Church could not at that time hold the priesthood," says Michael. "Because of my studies, I knew that from Moses until the birth of the Savior, only the tribe of Levi could hold the Aaronic Priesthood. I shared this and other biblical scriptures with Dorothy that showed how the Lord, throughout history, had restricted priesthood ordination to certain individuals. I told her that I didn't know why priesthood blessings had not yet been extended to all worthy men, but I testified that the Savior had restored His Church and His priesthood through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

"Dorothy, weeping at times, listened intently to the Spirit. I'll never forget her prayer at the close of our discussion: 'Please help other people to hear this message and feel good like I do.'"

Michael didn't get to attend Dorothy's baptism. Shortly after their discussion, his visa arrived. Nevertheless, he says,



"I left Las Vegas grateful for what I had learned about how the Holy Ghost can guide us in finding answers to gospel questions if we remain faithful, search, pray, and testify."

The contrasting experiences of Mary Anne and Michael show how the influence of the Holy Ghost can make a difference in finding answers. As Moroni said, "By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5).

Here are three key points to help us draw upon the power of the Holy Ghost when seeking answers: seek light and truth, pray and be patient, and obey God's commandments.

1. Seek Light and Truth

The Book of Mormon prophet Alma said, "Whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good" (Alma 32:35). But how do we actually discern light and truth?

Heavenly Father has blessed each of us with the Light of Christ, "that [we] may know good from evil" (Moroni 7:16, 19). We often call this our conscience.

However, through the gift of the Holy Ghost we can

have access to an even greater measure of light and truth. We receive this gift when we are confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after we are baptized. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead and “is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22).

The mission of the Holy Ghost is, in part, to testify of truth, a witness that often comes as a feeling of “peace and reassurance.”¹ Other times we feel a rush of enlightenment and understanding. The prophet Alma compares the word of God to a seed that “will begin to swell within [our] breasts” (Alma 32:28). God is the source of all truth, and the Holy Ghost confirms that truth.

How does the Holy Ghost help us discern light and truth? A story from the life of Oliver Cowdery illustrates one way. When Oliver heard of Joseph Smith and the work of the Restoration, he prayed to know if Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. He received an answer by way of peace that settled on his heart and mind. This gave him the assurance to go to Joseph and become his assistant in the work of translating the Book of Mormon.

Joseph in turn received a revelation for Oliver in which the Lord said that Oliver should think back to the night when he knelt and prayed to know if Joseph was a prophet. The Lord said, “Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?” (D&C 6:23). Often we recognize light and truth in the same way (see D&C 8:1–2).

2. Pray and Be Patient

Sincere prayer invites personal revelation.

“Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant but that are made conditional on our asking for them” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer”).

It was a humble and earnest prayer that led Jed, a Latter-day Saint married in the temple and the father of three, back into Church activity. “I was more in a state of disbelief than just doubt,” he says. “My doubts moved from the veracity of the Church to my convictions about Jesus Christ and Christianity in general. When I took it one step further and wondered about the very nature of God, the floodgates opened. I seriously examined whether or not I believed there was a Supreme Being.”

After all Jed’s study, however, his belief in God remained unshaken and, in fact, became stronger. “I knew God was watching over me, so I desired to do His will,” says Jed. “A prayer stemmed from that desire. The answer was clear and strong—I want you to attend church.” It was like sudden light filling a dark room.² I knew it came by way of the Holy Ghost. So, with my doubts and disbeliefs



SEVEN WAYS TO INVITE THE HOLY GHOST

“God’s laws must ever be our standard,” said President Russell M. Nelson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “In dealing with controversial issues, we should first search for God’s guidance.”⁷ Following are ways we can seek for God’s guidance through the revelations of the Holy Ghost:

1. Pray and fast.
2. Search the scriptures and the words of the prophets.
3. Listen to sacred music.
4. Obey the commandments.
5. Attend the temple.
6. Receive a priesthood blessing.
7. Bear testimony.

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OUR MOST IMPORTANT CHOICE

“God does not force us to believe. Instead He invites us to believe by sending living prophets and apostles to teach us, by providing scriptures, and by beckoning to us through His Spirit. We are the ones who must choose to embrace those spiritual invitations, electing to see with inward eyes the spiritual light with which He calls us. The decision to believe is the most important choice we ever make.”

Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Presidency of the Seventy, “Choose to Believe,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 38.

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unresolved, I started to attend church.”

Prayer was the key for Jed. “I’ve been active now for six years. I’ve resolved many of my doubts through prayer and personal revelation. As a result, the relevance of unresolved doubts has changed for me. I firmly believe that as I continually strive to do God’s will, I will not be led astray and answers will come.”

Prayer and patience can sustain us, just as they did Jed. “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36).

3. Obey God’s Commandments

Blessings come as we keep God’s commandments (see D&C 130:20–21). Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “Obedience makes us progressively stronger, capable of faithfully enduring tests and trials in the future.”³

For those who are struggling with questions or doubts, it is more important than ever to keep the commandments. Obedience helps us remain worthy to receive revelation and discern light and truth when the Holy Ghost speaks peace to our hearts and minds. Obedience and keeping our covenants help



us remember our testimonies of true doctrine and the joy that the gospel has brought into our lives. Obedience helps us remain on safe ground while we seek for answers to our questions. This is God’s pattern for finding answers.

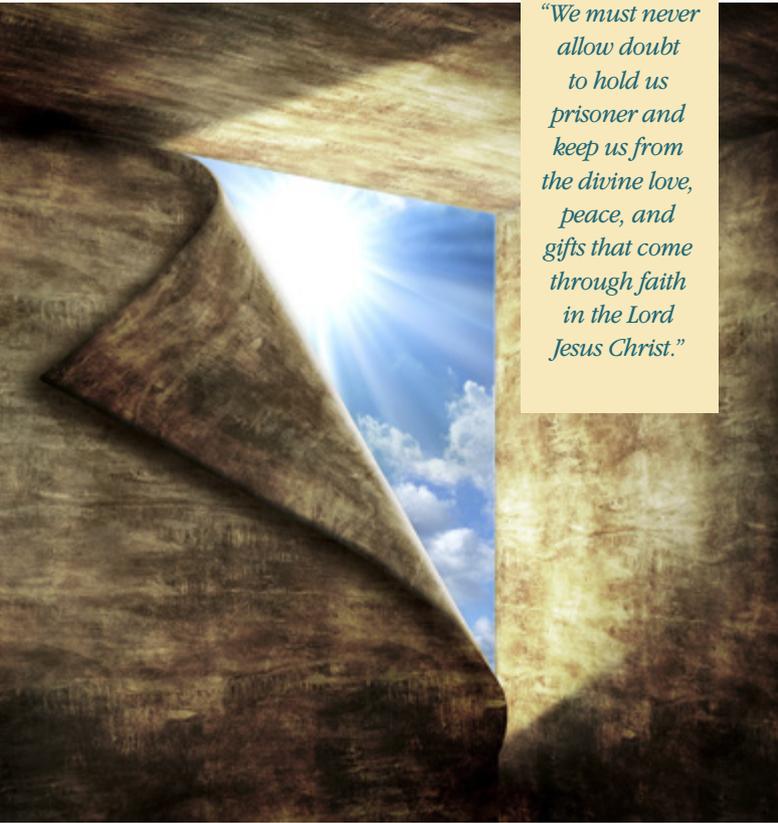
This is what Starla, a university student who had just received her mission call, did when she began to have doubts. “A book I was reading for a class raised issues about polygamy in the Church that concerned me,” she says. “In addition, I felt unsure about the role of women in the Church. How could I serve my mission in a few months when I had doubts?”

Starla decided, however, to continue to obey God’s commandments, which became key to dealing with her doubts.

“One day in the temple I realized that I felt the Spirit there,” she says. “I knew some things were true, like the Restoration of the gospel and the Book of Mormon. I decided to hold on to the things I knew were true. I believed that there were answers. I knew Heavenly Father knew the answers and someday I would know those answers. I decided that in the meantime, living the gospel would come first.”

So Starla left for her mission in Peru. “Gradually answers to my questions began falling into place,” she says, “in a sudden insight during my personal study or during a conversation with a companion. I can’t say exactly when it happened, but my questions were resolved. Not only am I now at peace with my answers, but I also have a strong testimony of the understanding I gained.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said:



“We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Please, first doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith. We must never allow doubt to hold us prisoner and keep us from the divine love, peace, and gifts that come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴

Resolving Doubts

Remember the story of Mary Anne at the beginning of this article—the Latter-day Saint mother who left the Church? Well, she discovered that it’s never too late to resolve doubts, repent, and return to the gospel. Eighteen years after asking to be excommunicated, Mary Anne went to sing in a ward choir with a member friend. She recalls, “I was surprised that I remembered the words to ‘I Stand All Amazed,’⁵ but I did. Later I found myself singing it around the house. The words sank deep into my soul, and the Holy Ghost testified of their truthfulness. My heart was softened. Before long I was baptized.”

The Holy Ghost guided Mary Anne to articles in the *Ensign*, to words of the living prophets, and to certain scriptures. “I didn’t find the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ anywhere in my search of worldly sources or another religion,” she says, “because it is only found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I don’t

recommend the road I traveled, but I am grateful for the deep truth of the gospel that I can carry with me into eternity.”

It may take courage to remain active in the Church as we deal with doubts. But as we seek light and truth, pray and be patient, and obey God’s commandments, the whisperings of the Spirit can help us. Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “If we heed the gentle promptings of the Holy Ghost, it can . . . guide us back to our eternal home to live with our eternal Father in Heaven.”⁶ ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “The Witness,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 95.
2. See David A. Bednar, “The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 87, 88.
3. Robert D. Hales, “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 38.
4. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 23.
5. “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193.
6. L. Tom Perry, “Obedience through Our Faithfulness,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 101.
7. Russell M. Nelson, “Let Your Faith Show,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 30.
8. Marcos A. Aidukaitis, “If Ye Lack Wisdom,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 108.

RESOURCES FOR FINDING ANSWERS

“In the kingdom of God, the search for truth is appreciated, encouraged, and in no way repressed or feared,” said Elder Marcos A. Aidukaitis of the Seventy. “Church members are strongly counseled by the Lord Himself to seek for knowledge [see D&C 88:78].”⁸

Following are some resources where we can find answers:

1. The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price
2. The words of the living prophets from general conference and other sources
3. Bishops and stake presidents
4. Church magazines and manuals
5. *True to the Faith* and *For the Strength of Youth*
6. The Gospel Topics site and the Church History site on LDS.org. These sites address topics that are sometimes confusing or cause doubt, such as race and the priesthood, plural marriage, and First Vision accounts.