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# Listening

## As Samuel Listened

*It is a blessing to live in a time when the Lord guides us through prophets and an outpouring of the Spirit.*

When a young man named Samuel uttered the words “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10), they changed his life. They can change our lives as well.

Samuel, who ministered in the temple, uttered these words thousands of years ago. One night, as he was falling asleep, he heard a voice calling out to him. He thought it was the priest Eli, so Samuel called back, “Here am I” (1 Samuel 3:4).

Eli was asleep, so he did not respond. Samuel then ran to Eli, woke him, and said, “Here am I; for thou calledst me” (1 Samuel 3:5). Eli said he had not called Samuel and sent the young man back to bed. This happened two more times that night.

The third time Samuel went to Eli, the priest perceived that it was God who had called Samuel. So he instructed the young man to return to bed, and if the voice called him again,

he was to say, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:9). When the voice called to Samuel later that night, he answered, “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10). Mighty Jehovah then revealed His will to young Samuel (see 1 Samuel 3:11–14).

There is much we can learn from Samuel’s experience. Note that the Lord called three times, and all three times Samuel replied simply, “Here am I.” Only after he showed his willingness to listen—“Speak; for thy servant heareth”—did the Lord reveal His will.<sup>1</sup>

This experience also teaches us something about the way in which the Lord speaks to us. While it is true that occasionally there may be other ways in which He reveals His will to His children, including the ministering of angels and the granting of visions, I would like to focus on two ways: through prophets and through the Spirit. These two ways are as current as they are ancient.



### The Lord Speaks through Prophets

Millennia ago there lived a prophet named Amos. He bore the heavy burden of warning Judah and all of Israel about the devastating consequences of their actions. What Amos is most remembered for, however, is his important declaration: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

His statement is as true today as it was in ancient times. In fact, the Lord has given a similar message in our own dispensation: “I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments” (D&C 1:17). In the same revelation, the Lord added, “Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled” (D&C 1:37).

We learn three important principles from these passages:

1. The Lord calls prophets to warn us of coming calamities and to give us the commandments we need so that the calamities will not overcome us.
2. Prophets are the conduits through which the Lord gives us revelation and prophecy.
3. Prophets are the messengers who bring us the Lord’s promises. Those promises are often tied to commandments God gives us through His prophets.

Attending general conference is an excellent experience that gives me hope and joy. I pay attention to the prophetic warnings and promises, knowing full well that the promises will be fulfilled.

When my wife and I were newly married, we did not have a lot of money, but we decided that we would pay tithes and offerings no matter what happened. We trusted in the Lord’s promises made through His prophets. We did not always have money, but we never wanted for food or

shelter in any way. Experiences like this have assured us that the will of the Father is made known to us through His Son and through the prophets.

When we obey the commandments given through the prophets, we will be richly blessed with the fulfillment of promises. Such was the case with Enoch and the city that became known as Zion. Such can be the case with us—in our personal lives and in our families—if we will say as did Samuel of old, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.” This is so because our Father loves us and because our Savior will not leave us comfortless (see John 14:15–18). Indeed, He pours His Spirit upon all who receive His teachings.



*Our Father pours His Spirit upon all who receive His teachings through His Son and through His prophets.*

### The Lord Speaks through the Spirit

The ancient prophet Joel spoke of our day when he prophesied: “It shall come to pass afterward, *that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh*; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

“And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids *in those days will I pour out my spirit*” (Joel 2:28–29; emphasis added).

We know for certain that this prophecy applies to our dispensation because Moroni quoted this passage to Joseph Smith in 1823 and then declared that the prophecy would soon be fulfilled (see Joseph Smith—History 1:41). This

current outpouring of the Spirit is seen as many humble servants of Christ say, “Speak; for thy servant heareth” and then receive personal revelation to lead them.

Like the prophets, the Spirit testifies of Christ. In the words of Jesus himself, “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26). As we live according to the Spirit’s witness, our hearts will undergo a process of change to the point that we will “have no more disposition to do evil, but



to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2).

The Spirit can be poured out upon us in many ways. Sometimes the way will be obvious; other times it will not. We all need to grow in the understanding and implementation of the principle of revelation and learn to recognize the promptings of the Spirit.

After the resurrection of Christ, two disciples heading to a village called Emmaus were joined by Jesus. He walked with them and expounded the scriptures, but because their eyes were veiled, they did not know it was the Savior. Eventually, as He left them, they realized it was He. They also realized that they had felt the Spirit bearing witness to them.

One of them said to the other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). The Spirit can bear witness to believers and unbelievers alike, but we must listen closely to realize that the witness has come, lest we find ourselves knowing it not (see 3 Nephi 9:20). We all can listen more closely to the promptings of the Spirit and act accordingly.

### Listening As Samuel Listened

Whether the Lord speaks to us through prophets or through the Spirit—and He will do both—we must promptly reply, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.” Many of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants begin with a commandment to hearken. The first verse in the first section of this sacred volume begins with clear-cut counsel: “Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together” (D&C 1:1).

Of course, *hearing* the words of the Lord through His prophets is much more than merely listening to a talk. When we *hear* the words of the prophets, we realize that

those words are the will of God and that we must be willing to follow them. Similarly, *hearing* the words of the Lord through the Spirit is more than feeling His promptings. It is acting according to those promptings.

Listening to Him when He speaks is as important in our day as it was when Samuel walked the earth.

In general conference, President Thomas S. Monson said:

“I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.”<sup>2</sup>

President Monson reiterated Heavenly Father’s desire for us to “walk uprightly and keep the commandments.” And He promised specific blessings: comfort, joy, and victory.

It is a blessing to live in a time when the Lord guides us through prophets and the outpouring of the Spirit. Let us not be content with simply saying, “Here am I.” Let us obediently say, “Speak; for thy servant heareth.” As we utter Samuel’s words, we will see promises fulfilled and our hearts changed.

I testify that God is a God of truth. He cannot lie, and all of His promises will be fulfilled. This fact fills my soul with gratitude. I know that all of this is possible because of the atoning sacrifice of our Savior. I also know that our Father reveals His will to us through His Son and through His prophets.

If we obey His will, nothing in the world will defeat us. This is truly so, for God has spoken it through His prophets. ■



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#### NOTES

1. See “God Will Honor Those Who Honor Him,” *Old Testament: Class Member Study Guide*, 14.
2. Thomas S. Monson, “Be of Good Cheer,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2009, 92.