



By Elder
Claudio R. M. Costa
Of the Seventy

FOLLOW THE PROPHET

Every blessing I have today started with a testimony of modern prophets.

I was baptized in June 1977, when I was 28 years old. What made me accept the gospel is the faith and knowledge I gained about modern prophets.

When I was 12 years old, the missionaries met me and my family—my parents, brother, and two sisters—and they talked about family. They said that Church members have a family night and explained family home evening.

My father said, “Thank you for coming, but we are not interested.” I was very sad, but he explained: “Son, we have *seven* family nights in our family, and they told us that we need to have only *one*. They have nothing to teach us.”



I read about the First Vision . . .



Five years later, when I was 17, I got a job in another city and lived alone. While I was away from home, the missionaries knocked on my parents' door again. This time, my family listened and was baptized. When my parents told me, I said, "I have no interest in religion right now."

Another five years passed, and I came to stay at my parents' home while I was changing employment. My father was the ward mission leader, and every afternoon the missionaries would visit him briefly to update and coordinate plans. One day they asked him, "Who is that young man there?"

He said, "That's my older son."

"Is he a member?"

"No."

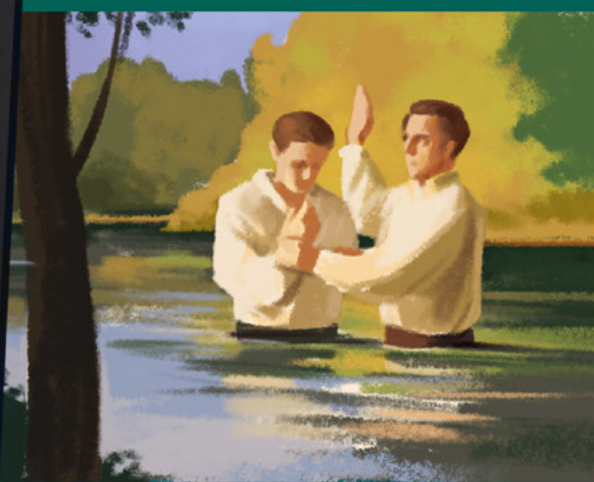
"We need to talk with him."

But I said, "No, I'm not interested."

LEARNING ABOUT JOSEPH SMITH

Then one day my father agreed to let the missionaries teach a lady in our home. They came around 5:00 in the afternoon and began teaching her—and they knew that I was in the next room making a sandwich before leaving to see my friends. They taught about a boy prophet—Joseph Smith—and the First Vision. And from the other room, I listened.

When I eventually left the house, the Spirit started to work in my heart and some questions came into my mind: "Why don't you do what the sisters taught this lady? Why don't you study the history of Joseph Smith and ask the Lord if he was a prophet?" And I said to myself, "I'm happy. I'm doing good things. I don't need it." But the Spirit started to wrestle with me, and I decided not to see my friends that night. I went back home.



and the baptism of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and the Prophet Joseph Smith's testimony.

I asked my mom, “Where can I read the history of Joseph Smith?” She gave me her scriptures and showed me the Joseph Smith—History, and I read and prayed. I read the first paragraph, pondered, and asked Heavenly Father if what’s there is true. I did this with every paragraph until I completed the whole thing. My heart was anxious for an answer. I read and prayed all night, until 9:20 the next morning.

The Lord revealed to me that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I had a very sacred experience. As I finished praying, I promised that I would find the missionaries and be baptized because I had this sure knowledge.

I told the sisters, “I need to be baptized now.” They explained the lessons I needed to have and commitments I needed to make. But I said, “I don’t want to lose a single day with the knowledge that the Lord has given me that Joseph Smith was a prophet.”

The sisters called their zone leader. He agreed to an accelerated schedule for the lessons. He scheduled the baptismal interview and told me he’d also need to talk to the ward mission leader, and I said, “Don’t worry, I’ll talk with the ward mission leader. He’s my daddy. He’s been praying for years for me to be baptized.”

My baptism was an experience I will remember forever. What a sweet and wonderful feeling. I felt that I was a

new man. I was clean. I felt so close to God, and I was very happy.

FOLLOWING THE LIVING PROPHET

Because I have a firm testimony about what happened in the Sacred Grove in 1820, I have always been active in the gospel and the Church. I started to serve, fulfill callings, and give all that I had to the Church.

Two weeks after my baptism, my stake president called me as the leader of the young single adults in my stake (though I had to ask him what a stake is). In another two weeks, I was organizing a regional singles conference. This was the best singles conference in the history of the Church, because I met my wife there.

One year later we were married. We have been happily married for 38 years now. We have four children and 10 grandchildren, and all the blessings we have are because of a decision we made. Before we married, I asked her, “Will you support me in being absolutely 100 percent obedient to the living prophets?” She said, “Yes.”

After I was baptized, the first talk I heard from the prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), was about being self-reliant and being wise with your money. He also said to provide a good education for your



I followed the counsel of President Kimball.



This helped me provide a good education for my children.

children.¹ These two things have been taught in our family and have been great blessings. My children are in good situations today—not because I’m so smart; I just chose to follow the prophets.

I love to serve the Lord and my fellowmen because that’s what I learned from the prophets.

GAINING YOUR OWN TESTIMONY

Follow the prophets. Listen to their words and practice what they teach, and you will be happy. My faith and knowledge about the Church and the gospel came from my testimony that Joseph Smith was a prophet.

I love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It’s my desire to be with Them forever. That’s why it’s important to listen to the prophets—they know the way back to the presence of God.

I think all young people should read the history of Joseph Smith with real intent, with an open heart and an open mind, and ask Heavenly Father. And I am sure the Lord will give the answer, as He gave to me. If you read the version we have in the scriptures, you can gain a strong testimony. Then you can read the other versions too.²

Joseph Smith saw the light, he saw God the Father and Jesus Christ, and They spoke to him. This is divine knowledge that comes from God, through the Spirit.

After you’ve had this confirmation in your heart, set a goal to know the words of the living prophets. Study their words in the scriptures, general conference, *For the Strength of Youth*, Church magazines, and LDS.org. Learn their counsel in seminary, Sunday School, and quorum or class meetings. Make goals based on prophetic priorities. Then just do it.

You will feel closer to the Lord. You will feel your intelligence expand for school and for all things. And remember you are never alone. You have supportive people around you who are ready to help, including your bishop or branch president. And the Lord and His Spirit will be with you. ■

NOTES

1. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Welfare Services: The Gospel in Action,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 76–79.
2. See “First Vision Accounts,” Gospel Topics, topics.lds.org.



Following prophets has blessed my family.