

The First Vision

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In my growing-up years in Germany, I attended church in many different locations and circumstances: in humble back rooms, in impressive villas, and in very functional modern chapels. All of these buildings had one important factor in common: the Spirit of God was present—the love of the Savior could be felt as we assembled as a branch or ward family.

The chapel in Zwickau had an old air-driven organ. Every Sunday a young man was assigned to push up and down the sturdy lever operating the bellows to make the organ work. I sometimes had the great privilege to assist in this important task.

While the congregation sang our beloved hymns of the Restoration, I pumped with all my strength so the organ would not run out of wind. The bellows operator sat in a seat that offered a great view of a stained-glass window that beautified the front part of the chapel. The stained glass portrayed the First Vision, with Joseph Smith kneeling in the Sacred Grove, looking up toward heaven and into a pillar of light.

During the hymns of the congregation and even during talks and testimonies given by our members, I often looked at this depiction of a most sacred moment in world history. In my mind's eye I saw Joseph receiving knowledge, witness, and divine instructions as he became a blessed instrument in the hand of our Heavenly Father.



President Uchtdorf shares his testimony of Joseph Smith's First Vision.

I felt a special spirit while looking at the beautiful scene in this window. I saw a picture of a believing young boy in a sacred grove who made a courageous decision to earnestly pray to our Heavenly Father, who listened and responded lovingly to him.

Here I was, a young boy in post-World War II Germany, living in a city in ruins, thousands of miles away from Palmyra in North America and more than a hundred years after the event actually took place. By the universal power of the Holy Ghost, I felt in my heart and in my mind that it was true, that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ and heard Their voices.

The Spirit of God comforted my soul at this young age with an assurance of the reality of this sacred moment that resulted in the beginning of a worldwide movement destined to “roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2). I believed Joseph Smith’s testimony of that glorious experience in the Sacred Grove then, and I know it now. God has spoken to mankind again! ●

From an April 2005 general conference address.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- 1. Does it matter what kind of building you go to church in? What does matter?**
- 2. What do you think “the universal power of the Holy Ghost” means? What might this have to do with the many people who are joining the Church across the world?**
- 3. Do you have a testimony of Joseph Smith’s First Vision? What can you do to gain one?**

