



DIGITAL DETACHMENT

& Personal Revelation

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Ours is a most unusual generation. We are blessed by great and rapid technological advances that make our lives easier and improve our ability to communicate. So quickly do these advances happen that the moment we buy the latest technological device, it is practically obsolete.

We carry wireless telephones that can store hundreds of numbers, are able to take both moving and still pictures, and can access never-ending streams of information from an unseen source. We can play thousands of songs from a device no larger than a credit card. We can surf the Internet at any time of the day or night and quickly move across the intellectual and physical globe in images and information.

Out of such technological advancement come both good and bad. Modern technology, when purely and judiciously used, can help us hasten the work of the Lord and spread the gospel.¹ But an overreliance on technology can also create boredom with lower-tech

activities, an attitude that may extend to how we worship God, our Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot simply point and click on or download a personal, revelatory relationship with our Heavenly Father.² This kind of relationship is built on quiet principles of faith, repentance, and obedience.

For this reason it is vitally important to recognize the risks of digital attachment. Being constantly “plugged in” can drown out the quiet whisperings and subtle impressions of the Holy Spirit, breaking our personal connection with God and making it difficult, if not impossible, to receive personal revelation.

We Need Personal Revelation

Who among us does not seek for guidance and counsel in important matters? How often do we ask family, friends, or religious leaders to provide us with counsel and direction? While this can be wonderfully helpful at times, is it not even more important to ask our Heavenly Father, who loves us and knows us better than all those we are surrounded by, for inspired direction and guidance? He will never lead us astray.



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come that way, it does not have a lasting effect. For instance, Laman and Lemuel had the miraculous experience of seeing an angel of the Lord, yet they rejected the Lord's promptings. Nephi later reproached his brothers: "Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words" (1 Nephi 17:45).

This state of being "past feeling" is a perilous position to be in. Can you imagine being faced with the eternally significant choices we face in life without being able to feel the promptings of the Holy Ghost? Laman and Lemuel provide a sobering example of the consequences of being in that state.

Nephi, on the other hand, had "great

I can personally testify that every major decision I have made in my life and many more minor decisions have been a result of promptings I have felt from the Holy Ghost. These include my decision to prepare for and serve a full-time mission, my selection of an eternal companion, my career pursuits, my decision to pursue additional education even though it wasn't convenient or economical at the time, and my quest toward greater righteousness. These types of decisions are important to all of us, and we need our Father's help as we strive to return to Him. We cannot afford to let anything, no matter how attractive, distract us from the personal revelation He wants to give us.

Desire Personal Revelation

The first step in receiving personal revelation is desiring it. Revelation is rarely given to those not seeking it, and sometimes when it does

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desires to know of the mysteries of God” (1 Nephi 2:16). Nephi sought for the blessings of personal revelation, was worthy of them, and as a result had many great and wonderful truths revealed unto him—truths that not only blessed his family and his people but that also continue to bless us today.

Study and Ponder

Once the desire has been kindled, how can you and I access the opened heavens? A recent example of canonized modern-day revelation provides a pattern.

The revelation we have today as Doctrine and Covenants 138 came to President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) the day before he spoke at the October 1918 general conference. A close look at this great revelation regarding the Savior’s visit to the spirits of the dead is instructive to those seeking their own divine communications. The first few verses of this revelation read in part:

How often have you made the time for pondering such wonderful things? If you are like most people, you are sometimes uncomfortable being alone with your thoughts. Most people would rather plug in some headphones than allow their minds to contemplate the sacred.

But pondering the sacred things of God is necessary if we are to receive personal revelation, and pondering is best done in an unplugged environment. We need to be able to hear the acoustic subtleties of the Spirit. Perhaps no greater counsel was given than that recorded in Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.”

President Joseph F. Smith received his revelation by being still and pondering the scriptures. A similar pattern unfolds in the events leading up to one of the most important revelatory moments of all mankind, when the young boy Joseph Smith read James 1:5. The Prophet recorded that “never did any passage of scripture come with more



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This state of being **“past feeling”** is a perilous position to be in. Laman and Lemuel provide a sobering example.

“I sat in my room pondering over the scriptures;

“And reflecting upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world;

“And the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world;

“That through his atonement, and by obedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved” (D&C 138:1–4).

power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

Joseph was learning the powerful connection between the study of the scriptures and then pondering them as essential precursors to receiving personal revelation. It was a pattern he would perfect to the blessing and edification of us all.

Fast and Pray for Answers

Prayer is another crucial component of receiving revelation. The instructive words of Alma witness how he received his own testimony through personal revelation. He writes:

“Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that



The scriptures often admonish us to **“knock”** or **“ask”** and tell us it shall be given unto us.



I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

“Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me” (Alma 5:45–46).

The scriptures admonish us on numerous occasions to “knock” or “ask” and tell us it shall be given unto us. Jesus Christ Himself promised that “whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you.

“Therefore, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (3 Nephi 27:28–29).

Keep the Commandments

To successfully draw upon the power of personal revelation, we must be obedient to the laws of God. Always remember that “there is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world,

upon which all blessings are predicated—

“And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21). Personal revelation is predicated upon personal obedience.

Personal Revelation Is for Everyone

These examples of ancient and modern prophets are powerful, but what of us, those not foreordained to such revelation-intense assignments in the Lord’s kingdom? Can we also participate in this revelatory process? Revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith as he was translating John 5:29 gives this powerful instruction:

“For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

“Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

“And to them [you and me] will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

“Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

“And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven” (D&C 76:5–9).

As though these promises were not enough, the Lord also says that “every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am” (D&C 93:1). These blessings are promised to all who qualify, not just those in leadership positions.

Avoid Digital Distractions

While modern technological advancements can enhance the work of the Lord and bless us and our families, we must be careful not to fall victim to their destructive side. We must not only avoid the base and degrading content some sources contain, but we must also recognize when electronic distractions keep us from quieter, more significant uses of our time. We must guard against becoming so attached to digital devices that we become detached from God.

Sometimes the most productive “point and click” application is that of pointing our finger at the power button and clicking our digital devices off.

Let us recognize the need for personal revelation; develop the desire for these divine communications; seek revelation through scripture study, prayer, and pondering upon the mercies of God; and obey His commandments. Finally, we must recognize that revelation is available to anyone who is worthy and asks God in faith, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

I know these things are true. I know it because of my own experiences with personal revelation. I know the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, for I have heard them and felt them. I know God loves us and desires to bless us with His word and knowledge if we will but seek it. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on February 5, 2008.

NOTES

1. See M. Russell Ballard, “Sharing the Gospel Using the Internet,” *Liahona*, June 2008, N1; *Ensign*, July 2008, 58.
2. See Boyd K. Packer, “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” *Liahona*, June 1997, 8; *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 59.

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