



LESSONS

— from the —

FIRST VISION

*What can I learn
about personal revelation
from Joseph Smith's
First Vision?*

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Do any of these questions sound familiar: “Why can’t I get answers to my prayers?” “How do I know if the thoughts I’m having are coming from me or from the Holy Ghost?” If you’ve had questions like these, you’re not alone. Learning to receive personal revelation is a challenge for many of us.

Joseph Smith had big questions too. Remember, he was just 14 years old when he wanted to know what church to join. His honest seeking had amazing results: the First Vision, the Restoration of the gospel, and so much more.

Joseph’s experience may be extraordinary, but the way he sought answers teaches some great patterns for how we can receive revelation ourselves. Here are five questions you can ask yourself that can help you hear, understand, and respond to heaven’s voice.



Have I “studied it out” (see D&C 9:8)? Have I done my homework?

When young Joseph wanted to know which church was true, he did more than simply ask. He put significant effort into seeking an answer. He speaks of “serious reflection,” of attending “several meetings” of various churches “as often as an occasion would permit,” and of “laboring under the extreme difficulties” of his dilemma (Joseph Smith—History 1:8, 11).

So many times we want revelation on important questions without putting much effort into the revelatory process. A youth might ask, “Which college should I go to?” without researching the school or visiting the campus. Or a young single adult might ask if he or she should marry a certain person after—or even during—the first date.

In most cases, the Lord wants us to make decisions based on righteous principles and *then* ask Him if

our decision is right. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles put it this way: “Persons who try to shift all decision making to the Lord and plead for revelation in every choice will soon find circumstances in which they pray for guidance and don’t receive it” (“Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 13).

Have I looked to see if the Lord already provided the answer?

As part of “studying it out,” Joseph did his best to find out if there was clear counsel from the Lord on what Church he should join. There just wasn’t a whole lot available, and after exhausting all his resources, he realized “it was impossible” for him “to come to any certain conclusion” on his own (Joseph Smith—History 1:8). It was after these efforts that Joseph went to pray in the Sacred Grove.

When we’re seeking guidance, we

too can look for what the Lord has revealed on the matter. All too often, we ask to receive revelation on things the Lord has already made clear. We’re blessed today to have so much that Joseph didn’t have in his time—for instance, modern-day scripture, prophets’ teachings, general conference, priesthood blessings, and guidelines in Church resources such as *For the Strength of Youth*.

When we have questions, we can always pray. But it just may be that the Lord has already placed an answer out there for you to find—you just have to be open to receive it.

Have I searched the scriptures?

Many answers to some of life’s greatest questions come as we are searching the scriptures. “One day” Joseph was “reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse.” It was in this sacred, private moment,



Take President Eyring's Challenge

At a Face to Face event in March, President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, challenged *you* to gain a testimony of the Restoration. Watch or read what he said at youth.lds.org.



Portrayal of Joseph Smith from the video "Joseph Smith: The Prophet of the Restoration."

with the scriptures open, that the words entered his heart "with great force" (Joseph Smith—History 1:11–12).

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "When we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets" (Oct. 2006 general conference).

Have I sought the Lord's answer in a humble, reverent way?

When Joseph finally decided to ask of God, he did so in a way that showed his humility and reverence for the sacred experience he wanted to have. He went to the woods, to a place he had planned in advance, where he could be alone. There he "kneled down" and offered up "the desires of [his] heart" (Joseph

Smith—History 1:14–15).

We don't need to be alone in a grove of trees, but we can do simple things to show how important the prayer is to us. Kneeling, pondering before and after our prayer, and expressing gratitude all help.

Am I willing to act upon the revelation I receive—even if it is not the answer I was expecting?

The answer that Joseph received surprised him—"it had never entered into [his] heart" that all of the churches could be wrong (Joseph Smith—History 1:18). However, he accepted that answer and lived by it, even when opposition and persecution arose—almost from the moment he stepped out of the Sacred Grove—and did not cease until his death.

In some cases, *learning* the will of God is the easy part—*following* it can be more challenging. If you

feel you cannot receive revelation, here's one simple question to ask in prayer that can help: "What do I need to change in my life to get closer to Thee?" Try it. You might be surprised by how revelation seems to flow. The battle then becomes changing our lives based on the revelation the Lord sends.

Answers Will Come

As a result of Joseph's experience, he was able to say, "I have learned for myself" (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). This can be our goal too. Revelation may not come right away, and sometimes God may require us to make a decision and act before the answers come. But we can be assured that He will guide us when we need it. **NE**



Experience the First Vision

Check out a new video about the First Vision at lds.org/go/FirstVisionNE417. What other lessons can you find from Joseph Smith's experience? Share your ideas and read those of other youth at youth.lds.org.