
Personal Revelation: **The Gift, the Test, and the Promise**

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Boyd K. Packer, "Personal **Revelation**: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 59

When the funeral cortege traveled with the body of our beloved President Ezra Taft Benson to his final resting place at home in Idaho, every overpass was lined with people. There were along the way Scouts in uniform with flags. There were the elderly in camp chairs, even wheelchairs. Farmers left their equipment to stand in the field, and families dressed in their Sunday best paid their respects. Thousands of people expressed love for him, a spontaneous outpouring of love—all of which is now transferred to President Howard W. Hunter. His physical limitations actually enhance his capacity as prophet and seer. God bless him for the course that he has already set and the direction that he will yet give us.

I speak to the youth of the Church who now face "perilous times," as the Apostle Paul prophesied would come in the last days. ¹

In order to prepare you, and protect you, I will tell you, as plainly as I can, what I have learned about personal **revelation**.

Dual Beings

There are two parts to your nature—your temporal body born of mortal parents, and your immortal spirit within. You are a son or daughter of God.

Physically you can see with eyes and hear with ears and touch and feel and learn. Through your intellect, you learn most of what you know about the world in which we live.

But if you learn by reason only, you will never understand the Spirit and how it works—regardless of how much you learn about other things.

The scriptures teach that “great men are not always wise.” 2 Spiritually you may “know *not*, and know *not* that you know *not*,” and be “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” 3

Your spirit learns in a different way than does your intellect.

For “there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding,” 4 and the Spirit of Christ “giveth light to every man that cometh into the world.” 5

I will use the words *see*, *hear*, and *feel* to teach about **revelation**, but I will use them as they are used in the scriptures.

The gift of the Holy Ghost

Following baptism, in the ordinance of confirmation, you received the *gift* of the Holy Ghost.

While the Holy Ghost may inspire all mankind, the gift carries the right to have it as a “constant companion.” 6 It is “by the **power** of the Holy Ghost [that you] may know the truth of all things.” 7

We are told that “angels speak by the **power** of the Holy Ghost.” 8 We are even told that when we speak by the **power** of the Holy Ghost, we “speak with the tongue [or in the same language] of angels.” 9

Prayer

You have your agency, and inspiration does not—perhaps cannot—flow unless you ask for it, or someone asks for you.

No message in scripture is repeated more often than the invitation, even the command, to pray—to ask.

Prayer is so essential a part of **revelation** that without it the veil may remain closed to you. Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees.

Begin Where You Are

You must begin where you are. Pray, even if you are like the prophet Alma when he was young and wayward, or if you are like Amulek, of the closed mind, who “knew concerning these things, yet ... would not know.” 10

Prayer is *your* personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil. 11

Study

But that is not all. To one who thought that **revelation** would flow without effort, the Lord said:

“You have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

“But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your *mind*; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right.” 12

This burning in the bosom is not purely a physical sensation. It is more like a warm light shining within your being.

Describing the promptings from the Holy Ghost to one who has not had them is very difficult. Such promptings are personal and strictly private! 13

Still Small Voice

The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *hear*. It is described as a “still small voice.” 14 And while we speak of “listening” to the whisperings of the Spirit, most often one describes a spiritual prompting by saying, “I had a *feeling* ...”

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “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; ... 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.” 15

Revelation comes as words we *feel* more than *hear*. Nephi told his wayward brothers, who were visited by an angel, “Ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.” 16

The scriptures are full of such expressions as “The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened,” 17 or “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart,” 18 or “I did enlighten thy mind,” 19 or “Speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts.” 20 There are hundreds of verses which teach of **revelation**.

President Marion G. Romney, quoting the prophet Enos, said, “While I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind.” 21 Enos then related what the Lord put into his mind.

“This,” President Romney said, “is a very common means of **revelation**. It comes into one’s mind in words and sentences. With this medium of **revelation** I am personally well acquainted.” 22

We do not seek for spectacular experiences. President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of the many who “have no ear for spiritual messages ... when they come in common dress. ... Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication.” 23

Prompting

This voice of the Spirit speaks gently, prompting you what to do or what to say, or it may caution or warn you.

Ignore or disobey these promptings, and the Spirit will leave you. It is your choice—your agency.

Faith

The flow of **revelation** depends on your faith. You exercise faith by causing, or by making, your mind accept or believe as truth that which *you* cannot, by reason alone, prove for certainty. 24

The first exercising of your faith should be your acceptance of Christ and His atonement.

As you test gospel principles by believing without knowing, the Spirit will begin to teach you. Gradually your faith will be replaced with knowledge.

You will be able to discern, or to *see*, with spiritual eyes.

Be believing and your faith will be constantly replenished, your knowledge of the truth increased, and your testimony of the Redeemer, of the Resurrection, of the Restoration will be as “a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life.” 25 You may then receive guidance on practical decisions in everyday life.

Word of Wisdom

Your body is the instrument of your mind. In your emotions, the spirit and the body come closest to being one. What you learn spiritually depends, to a degree, on how you treat your body. That is why the Word of Wisdom 26 is so important.

The habit-forming substances prohibited by that **revelation**—tea, coffee, liquor, tobacco—interfere with the delicate feelings of spiritual communication, just as other addictive drugs will do.

Do not ignore the Word of Wisdom, for that may cost you the “great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” 27 promised to those who keep it. And good health is an added blessing.

Music

Make wholesome music of all kinds a part of your life.

Then learn what *sacred* music has to do with **revelation**. The Lord said, “My soul delighteth in the song of the *heart*; yea, the song of the righteous is a **prayer** unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.” 28

Secular music may be inspiring in a classical or popular sense, but it will not prepare your mind to be instructed by the Spirit as will sacred music.

The Apostle Paul counseled the Ephesians to “be filled with the Spirit; *speaking to yourselves* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody *in your heart* to the Lord.” 29

Reverence

Prelude music, reverently played, is nourishment for the spirit. It invites inspiration. That is a time to, as the poet said, “go to your bosom ... and ask your heart what it doth know.” 30 Do not ever disturb prelude music for others, for reverence is essential to **revelation**. “Be still,” He said, “and know that I am God.” 31

Now a warning! Some music is spiritually very destructive. You young people know what kind that is. The tempo, the sounds, and the lifestyle of those who perform it repel the Spirit. It is far more dangerous than you may suppose, for it can smother your spiritual senses.

Temptation

Now, young people, pay attention! Before I say another word about personal **revelation**, I must tell you so that you cannot possibly misunderstand: “There are many spirits which are false spirits.” 32 There can be counterfeit **revelations**, promptings from the devil, temptations! As long as you live, in one way or another the adversary will try to lead you astray.

“For after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.” 33

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God.” 34

The seventh chapter of Moroni in the Book of Mormon tells you how to test spiritual promptings. Read it carefully—over and over.

By trial, and some error, you will learn to heed these promptings.

If ever you receive a prompting to do something that makes you *feel* uneasy, something you know in your *mind* to be wrong and contrary to the principles of righteousness, do not respond to it!

The Church

The Lord reveals His will through dreams and visions, visitations, through angels, through His own voice, and through the voice of His servants. ³⁵ “Whether by mine own voice,” He said, “or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.” ³⁶

The Lord’s house is a house of order. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one [else], to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves.” ³⁷

You may receive **revelation** individually, as a parent for your family, or for those for whom you are responsible as a leader or teacher, having been properly called and set apart.

If one becomes critical and harbors negative feelings, the Spirit will withdraw. Only when they repent will the Spirit return. My experience is that the channels of inspiration always follow that order. You are safe following your leaders.

The Comforter

Now do not suppose that you will be spared from sorrow, disappointment, failure, fear. These come to all. They are essential to our testing.

When sore trials come, you will learn why the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter.

You must face life “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [you] should do,” ³⁸ just as Nephi did.

You may not yet have a certain witness that Jesus is the Christ. Exercise your faith and trust in those who do.

I have that certain witness. It came to me in my youth. During those early periods of doubt, I leaned on the testimony of a seminary teacher. Although *I* did not know, somehow I *knew* that he *knew*.

The Lord said:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” 39

I bear witness of the **power** of the Spirit and thank God that this incomparable gift is given to you, our youth, to guide you as you move forward to a happy life, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

*Gospel topics: Holy Ghost, education, faith, **prayer**, reverence, spirituality, Word of Wisdom*