

Finding Strength in Challenging Times!

ELDER ALLAN F. PACKER

Of the Seventy

Having the capacity to receive personal inspiration will be necessary in the coming days.



Elder Andersen, we extend our love, blessings, and support as you fill this new calling. Brothers and sisters, individuals and families across the world are challenged by current conditions. While I believe there are serious challenges ahead, I also know it is a wonderful time to be alive, especially for the youth. I see my children and grandchildren having full, satisfying lives even as they have challenges, setbacks, and obstacles to overcome.

These are the days when prophecies are being fulfilled. We live in the

dispensation of the fulness of times, which is the time to prepare for the Savior's return. It is also the time to work out our own salvation.

When the winds blow and the rains pour, they blow and pour on all. Those who have built their foundations on bedrock rather than sand survive the storms.¹ There is a way to build on bedrock by developing a deep personal conversion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and knowing how to receive inspiration. We must know—and know that we know. We must stand spiritually and temporally independent of all worldly creatures.² This begins by understanding that God the Father is the Father of our spirits and that He loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and Savior, and that the Holy Ghost can communicate with our minds and our hearts.³ This is how we receive inspiration. We need to learn how to recognize and apply these promptings.

When I was a young man in high school, one of my passions was American football. I played middle linebacker. The coach worked the team hard, teaching us the basics. We practiced until the skills became natural and automatic. During one play

against our biggest rival, I had an experience that has helped me over the years. We were on defense. I knew my assigned opponent, and as the play unfolded, he moved to my right into the line of scrimmage. There was a lot of noise from players and fans. I reacted as the coach had taught us and followed my man into the line, not knowing if he had the ball. To my surprise, I felt the ball partially in my hands. I gave it a tug, but my opponent didn't let go. As we tugged back and forth, amid all the noise I heard a voice yelling, "Packer, tackle him!" That was enough to bring me to my senses, so I dropped him on the spot.

I have wondered how I heard that voice above all the other noise. I had become acquainted with the voice of the coach during the practices, and I had learned to trust it. I knew that what he taught worked.

We need to be acquainted with the promptings of the Holy Ghost, and we need to practice and apply gospel teachings until they become natural and automatic. These promptings become the foundation of our testimonies. Then our testimonies will keep us happy and safe in troubled times.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks defined a testimony this way: "A testimony of the gospel is a personal witness borne to our souls by the Holy Ghost that certain facts of eternal significance are true and that we know them to be true."⁴ At another time Elder Oaks said, "Testimony is to know and to feel, conversion is to do and to become."⁵

There are several things we can do to develop a deep conversion and learn how to receive divine inspiration. First, we must have a desire. Alma said, "For I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life . . . according to their wills."⁶

Next, Alma challenged us to experiment on the word: "We will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give



place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”⁷

To study and learn is the next step. This includes pondering, which broadens and deepens our testimonies. “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right.”⁸

We can learn how answers come through inspiration. They come as thoughts and feelings to our minds and hearts.⁹ Occasionally answers may come as a burning in the bosom.

Elijah taught that answers come as a “still small voice.”¹⁰ The Lord said, “And if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”¹¹

Joseph Smith told us to watch for answers by paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that come into our minds. Over time we will learn to recognize these as promptings.

He said: “A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.”¹²

Developing this capacity helps us gain testimonies and becomes the means for obtaining additional inspiration in the future.

While testimonies can come as dramatic manifestations, they usually do not. Sometimes people think they need to have an experience like Joseph Smith’s vision before they gain testimonies. If we have unrealistic expectations of how, when, or where answers come, we risk missing the answers which come as quiet, reassuring feelings and thoughts that most often come after our prayers, while we are doing something else. These answers can be equally convincing and powerful.

Over time we will receive answers and learn how inspiration comes. This is something each person learns for himself.

Next, asking for a testimony of truth opens the window of inspiration. Prayer is the most common and powerful way to invite inspiration. Merely asking a question,¹³ even in our minds, will start to open the window. The scriptures teach, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”¹⁴

Jesus also taught us to apply the doctrine in our lives: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”¹⁵

In time, a personal witness will come and we will know—and know that we know. We will then be independent of all other worldly things, for “by the power of the Holy Ghost [we] may know the truth of all things”¹⁶ which are right¹⁷ and expedient¹⁸ for us. We will receive strength, comfort, and help to make good decisions and act with confidence in troubled times.¹⁹

This witness is not limited to the leaders but is available to all men, women, youth, and even little children. Having the capacity to receive

personal inspiration will be necessary in the coming days.

As a youth I learned that my testimony could grow by fulfilling my priesthood duties. I had a desire to know. I studied and pondered; I prayed for answers. One day while sitting at the sacrament table as a priest, I felt and I knew.

This is a great time to be alive! The Lord needs each of us. This is our day; it is our time! From one of our hymns, we read:

*Rise up, O men [and I add women]
of God!
Have done with lesser things.
Give heart and soul and mind and
strength
To serve the King of Kings.*²⁰

I bear testimony of our Heavenly Father, the Father of our spirits; of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior; and of the Holy Ghost, who is the means through which we receive divine guidance. I bear testimony that we can personally receive inspiration. May we know the voice through which that inspiration comes, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See Matthew 7:24–27.
2. See D&C 78:14.
3. See D&C 8:2–3.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, “Testimony,” *Liabona and Ensign*, May 2008, 26.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, quoted in Kenneth Johnson, “Coming to Know for Ourselves,” *Ensign*, July 2008, 29.
6. Alma 29:4.
7. Alma 32:28.
8. D&C 9:8.
9. See D&C 8:2–3.
10. 1 Kings 19:12.
11. D&C 9:8.
12. *History of the Church*, 3:381.
13. See Richard G. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively,” in *Brigham Young University 2007–2008 Speeches* (2008), 7.
14. Luke 11:9; see also Matthew 7:7; 3 Nephi 14:7; D&C 88:63–65.
15. John 7:17.
16. Moroni 10:5.
17. See 3 Nephi 18:20.
18. See D&C 88:64.
19. See Alma 48:15–16.
20. “Rise Up, O Men of God,” *Hymns*, no. 323.