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Follow the example of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration.

AYER



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THE KEY TO TESTIMONY AND THE RESTORATION

As Church leaders, we are often asked, “How do I receive a testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ?”

Gaining a testimony and becoming converted begins with study and prayer, then living the gospel with patience and persistence and inviting and waiting upon the Spirit. The life of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration are excellent examples of this process. As [I share]... the events of the Restoration with you, look for the steps that lead to testimony....

*Turn to the scriptures.
Kneel in prayer.
Ask in faith.
Listen to the Holy Ghost.*



DETAIL FROM THE DESIRES OF MY HEART II, BY WALTER RANE. PHOTOGRAPHS FROM GETTY IMAGES



Great Confusion

Joseph Smith was born on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, USA. He came into a family that prayed and studied the Bible. In his youth, he became interested in religion and discovered a “great confusion” over the doctrines of Christ, with “priest contending against priest, and convert against convert” (Joseph Smith—History 1:6).

This confusion . . . began centuries earlier in what has been called the Great Apostasy. The day of Christ “shall not come,” said the Apostle Paul, “except there come a falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

A few decades after Christ’s Resurrection, His Apostles were killed, His teachings were corrupted, and the priesthood was taken from the earth. But Paul, seeing our day, prophesied “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times [God would] gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10). He would restore Christ’s true Church to the earth once more. . . .

Joseph Finds an Answer

Joseph . . . , at the age of 14, found himself caught in a “tumult of [religious] opinions.” Often he asked himself, “If any one of [these churches] be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10).

Joseph turned to the Bible for answers. “If any of you lack wisdom,” he read in the Epistle of James, “let

him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Following James’s direction, Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home and prayed. As he called upon God, “a pillar of light . . . descended,” brighter than the noonday sun, and “two Personages” appeared. “One of them spake . . . , calling [Joseph] by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*” (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, conversed with Joseph. They answered his question. They taught him that the true Church of Christ had been lost from the earth. Joseph learned that these members of the Godhead were separate and distinct beings, They knew him by name, and They were willing to answer his prayers. The heavens were opened, the night of apostasy was over, and the light of the gospel began to shine forth.

Like Joseph, many of us find ourselves seeking the light of truth. . . . Like Joseph, we must search the scriptures, pray, . . . [be] humble, and [learn] to exercise faith.

Moroni and the Golden Plates

During the three years following his First Vision, Joseph [said he often felt discouraged because of his weaknesses and imperfections]. But he did not lose faith or forget the power of prayer.

On September 21, 1823, at the age of 17, [Joseph] knelt to ask “for forgiveness of all [his] sins” . . . and [to know his] “standing before [God]” (see Joseph Smith—History 1:29). As he prayed, a light . . . appeared, increasing “until the room was lighter than at noonday” (verse 30). In that light there stood a personage dressed in a robe of “exquisite whiteness” (verse 31). He called Joseph by name and introduced himself as Moroni. He said “that God had a work for [Joseph] to do” and told him of an ancient record “written upon gold plates,” which, when translated, became the Book of Mormon. The book contained a record of the fulness of the gospel. (See verses 33–34.) . . . Joseph was directed to . . . that record, buried . . . [in the] nearby Hill . . . Cumorah.

The next day Joseph found the plates, but the time had not yet arrived to bring them forth. Moroni instructed Joseph to meet him there that same day each year for the next four years (see verses 52–53). Joseph obeyed. Each year he went to the hill where Moroni gave him “instruction” (verse 54) concerning the Restoration of Christ’s Church. . . .

Joseph received the plates on September 22, 1827, at the age of 21. He also received an ancient instrument for translating them, called the Urim and Thummim. Using this sacred interpreter, along with the Holy Ghost, Joseph began the work of translation. . . .

The Restoration Unfolds

At the age of 23, Joseph was translating the plates when he and [his scribe], Oliver [Cowdery], came upon a passage about baptism for the remission of sins. . . . They wanted to know more. Joseph knew what to do.

On May 15, 1829, [Joseph and Oliver] went into the woods to inquire of the Lord. While they were praying, John the Baptist appeared “in a cloud of light” (Joseph Smith—History 1:68). He . . . had baptized the Savior in life, [and] he held the priesthood keys necessary to perform that ordinance by the authority of God.

. . . John . . . laid his hands on [Joseph’s head and then Oliver’s] and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon [each] of them (see D&C 13; Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69). . . . In late May or early June 1829, the Melchizedek, or higher, Priesthood was conferred on Joseph and Oliver by the Apostles Peter, James, and John.

The translation of the Book

of Mormon was also completed that June, and the book was published on March 26, 1830. . . . Days later, on April 6, the Church was formally organized. . . . As prophesied by Paul, the ancient Church of Christ was once again established on the earth.

But the work of the Restoration was not over. . . . [The Kirtland Temple, the first temple built in this dispensation,] was dedicated . . . on March 27, 1836. One week later, on April 3, a meeting was held there. Following a solemn and silent prayer, . . . the Lord Jesus Christ [appeared to Joseph and Oliver.] . . . Moses, Elias, and Elijah also appeared [in the Kirtland Temple] and [gave priesthood keys] to Joseph (see D&C 110).

A Pattern for Us to Follow

Brothers and sisters, can we see the pattern? Every major event of the Restoration—the First Vision, the appearance of Moroni and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon,

the restoration of the priesthood, and the appearance of Jesus Christ [in] His holy temple—was preceded by prayer. . . .

[Many times] I have felt the undeniable witness of the Spirit of God, like a fire burning in my heart, that the restored gospel is true. . . . [If you do not know these things for yourself,] may I suggest accepting the invitation extended by Moroni in the Book of Mormon: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:4–5). . . .

. . . Follow the example of Joseph Smith and the pattern of the Restoration. Turn to the scriptures. Kneel in prayer. Ask in faith. Listen to the Holy Ghost. . . . And in the name of Jesus Christ, I promise, “If ye will . . . ask [Heavenly Father] in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping [the Lord’s] commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Nephi 15:11). ■

From an October 2003 general conference address.



DETAIL FROM JESUS CHRIST APPEARS TO THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY, BY WALTER RANE RESTORATION OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD, BY WALTER RANE