



## THE FIRST VISION:

# WHERE DO

# YOU FIT IN?

*The First Vision teaches us that you have a role to play in the ongoing Restoration and that God will sustain you.*

**By Stephen W. Owen**  
Young Men General President

**W**hen I was a young boy, I received a loving gift from my Father in Heaven that has helped me throughout my life. One summer morning I was with my parents and my two little brothers and sister at our ranch trying to round up our horses.

I remember watching my dad and my little brothers as I walked in the pasture by myself. The sky was blue, the sun was bright, the grass was green and lush, and there was a little breeze in the air. As I stood there, I looked up to the sky and the mountains. Then an overwhelming feeling came upon me that Heavenly Father had created all of this—everything I could see—and that He loved me.



At that age, I had not yet read the Book of Mormon. My understanding of the gospel was limited. And yet I felt something very real that went deep into my heart. It was a warm, gentle feeling of truth.

That experience caused me to be sensitive to spiritual things and to listen to the counsel from the Lord. Each of us has the privilege to have spiritual experiences if we seek them and pay attention to them.

In the spring of 1820, 14-year-old Joseph Smith had a spiritual experience that was both personal and of profound universal significance. He was wrestling with questions of the heart, just like you

and I do. He studied the scriptures, he pondered, and finally he decided to pray to Heavenly Father to seek answers.

Of course, what happened next was the unique, extraordinary experience we call the First Vision. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ appeared personally to Joseph Smith, calling him as the first prophet of this dispensation. This opened the Restoration and led to many revelations and blessings—for example, the restoration of the priesthood; the establishment of the Lord's true Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and the calling of prophets and apostles.

## YOU HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL

The Restoration may have begun with Joseph in the grove, but it didn't end with Joseph's death. In fact, the Restoration is very much still rolling forth today. The Lord continues to reveal His will to His prophet and directs and guides His



Church. What does that mean for you, personally? It means that you have a role to play in the ongoing Restoration!

How do you fulfill that role?

## FOLLOW THE COVENANT PATH

First, you follow the covenant path. That means living faithfully according to the covenants you have made and will make in the future. You have faith in Jesus Christ, you follow His commandments, you repent when you make mistakes, you love and serve others, you seek the Lord's counsel, and you strive to help others do the same.

## TAKE PART IN THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL

Next, you participate in the gathering of Israel. Think about what's happened with temples during the 200 years since the First Vision. From the humble beginnings of the Kirtland Temple, temples now dot the earth. Why are we a temple-building people? So that we can receive eternal life through covenants made in the temple.

Most people who have lived haven't received those covenants. In temples we can perform the ordinances for the dead

who now can't do that work for themselves. That's the reason you go to the temple now—it's a necessary part of the salvation of the human family.

As we participate in the gathering of Israel, we also share the gospel with others to strengthen their faith and invite them to come unto Christ. President Russell M. Nelson has taught that "every one of our Heavenly Father's children, on both sides of the veil, deserves to hear the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. They decide for themselves if they want to know more."<sup>1</sup> That's what the gathering of Israel is all about.

## PRINCIPLES FOR LIFE

The First Vision also teaches us other important principles that affect your life.

### GOD ANSWERS PRAYERS

A key message of the First Vision is that God answers prayers and reveals truth. Just as Joseph had his questions answered, you can pray and get answers to your prayers as well. You are not likely to see heavenly beings as Joseph did, but God has promised to lead and guide His faithful Saints.

### GOD IS MORE POWERFUL THAN THE OPPOSITION

When Joseph Smith began to pray, the adversary attacked him and tried to stop him. But when Joseph called on our Heavenly Father, the light of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ drove the adversary away.

Our Heavenly Father knows you and wants to bless you. You have the assurance that if you are prayerful and keep pressing forward with “a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20), God will bless you, help you, and answer your prayers.

### RELY ON YOUR SACRED MOMENTS . . .

Joseph Smith’s experiences *after* the First Vision also teach us to rely on the spiritual experiences we’ve had when things get tough. Many of the people Joseph thought would support him ridiculed him. Instead of giving up, Joseph trusted in the answer he had received. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:21–26.)

For me, ever since that moment in the pasture as a boy, whenever I’ve faced difficult times or temptations, I’ve remembered what I felt at that moment—the Holy Ghost teaching me truth. That feeling has sustained me. I knew God would help me, and even when I’d struggle, I knew the Lord loved me and I could turn to Him.

When you struggle, you can look to the light that is Jesus Christ and remember the Spirit you’ve felt and what you know to be true. That can sustain you.

### . . . AND KEEP BUILDING ON THEM

But you also need to seek to be guided by the Spirit throughout your life. Joseph didn’t stop seeking heavenly guidance after he experienced the First Vision.

He called on God regularly—he studied, learned, and had new spiritually strengthening and enlightening experiences that helped him through many challenging times.

We can have the Holy Ghost with us constantly by doing the things that invite the Spirit into our lives. These include praying, studying the scriptures, attending church, bearing testimony, serving others, and repenting.

### GOD WILL BE WITH YOU

Throughout your life, you will experience good times and difficult times. As you participate in the gathering of Israel and strive for heavenly guidance, God will bless you, support you, and sustain you. **NE**



#### NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), 8, [HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).