

Too often we think of obedience as the passive and thoughtless following of the orders or dictates of a higher authority. Actually, at its best, obedience is an emblem of our faith in the wisdom and power of the highest authority, even God. When Abraham demonstrated his unwavering faithfulness and obedience to God, even when commanded to sacrifice his son, God rescued him. Similarly, when we demonstrate our faithfulness through obedience, God will ultimately rescue us.

Those who rely solely on themselves and follow only their own desires and self-inclinations are so limited when compared to those who follow God and tap into His insight, power, and gifts. It has been said that someone who is all wrapped up in himself or herself makes a very small package. Strong, proactive obedience is anything but weak or passive. It is the means by which we declare our faith in God and qualify ourselves to receive the powers of heaven. Obedience is a choice. It is a choice between our own limited knowledge and power and God's unlimited wisdom and omnipotence. According to the lesson my grandfather gave to me, it is a choice to sense the spiritual bit in our mouths and follow the driver's lead.

May we become heirs to the covenant and the seed of Abraham through our faithfulness and by receiving the ordinances of the restored gospel. I promise you that the blessings of eternal life are available to everyone who is faithful and obedient. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



**By Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge**  
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# The Prophet Joseph Smith

*The revelations poured out upon Joseph Smith affirm that he was a prophet of God.*

## The First Vision

A young boy reads the Bible, and his eyes pause on a singular passage of scripture. This is a moment that will change the world.

He is anxious to know which church can lead him to truth and salvation. He has tried almost everything else, and now he turns to the Bible and reads these words: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of

God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."<sup>1</sup>

He reflects on them over and over again. The first glimmer of light penetrates the darkness. Is this the answer, the way out of confusion and darkness? Can it be this simple? Ask God and He will answer? At length he decides he must either ask God or ever remain in darkness and confusion.

And yet as anxious as he is, he doesn't run to a quiet corner and rattle off a hurried prayer. He is only 14, but in his haste to know, he is not hasty. This is not to be just any prayer. He decides where to go and when to make the attempt. He prepares to talk to God.

And then the day comes. It is "the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of [1820]."<sup>2</sup> He walks alone into the stillness of the nearby woods, beneath the trees that tower above him. He reaches the place where he previously designed to go. He kneels and offers up the desires of his heart.

Describing what happens next, he says:



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“I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

“ . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other— [Joseph,] *This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”<sup>3</sup>

Only 24 years later, Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum will die because of what began here.

### Opposition

Joseph said that when he was 17, an angel told him that his “name [would] be had for good and evil among all nations, . . . among all people.”<sup>4</sup> This amazing prophecy is continuing to be fulfilled today as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has spread throughout the world.

Opposition, criticism, and antagonism are companions to the truth.

Whenever the truth with regard to the purpose and destiny of man is revealed, there will always be a force to oppose it. Beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, down to the ministry of Christ, and on down to our day, there has always been and will ever be an effort to deceive, derail, oppose, and frustrate the plan of life.

Look for the biggest dust cloud billowing above the most dirt that is kicked at One who was most opposed, challenged, and rejected, beaten, abandoned, and crucified, One who descended below all things, and there you will find the truth, the Son of God, the Savior of all mankind. Why did they not leave Him alone?

Why? Because He is the truth, and the truth will always be opposed.

And then look for one who brought forth another testament of Jesus Christ and other scripture, look for one who was the instrument by which the fullness of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ were restored to the earth, look for him and expect to find the

dirt flying. Why not leave him alone?

Why? Because he taught the truth, and the truth will always be opposed.

### The Flood of Revelation

The revelations poured out upon Joseph Smith affirm that he was a prophet of God. Let’s just look at some of them—just look at some of the light and truth revealed through him that shines in stark contrast to the common beliefs of his day and ours:

- God is a personal, exalted being, an Eternal Father. He is our Father.
- God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are separate beings.<sup>5</sup>
- You are more than human. You are a child of God the Eternal Father and may become like Him<sup>6</sup> if you will have faith in His Son, repent, receive ordinances, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end.<sup>7</sup>
- The Church of Jesus Christ today is fundamentally the same Church He organized during His mortal ministry, with prophets and apostles, Melchizedek and Levitical

Priesthoods, elders, high priests, deacons, teachers, bishops, and the seventy, all as described in the Bible.

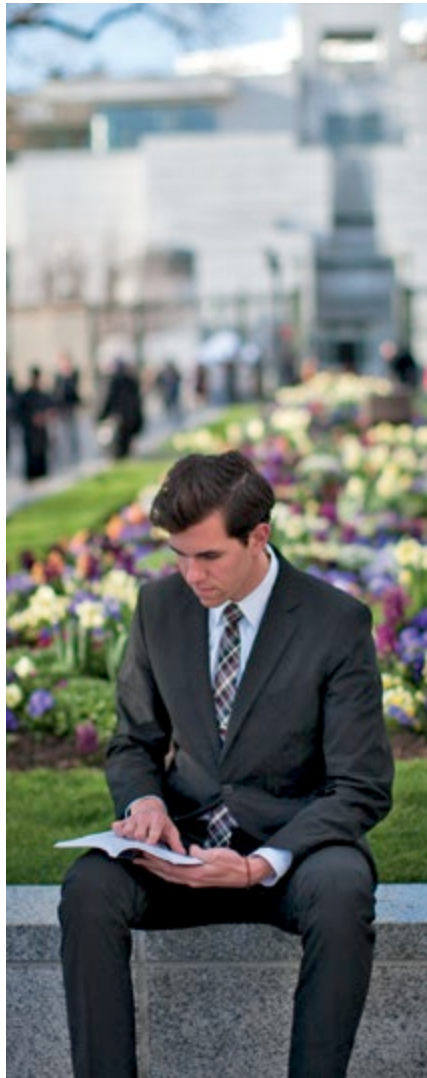
- Priesthood authority was withheld from the earth following the deaths of the Savior and His Apostles and was restored again in our day.
- Revelation has not ceased, and the heavens are not closed. God speaks to prophets today, and He will speak to you and me as well.<sup>8</sup>
- There is more after this life than only heaven and hell. There are degrees of glory, and it matters a great deal what we do in this life.<sup>9</sup>
- More than having a mere passive belief in Christ, we should “look unto [Him] in every thought,”<sup>10</sup> “do all that [we do] in the name of the Son,”<sup>11</sup> and “always remember him and keep his commandments . . . that [we] may always have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>12</sup>
- The billions who live and die without the gospel and the ordinances necessary for salvation are not lost. “Through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel,”<sup>13</sup> administered for both the living and the dead.<sup>14</sup>
- Everything did not begin at birth. You lived before in the presence of God as His son or daughter and prepared for this mortal life.<sup>15</sup>
- Marriage and family are not conventions of men until only death do us part. They are intended to be made eternal through covenants we make with God. The family is the pattern of heaven.<sup>16</sup>

And this is only a part of the flood of revelation poured out upon Joseph Smith. Where did it all come from, these revelations which give light to darkness, clarity to doubt, and which have inspired, blessed, and improved

millions of people? Which is more likely, that he dreamed it all up on his own or that he had the help of heaven? Do the scriptures he produced sound like the words of man or the words of God?

### Conclusion

There is no dispute about what Joseph Smith accomplished, only how he did what he did and why. And there are not many options. He was either pretender or prophet. Either he did what he did alone, or he had the help of heaven. Look at the evidence, but look at all of the evidence, the entire mosaic of his life, not any single piece. Most importantly, do as young



Joseph and “ask . . . God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given [you].”<sup>17</sup> This is not only how you may learn the truth about the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith; it is also the pattern to know the truth of all things.<sup>18</sup>

Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, as is Thomas S. Monson today. Through Joseph Smith, “the keys of the kingdom of God are [again] committed unto man on the earth, and . . . the gospel [will] roll forth . . . as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands . . . , until it has filled the whole earth.”<sup>19</sup>

God is our Eternal Father, and Jesus is the Christ. We worship Them. Nothing compares with Their creations, the plan of salvation, and the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. In this dispensation, we fulfill the plan of the Father and partake of the fruits of the Atonement only by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I bear testimony of Them—God the Eternal Father and Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. And I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. James 1:5.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:14.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:33.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
7. See 2 Nephi 31; 3 Nephi 27.
8. See Moroni 10:3–5.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 76.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
11. Moses 5:8.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77.
13. Articles of Faith 1:3.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 76; 128; 138.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:17; 138; Moses 3:5; 6:36.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–2; 132:5–33.
17. James 1:5.
18. See Moroni 10:3–5.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 65:2.