

DOCTRINE & COVENANTS & CHURCH HISTORY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

* GREEN MOUNTAIN 1ST WARD * LAKEWOOD, COLORADO * 02/01/09 * PAGE 1 *

Lesson 5: “This Is the Spirit of Revelation”, D&C 6, 8, 9, Joseph Smith—History 1:8-17

Introduction

EACH OF THESE PICTURES PORTRAYS SOMETHING SIMILAR. WHAT IS IT?



Boy Samuel Called by the Lord



The Brother of Jared Sees the Finger of the Lord



Moses and the Burning Bush



Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream



Joseph Smith's First Vision

Lesson Highlights

- Our need for personal revelation
- Understanding what we should do to receive revelation

A study of this lesson will help us understand how to prepare to receive personal revelation and encourage us to do so.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** said: *“God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them”* (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 149).

We do not have to be prophets to receive revelation from the Lord. Although we do not receive revelation to guide the Church, we can receive revelation to help us learn gospel truths and to guide us in our personal lives and in our responsibilities in the home and in the Church.

Our need for personal revelation

One of our greatest blessings is that the heavens are open and the Lord communicates with His children through continuing revelation. *“Divine revelation is one of the grandest concepts and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for without it, man could not know of the things of God. ... Continuous revelation from God to his saints ... makes possible daily guidance along true paths and leads the faithful soul to complete and eternal salvation in the celestial kingdom. ... Without revelation, all would be guesswork, darkness, and confusion”* (Bible Dictionary, “Revelation,” 762).

Recall some decisions or situations in which personal revelation has helped you or your family.

Elder Boyd K. Packer said, *“No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration”* (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 23).

Personal revelation is important in our day:

- Personal revelation is the way we receive our testimonies of Jesus Christ, His gospel, and the divine calling of Joseph Smith.
- Personal revelation is the way we learn divine truths.
- Personal revelation is the way we receive guidance beyond our own limited understanding in answering life's questions, meeting challenges, and making decisions.

Understanding what we should do to receive revelation

It is important for us to understand how we prepare to receive personal revelation.

Study the matter in your mind.

Doctrine and Covenants 9:8. The Lord said, *"behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind."*

Joseph Smith—History 1:8–10. Joseph Smith's statements illustrate this process somewhat:

- *"My mind was called up to serious reflection."*
- *"My feelings were deep and often poignant."*
- *"I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit."*

Look to Joseph Smith as an example of how to study matters out in your mind as you seek revelation. He gave deep thought to settling the question of which church was right. He also invested much time and effort, attending meetings, studying the scriptures, and searching longer than two years for an answer.

The Lord expects us to study matters out in our own minds before receiving revelation. He intends for us to be active, not passive, as we seek revelation from Him. He also expects us to use our agency. We grow as we use the gifts and resources He has provided to help us study matters out in our minds.

Consider how studying matters out in your mind has helped you grow spiritually?

Ponder and meditate on the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets.

Doctrine and Covenants 138:1–11; Joseph Smith—History 1:11–12.

Pondering the scriptures was the catalyst for both of the revelations recorded in these passages.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained the importance of studying and pondering the scriptures when we seek revelation:

"Scripture reading may ... lead to current revelation on whatever [subject] the Lord wishes to communicate to the reader at that time. We do not overstate the point when we say that the scriptures can be a Urim and Thummim to assist each of us to receive personal revelation."

"Because we believe that scripture reading can help us receive revelation, we are encouraged to read the scriptures again and again. By this means, we obtain access to what our Heavenly

Father would have us know and do in our personal lives today. That is one reason Latter-day Saints believe in daily scripture study" ("Scripture Reading and Revelation," *Ensign*, Jan. 1995, 8).

Inquire of the Lord in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you will receive.

Doctrine and Covenants 6:5, 14; 8:1; 42:61; 88:63–64. Elder Boyd K. Packer said, *"No message appears in scripture more times, in more ways than 'Ask, and ye shall receive'"* (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21).

When we pray with faith we ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that we will receive and answer.

Praying with faith is a vital part of the process of receiving revelation. Most of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants are answers to questions that the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the Lord.

The following questions from **President Spencer W. Kimball** can help us understand what it means to pray with faith: *"Do you offer a few trite words and worn-out phrases, or do you talk intimately to the Lord? Do you pray occasionally when you should be praying regularly, often, constantly? ... When you pray, do you just speak, or do you also listen? ... Do you give thanks or merely ask for favors?"* ("Prayer," *New Era*, Mar. 1978, 17).

D&C 8:1. Pray with an honest heart.

- We should honestly seek to understand the Lord's will and ask only for those things that are in accordance with it.
- We should ensure that our motives for asking are pure.
- We should be repentant.

Joseph Smith—History 1:13–16 teaches of the importance of praying vocally, kneeling in prayer, offering up the desires of our hearts instead of merely speaking words, and exerting all our powers to call upon God.

D&C 6:14; 42:61. The Lord promises that as often as we ask in faith, with an honest heart we will receive instruction, revelation, and knowledge.

Consider how these promises have been fulfilled in your life

"Revelation has always been an identifying characteristic of the Children of God. And as for our day the Prophet declared: 'As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints'" (D&C 121:33).

(The Principle of Revelation (D&C 6, 8, 9, and 11) Joseph Fielding McConkie, 1989 Deseret Book Co.)



Be obedient and serve God.

Doctrine and Covenants 63:23; 76:5–10; 93:1, 28; 101:7–8.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “*The way to revelation is righteousness*” (*The Lord’s Way* [1991], 34). He also taught, “*We cannot have the companionship of the Holy Ghost—the medium of individual revelation—if we are in transgression or if we are angry or if we are in rebellion against God’s chosen authorities*” (“Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 9).

Be meek and humble.

Doctrine and Covenants 5:24; 19:23; 112:10; 136:32–33.

David Whitmer recalled that one morning when Joseph Smith was getting ready to resume translating the Book of Mormon, “*something went wrong about the house and he was put out about it. Something that Emma, his wife, had done. Oliver and I went upstairs and Joseph came up soon after to continue the translation but he could not do anything. He could not translate a single syllable. He went downstairs, out into the orchard, and made supplication to the Lord; was gone about an hour—came back to the house, and asked Emma’s forgiveness and then came upstairs where we were and then the translation went on all right. He could do nothing save he was humble and faithful*” (quoted in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1:131).

Focus on the things of God rather than the things of the world.

Doctrine and Covenants 25:10; 30:2.

It is important to focus on “*the things of [God]*” rather than “*the things of the earth*” as we seek revelation. We should seek to free ourselves from the concerns and noise of the world as we seek revelation.

Conclusion

Personal revelation is important in our lives. Every member of the Church may receive revelation through the Holy Ghost. Endeavor to prepare to receive this divine guidance.

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: “*Inspiration comes more easily in peaceful settings. Such words as quiet, still, peaceable, Comforter abound in the scriptures. ...*

“The world grows increasingly noisy. Clothing and grooming and conduct are looser and sloppier and more disheveled. Raucous music, with obscene lyrics blasted through amplifiers while lights flash psychedelic colors, characterizes the drug culture. Variations of these things are gaining wide acceptance and influence over our youth. ...

“This trend to more noise, more excitement, more contention, less restraint, less dignity, less formality is not coincidental nor innocent nor harmless.

“The first order issued by a commander mounting a military invasion is the jamming of the channels of communication of those he intends to conquer.

“Irreverence suits the purposes of the adversary by obstructing the delicate channels of revelation in both mind and spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 27–28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21–22).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: “*Divine guidance is so crucial ... that we need to go out of our way to put ourselves in a situation in which such special help can be given. President David O. McKay spoke of how the morning hours, before we are cluttered with the cares of day, are especially conducive to inspiration. Others have felt that solitude and reading the scriptures can create an atmosphere conducive to the Spirit and can be developed. After all, to read the words of Christ already before us is a good thing to do before asking for more*” (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* [1977], 121).

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How has studying matters out in your mind helped you grow spiritually?
- How do you prepare to receive personal revelation?
- How have the Lord's promises related to your prayers offered in faith and with an honest heart been fulfilled in your life?

