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*Coming to Know*

# WHO YOU REALLY ARE

*I was your age when I received a revelation that set the course of my life.*

**W**hen I was 17 years old, I knew my bishop was going to approach me in the near future and ask me about serving a mission.

While I grew up in a home with devout and active parents, I wasn't yet fully committed to serving a mission. I went to church and prayed when asked, and sometimes I prayed on my own. I believed in the Church, but I didn't yet know that it was true. I didn't yet have my own testimony, and I didn't feel that I could go and tell others to join the Church unless I could look into their eyes and say, "I know."

So I decided to find out for myself whether the Church is true. I started with reading the Book of Mormon. However, when I finished reading the Book of Mormon, I didn't feel any different from when I'd started reading.

## **The Day That Changed Everything**

One evening, I sat in my bedroom thinking, "How do I come to know?" To my mind came the impression that I should read the Joseph Smith story in the Pearl of Great Price. As I read Joseph's story, I began to see that his story was the same as mine. Here was a young man who wanted to know which church was true and which he should join. There were many different voices and opinions on the subject of religion swirling around Joseph Smith.

That was how I felt.

As I read how Joseph Smith determined to ask God what was true and what he should do—and what happened to him as a result—I realized I needed to do the same. I needed to pray and ask God. Unlike Joseph Smith, I didn't have a grove of trees to visit. I was living in a big

city, in Long Beach, California, USA. The only quiet place I could go to was the quiet of my own bedroom.

So I closed the door, knelt at my bed, and put my face in my pillow. I offered what, for me, was my first real vocal prayer on this subject. I addressed Heavenly Father and humbly asked Him if He was really there, if Jesus Christ was really His Son, and if Joseph Smith had really seen the two of Them.

As I did so, I had an experience that just overwhelmed me. A feeling of love and peace fell upon me and completely consumed me. I was filled with deep spiritual knowledge. In that moment, I knew—and have known ever since—that there is a God in heaven and that He is my Father. I knew that Jesus Christ is His Son, who atoned for me and all mankind, and that Joseph Smith saw both of Them.

I also got something more that I hadn't actually asked for: a knowledge that out of all the people on the earth, God knew and loved me.

Knowing that God was answering my prayer, and knowing that He loved me, caused me to weep.

### Following My New Course

This experience fundamentally changed my life. While I haven't been perfect since this experience, I've tried very hard to live up to the knowledge I gained that day—that I was a son of God and that He loved me enough to speak to me in prayer.

I moved forward with conviction to serve a full-time mission and did so. Afterward, I was married in the temple to a wonderful, worthy young woman, my wife now of 30 years. And I have tried to serve faithfully in all that God has asked me to do and to keep the covenants I have made with Him.

My whole life has been based on that revelatory experience and the knowledge that came to me as a 17-year-old young man.

### Discovering Your Own True Identity

To the youth of the Church, I urge you to come to know who you are. It changes everything.

So many voices in the world today tell you that there is nothing more than this life, that you're simply a product of your biology and culture, that happiness comes only through indulging your desires, appetites, and passions. However, such voices speak without knowledge of what was before this life or what comes after. Therefore, they speak without knowledge of who you really are.

When you hear the voice of your Heavenly Father, when He illuminates your soul with who you really are, the voices of the world will never sound the same to you again. You will understand that the voices of the world “speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh. . . . [T]hey promise . . .



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liberty, [but] they themselves are the servants of corruption” and lead to nothing else but “wells without water” (2 Peter 2:17–19).

Build some quiet time into your life where you put aside electronic gadgetry. Turn off the music, the



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television, and everything else, and go to your knees in prayer. Go to the scriptures. Ponder. Pray. Then, listen. Don't just talk *to* God; talk *with* Him.

If you'll do that in a quiet place, as Joseph did, as I have done, and as countless others have done, then you will come to know who you really are. You will get above the cloud of distraction that is so thick in our secular world.

### **Becoming a Witness**

Sometimes people will ask me, "You're now a General Authority. What have you come to know about the Lord since becoming a General Authority?" I say that while I've come to know more, the spiritual knowledge I gained at age 17 remains among the most significant of my life.

The scriptures describe the Seventies as "especial witnesses" (D&C 107:25). I've had many revelatory experiences in my life, and all of them have added to what I know to be true. But if there's one thing that qualifies me to be today an especial witness of the Savior, it is that witness which I received at age 17.

From this I say that youth can receive as much witness as a General Authority has. The reason I say this is because, for me, I received that witness in my youth. It has been the foundation of everything I've done since.

### **We Love You**

To the youth of the Church, the General Authorities of the Church love you. We love you like our own children. We have the deepest hope that you will come to know who you are and then live and be what you need to live and be. **NE**

