

This document contains handouts that Ron Bartholomew has cleared for use at Campus Education Week and other CES Continuing Education programs.

| Page | Handout Title |
|-------------|---|
| 2-5 | The Importance of Preparing for a Mission Early: Start Preparing Now! |
| 6-7 | Lesson from the Old Testament: Follow the Prophet |
| 8 | Standing as a Witness |
| 9-12 | Understanding the Doctrine of Foreordination |
| 13-15 | The Doctrine of Perfection |
| 16-21 | Understanding the Principles of Personal Revelation |
| 22-25 | Understanding the Process of Spiritual Rebirth |

The Importance of Preparing Early for a Mission: Start Preparing Now!

Ron Bartholomew—2006 Campus Education Week

Counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley and members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles on how to hit the ground running by starting to prepare NOW!

“BECOMING” A MISSIONARY

Elder David A. Bednar teaches us the difference between “going” on a mission and “becoming” a missionary, and why this has a dramatic effect on missionary preparation.

“In meetings with young members of the Church around the world, I often invite those in attendance to ask questions. One of the questions I am asked most frequently by young men is this: ‘What can I do to prepare most effectively to serve as a full-time missionary?’ Such a sincere question deserves a serious response.

“My dear young brethren, the single most important thing you can do to prepare for a call to serve is to *become* a missionary long before you *go* on a mission. Please notice that in my answer I emphasized *becoming* rather than *going*. Let me explain what I mean.

“In our customary Church vocabulary, we often speak of *going* to church, *going* to the temple, and *going* on a mission. Let me be so bold as to suggest that our rather routine emphasis on *going* misses the mark.

“The issue is not going to church; rather, the issue is worshipping and renewing covenants as we attend church. The issue is not going to or through the temple; rather, the issue is having in our hearts the spirit, the covenants, and the ordinances of the Lord’s house. The issue is not going on a mission; rather, the issue is becoming a missionary and serving throughout our entire life with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is possible for a young man to *go* on a mission and not *become* a missionary, and this is not what the Lord requires or what the Church needs.

“My earnest hope for each of you young men is that you will not simply go on a mission—but that you will become missionaries long before you submit your mission papers, long before you receive a call to serve, long before you are set apart by your stake president, and long before you enter the MTC” (Elder David A. Bednar, “Becoming a Missionary,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, p. 44).

PREPARE EARLY

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the need for young people to “prepare early.”

“We will need to have developed and nurtured faith in Jesus Christ long before Satan hits us, as he will, with doubts and appeals to our carnal desires and with lying voices saying that good is bad and that there is no sin. Those spiritual storms are already raging. We can expect that they will worsen until the Savior returns.

However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation. Procrastination and inconsistency are its mortal enemies” (Elder Henry B. Eyring, “Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, p. 37).

President Gordon B. Hinckley's Four "P's"

- 1) Prepare Spiritually: (Family Home Evening, Church, Seminary, Institute and Temple attendance, and reading the Book of Mormon).
- 2) Prepare Mentally: (We are taking the gospel to all the world—Study languages, including English!).
- 3) Prepare Socially: (Learn to get along with others, and keep yourself clean and worthy).
- 4) Prepare Financially: (Start saving when you are young! [Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, pp. 344-349]).

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY

President Hinckley taught: "The [young person] who knows scripture and can quote it speaks with the voice of authority. . . . May I suggest that . . . we make it a project to memorize one scripture citation a week. . . . At the conclusion of a year [we] will have on [our] lips a fund of scripture which will remain with [us] throughout [our] lives" (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 344).

PREPARE MENTALLY

President Gordon B. Hinckley has asked us to "Study languages . . . If you be called to a foreign language mission, you will be better equipped if you have studied the language" (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 344).

He also taught: "Seek for the best schooling available. . . . Be Smart. The Lord wants you to educate your minds and hands (*Ensign*, January 2001, pp. 4- 5).

PREPARE SOCIALLY

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught:

"When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. . . . You boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the girls. . . . Do not get too serious too soon. You have missions ahead of you, and you cannot afford to compromise this great opportunity and responsibility" (President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, p. 51).

President Benson said to the Sisters:

"You can have a positive influence in motivating young men to serve full-time missions. Let the young men of your acquaintance know that you expect them to assume their missionary responsibilities, that you personally want them to serve in the mission field, because you know that's where the Lord wants them. Avoid steady dating with a young man prior to the time of his mission call."

"If your relationship with him is more casual, then he can make that decision to serve more easily and also can concentrate his full energies on his missionary work instead of on the girlfriend back home. And after he returns honorably from his mission, he will be a better husband and father and priesthood holder, having first served a full-time mission" (President Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Young Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 81).

Elder Richard G. Scott recently taught the following concerning the obligations sisters have to serve missions. He said:

"In the home a young girl can understand that her primary role is to be a wife and mother. Yet as that preparation unfolds there may be an opportunity to serve a full-time mission,

provided recent counsel of the First Presidency is followed: ‘Worthy single women ages twenty-one and older . . . may be recommended to serve full-time missions. . . . These sisters can make a valuable contribution . . . but they should not be pressured to serve. Bishops should not recommend them for missionary service if it will interfere with imminent marriage prospects’” (Elder Richard G. Scott, “Now Is the Time to Serve a Mission!” *Ensign*, May 2006, p. 87).

PREPARE SOCIALLY

President Hinckley said we need to “learn the great art of getting along with others” (Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 349).

President James E. Faust said: “Never permit contention in your companionships. When there is contention, the Spirit of the Lord will depart, regardless of who is at fault” (President James E. Faust, “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 4).

PREPARE FINANCIALLY

President Hinckley said: “Missions have become costly. . . . The time to start saving is when boys are very young. . . . We urge adherence to the rule of missionary support which has been in effect from the beginnings of the Church—namely, that it is the responsibility of the *individual* and the *family* to provide support for the missionary.”

He continued: “This must be encouraged, even though there may necessarily be some delay in departure . . . Better that a young man delay his mission . . . and earn money towards his support than that he rely entirely on others” (emphasis added, Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 349).

All Times, All Things, All Places

It’s not in the letter I can’t wait to open
It’s not in the badge that will carry His name
It’s not going to grow in just 3 weeks of study
Or magically come when I get on the plane
So Today I’m becoming who I’m meant to be
The worthy, unshakeable witness He needs
All Times, All Things, All Places
At all times, all things, all places
I will sing and shout his praises
I will tell the whole world that I know what His Grace is
At all times, in all things, in all places
All times, All Things, All Places
It comes as I study the words of the prophets
And think about all that those words mean for me
As Abraham’s son I am part of the promise
That all of the earth would be blessed by His seed
I know what my Savior expects me to be
The faithful, unchangeable witness He needs
All Times, All Things, All Places
At all times, all things, all places
I will sing and shout his praises
I will tell the whole world that I know what His Grace is
At all times, in all things, in all places
All Times, All Things, All Places
All eyes, all ears, all hearts, all faces
All rich, all poor, all life, all ages
All roads, all doors, all lands, all nations

All earth, all kinds, all tongues, all races
All Times, All Things, All Places
At all times, all things, all places
I will sing and shout his praises
I will tell the whole world that I know what His Grace is
At all times, in all things, in all places

(Song on 2006 EFY CD, produced and written by Tyler Castleton and Staci Peters)

Lesson from the Old Testament: Follow the Prophet

Submitted by Ron Bartholomew for Education Week 2006

Lessons we can learn from the Old Testament about the importance of following the prophet.

1. 2 Kings 5:13 (the story of Naaman the Leper). **Lesson #1—The small and simple things the Lord asks us to do through prophets make all the difference.** Naaman wanted Elisha to command him to do "some great thing," but when his servants convinced him to wash in the Jordan River as the prophet had asked, it cleansed and saved him. We must do the little things the Prophet has asked—don't always be looking for "some great thing." See also 1 Nephi 17:41; Alma 33:19-22; Alma 37:41-47.
2. 1 Kings 17:13 (the story of the Widow of Zarephath). **Lesson #2—Give your best and your all to the Lord first—don't be tentative or hold anything back.** If the Prophet's requests seem unreasonable, demanding, or out of the question, have the faith to follow and you will be blessed. Elijah asked the widow to give her last meal to him first, and then promised that there will be enough food for her and her starving son. Not only was that promise fulfilled for "many days," when her son later died he raised him from the dead—all because she had the faith to give all she had to the Lord first (Ether 12:6—the blessing comes after the trial of your faith).
3. 1 Kings 18:18-40 (the story of the contest with the priests of Baal). **Lesson #3—How many miracles will we have to witness before we finally make up our minds to throw our whole soul into this great work?** These people had seen miracles before, and they witnessed a great miracle here. What great miracles are we waiting for before we finally decide to commit wholeheartedly to the Lord and His Church? Elijah challenged: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Are you still trying to decide which side of the line you are on? (See related quote by Bishop Glen L. Pace, *Ensign*, November 1992, pp. 11-12).
4. 1 Kings 19:19-21 (the story of Elijah throwing his "mantle" on Elisha). **Lesson #4—When the Lord calls, go and do the thing he has called you to do.** Elisha didn't stop to see if the mantle Elijah had given him "fit," he tried his best to do the work the Lord called him to do. It is not our place to decide if a call from the Lord "is right for us," it is our place to accept and serve and go and do. (See quote by Elder Boyd K. Packer on never refusing a call to serve the Lord, *Ensign*, November 1997, p. 8).
5. 1 Kings 22:18 (The story of King Jehosaphat and King Ahab inquiring of Micaiah about whether or not they should attack Syria). **Lesson #5—We have to accept all that comes from the Prophet, whether we agree or not. Beware of false prophets that will only tell you what you want to hear. The Lord's prophet will only tell you what you need to hear, and that at times may not be what you wanted to hear.** When these two kings seek advice from their false prophets, they tell them exactly what they want to hear (the good report). When they ask Micaiah, the Lord's true prophet, he sarcastically answers the same as their false prophets, because that is what they wanted to hear. When they press him for "the truth (see v. 16)," he gives them "an evil report," or in other words, tells them to abandon their plan to attack Syria or they will be sorry. King Ahab complains that Micaiah never tells him what he wants to hear. He puts Micaiah in prison on a diet of bread and water, and rejects his counsel, but Micaiah's counsel was right, and the two kings who followed the false prophets and their "good reports" lose the battle as well as their lives. (See related quote by President Harold B. Lee, *Conference Report*, October 1970, pp. 152—on following the prophet whether he "agrees" with you or not).

6. 2 Kings 2:23-25 (the story of Elisha and the she bears). **Lesson #6—Don't make the same mistake and mock the prophet and accuse him of being "old-fashioned" or "out-of-touch with reality."** These youths (the Bible footnote states that they were "not little children") make the mistake of mocking the prophet with words that meant *go away you old man*. When two she bears come out and tear the youths to pieces, they receive their just reward. I wonder how many scars we would have if we got attacked by bears every time we ignore or reject the counsel of our prophet and considered their counsel as "old fashioned" or "out of date?"

7. 2 Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6: (The story of the Shunammite woman who builds a room on her house for Elisha to stay in while he is passing by). **Lesson #7—If you will make "room" for the Prophet in your life, by reading and pondering his words and messages, and listening and following them, you will be blessed.** This great woman actually has a room added onto her existing home for the prophet to stay in on his journeys to and from the area. As a result, he blesses her to be able to bear a son (she was barren) and then when her son dies, Elisha raises him from the dead. Later, when there is a seven-year drought, he makes special arrangements for this woman and her family to live in another country and then return to their property and belongings after the famine is over.

8. 2 Kings 6:24-2 Kings 7:20 (especially 7:1-2, the story of the famine and the abatement of the famine). **Lesson #8—The wisdom of God and his prophets is often considered foolishness to men. Never say never to the words or promises of a prophet. Faith is believing in things we can't see, that are true.** The famine in Israel was long and hard. When Elisha prophesies that on the next day there will be so much food to eat that the prices in the market place will reach an all time low, a "lord" (ruler in the king's household) scorns him and says it is impossible. Elijah replies that it will not only happen, but this man will see it with his eyes but never get to eat any of the food. That night, the Lord scares the Syrian army away and they leave all of their provisions behind. In the morning, the provisions are discovered and the man who scoffed at the words of the prophet sees the food but is trampled to death by the rush of the Israelites and never gets to eat any of it.

Standing as a Witness

Education Week 2006—Ron Bartholomew

- President Gordon B. Hinckley: "The problem with most of us is that we are afraid to stand up for what we believe, to be witnesses for what is true and right. We want to do the right thing, but we are troubled by fears. . . . What we desperately need today . . . are leaders . . . who are willing to stand for something . . . especially when it is unpopular to do so!" (*Standing For Something*, pp. 167-168).
- President Gordon B. Hinckley: "My plea to you, my dear [young people], is to distance yourselves from these things. . . . You don't have to read sleazy literature of any kind. It will not help you. It will only injure you" (Ensign, June 1996, p. 4).
- Elder Boyd K. Packer: "Young people, you cannot afford to fill your mind with the unworthy music of our day.... You degrade yourself when you identify with all of those things which seem now to surround such extremes in music: the shabbiness, the irreverence, immorality, and the addictions. Such music as that is not worthy of you.... I would recommend that you go through your [tapes and CD's] and set aside those that promote [immorality, drugs, etc.]. Such music ought not to belong to young people concerned about spiritual development. Why not go through your collection? Get rid of the worst of it. Keep just the best of it. Be selective in what you consume and what you produce. It becomes a part of you" (Elder Boyd Packer, Ensign, January 1974, pp. 27-28).

Understanding the Doctrine of Foreordination

Ron Bartholomew

The Importance of Studying and Understanding the Doctrine of Foreordination

Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote: "The doctrine of foreordination is one of the doctrinal roads 'least traveled by.' Yet it clearly underlines how very long and how perfectly God has loved each of us and known each of us, with our individual needs and capacities. *It is so powerful a doctrine, however, that isolated from other doctrines, or mishandled, it can induce false pride, stoke the fires of fatalism, impact adversely upon agency, cause us to focus on status rather than service, and carry us over into the false doctrine of predestination....* Foreordination is clearly no excuse for fatalism, or arrogance, or the abuse of agency. It is not, however, a doctrine that can be ignored simply because it is difficult. Indeed, deep inside the hardest doctrines are some of the pearls of greatest price" (*But for a Small Moment*, pp. 95-97; italics added).

"Once the believer acknowledges that the past, present, and future are before God simultaneously—even though we do not understand how—then the doctrine of foreordination may be seen somewhat more clearly. For instance, it was necessary for God to know how economic difficulties and crop failures of the Joseph Smith Sr. family in New England would move this special family to Cumorah country where the Book of Mormon plates were buried. God's plans could scarcely have so unfolded if willy-nilly the Smith's had been born Manchurians and if, meanwhile, the plates had been buried in Belgium!" (Neal A. Maxwell, "Foreordination," a talk given at the District Sacrament Meeting in Jerusalem, Oct. 1978.)

The following historical background, summarized from *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, may shed some light on Elder Maxwell's comments: The Joseph Smith Sr. family moved ten times in the twenty-year period from 1796 to 1816. They first moved because of barren, rocky soil; next due to the failure of their mercantile establishment; next they were forced to sell their farm to pay an eighteen-hundred dollar debt incurred because their three-thousand dollar ginseng root shipment to China was stolen. Their next three moves were an effort to find fertile soil and a suitable livelihood. Having finally found a place where they could begin to "contemplate the joy and satisfaction, the prosperity which had attended our recent exertions," they were again forced to relocate because of a typhoid epidemic that swept upper Connecticut valley leaving six-thousand people dead and everyone in the Smith family ill. In Norwich, Vermont, their next residence, they experienced three successive crop failures. They were able to "obtain bread for the family" for the first two years by selling fruit that grew on the property. Their third-year crops were frozen along with everyone else's in the infamous "year without a summer" of 1816. Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) had exploded in what was considered the largest volcanic eruption in recorded history, ejecting an estimated twenty-five cubic miles of volcanic debris which filled the stratosphere obscuring the sun. Unaware of the cause, but discouraged, the Smith family moved finally to Palmyra, New York, where the land was said to be "well-timbered, well-watered, easily accessible and undeniably fertile."

Responsibilities in This Life Effected by Choices Made in Premortal Existence

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: "God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins. Because of this, some even there were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord.... The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:58-59).

President Harold B. Lee taught: "There is no truth more plainly taught in the Gospel than that our condition in the next world will depend upon the kind of lives we live here.... Is it not just as reasonable to suppose that the conditions in which we now live have been determined by the kind of lives we lived in the pre-existent world of spirits? ...Between the extremes of the "noble and the great" spirits, whom God would make his rulers, and the disobedient and the rebellious who were cast out with Satan, there were obviously many spirits with varying degrees of faithfulness. May we not assume from these teachings that the progress and development we made as spirits have brought privileges and blessings here according to our faithfulness in the spirit world?" (*Decisions for Successful Living*, pp. 164-65).

President Harold B. Lee also said: "All these rewards were seemingly promised, or foreordained, before the world was. Surely these matters must have been determined by the kind of lives we had lived in that premortal spirit world. Some may question these assumptions, but at the same time they will accept without any question the belief that each one of us will be judged when we leave this earth according to his or her deeds during our lives here in mortality. Isn't it just as reasonable to believe that what we have received here in this earth [life] was given to each of us according to the merits of our conduct before we came here?" (Conference Report, Oct. 1973, pp. 7-8).

President Heber J. Grant taught: "We have been placed upon this earth because of our faithfulness in having kept our first estate. The labors that we performed in the sphere that we left before we came here have had a certain effect upon our lives here, and to a certain extent they govern and control the lives that we lead here, just the same as the labors that we do here will control and govern our lives when we pass from this stage of existence" ("Reward of Conscience," Improvement Era, Feb. 1943, p. 75).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "Every man had his agency there [in the premortal life], and men receive rewards here based upon their actions there, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body" (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:66)."

Israel Foreordained: "The Election of Grace"

The children of Israel-valiant spirits from the premortal existence-have been born into all the nations of the earth to serve as a leavening agent to bless those nations (see Deuteronomy 32:7-9; Acts 17:26).

President Harold B. Lee taught: "You are now born into a family to which you have come, into the nations through which you have come, as a reward for the kind of lives you lived before you came here and at a time in the world's history, as the Apostle Paul taught the men of Athens and as the Lord revealed to Moses, determined by the faithfulness of each of those who lived before this world was created" (Conference Report, Oct. 1973, p. 7).

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "The numbers of the children of Israel were known and the bounds of their habitation fixed, in the days of old when the Lord divided to the nations their inheritance. We conclude, therefore, that there must have been a division of the spirits of men in the spiritual world, and those who were appointed to be the children of Israel were separated and prepared for a special inheritance" (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:59).

Elder Melvin J. Ballard wrote: "There was a group of souls tested, tried, and proven before they were born into the world, and the Lord provided a lineage for them. That lineage is the house of Israel, the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their posterity. Through this lineage were to come the true and tried souls that had demonstrated their righteousness in the spirit world before they came here" (The Three Degrees of Glory, pp. 218-219).

Elder McConkie wrote: "To bring to pass the salvation of the greatest possible number of his spirit children the Lord, in general, sends the most righteous and worthy spirits to earth through the lineage of Abraham and Jacob.... Those so grouped together during their mortal probation have more abundant opportunities to make and keep the covenants of salvation, ...If the full blessings of salvation are to follow, the doctrine of election must operate twice. First, righteous spirits are elected or chosen to come to mortality as heirs of special blessings. Then, they must be called and elected again in this life, an occurrence which takes place when they join the true Church. Finally, in order to reap eternal salvation, they must press forward in obedient devotion to the truth until they make their "calling and election sure," that is, they are "sealed up unto eternal life (D&C 131:5)." (Mormon Doctrine, p. 216).

Elder McConkie wrote: "The race and nation in which men are born in this world is a direct result of their pre-existent life. All the spirit hosts of heaven deemed worthy to receive mortal bodies were foreordained to pass through this earthly probation in the particular race and nation suited to their needs, circumstances, and talents. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam," Moses said with reference to pre-existence, "he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." (Deut. 32:8.) Not only Israel but all groups were thus foreknown and their total memberships designated in the pre-mortal life. Paul spoke similarly when he averred that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:26)." (Mormon Doctrine, p. 616).

Assignments in this Life Effected by Premortal Obedience and Development of Talents

President Ezra Taft Benson said: "To fulfill the purpose of His omniscient design, our Heavenly Father foreordained certain valiant spirit children and assigned them to come to earth at specific times and places to fulfill their appointments. The greatest of these spirits He reserved to come as prophets and priesthood leaders in His kingdom" (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p. 21).

President Spencer W. Kimball said: "Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks" (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 316).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught: "Just as certain men were foreordained from before the foundations of the world, so were certain women appointed to certain tasks. Divine design--not chance--brought Mary forward to be the mother of Jesus. The boy prophet, Joseph Smith, was blessed not only with a great father but also with a superb mother, Lucy Mack, who influenced a whole dispensation. (Conference Report, April 1978, p. 13)."

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 365).

Elder McConkie explained: "Other spirits, such as those who laid the foundations of the American nation, were appointed beforehand to perform great works in political and governmental fields (Mormon Doctrine, p. 290). The work to be done by John the Baptist, by the ancient Twelve, by Columbus, by the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and by the framers of the Constitution of the United States was all known and arranged for in advance. And all these are but illustrations and patterns, for all of the Lord's work is planned and prepared in advance, and those who are called and chosen to do the work receive their commission and ordination from him, first in the preexistence and then, if they remain true and faithful, again here in mortality" (Conference Report, April 1974, p. 102).

President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "The spirits of men were created with different dispositions and likes and talents. Some evidently were mechanically inclined, from them have come our inventors. Some loved music and hence they have become great musicians. We evidently brought to this world some if not all of the inclinations and talents that we had there. The fact that one person finds one bent, like mathematics easy and another finds it difficult, may, in my judgment, be traced to the spirit existence. So with other talents and skills. It was these characteristics that enabled our Eternal Father to choose certain individuals for certain work on the earth, such as Adam, Abraham, Moses and Joseph Smith.... It is my judgment that thousands of others were chosen for their special fields because they showed talents and dispositions in that spirit world" (Answers to Gospel Questions, 5:138-39).

We Can Be Assured that Heavenly Father Knows Our Talents and Abilities Best, and We Should Be Content with the Assignments We Receive

Elder Henry D. Moyle taught: "I am sure today that in our lives many of us wish that we were something other than we are, thinking that their lot is preferable to our own. But Alma said further, (he quotes Alma 29:2-3).

"I believe that we, as fellow workers in the priesthood, might well take to heart the admonition of Alma and be content with that which God hath allotted us. We might well be assured that we had something to do with our allotment in our pre-existent state. This would be an additional reason for us to accept our present condition and make the best of it. It is what we agreed to do..."

"We unquestionably knew before we elected to come to this earth the conditions under which we would here exist, and live, and work. So little wonder it is that Alma of old said that we sin in the thought, or in the desire, or in the wish that we were someone other than ourselves. He said further, (quotes Alma 29:6-9).

"I have a conviction deep down in my heart that we are exactly what we should be, each one of us, except as we may have altered that pattern by deviating from the laws of God here in mortality. I have convinced myself that we all have those peculiar attributes, characteristics, and abilities which are essential for us to possess in order that we may fulfil the full purpose of our creation here upon the earth.

"Once again, that allotment which has come to us from God is a sacred allotment. It is something of which we should be proud, each one of us in our own right, and not wish that we had somebody else's allotment. Our greatest success comes from being ourselves.

I think that we can console ourselves best by believing that whatever is our allotment in life, whatever is our call in the priesthood, the Lord has been wise and just, and I might add, merciful, in giving to us that which we need to accomplish the particular purpose of our call. (Conference Report Oct. 1952, pp. 71-72.)

The Realization of Our Foreordained "Allotment" Is Conditioned on Our Faithfulness

Elder McConkie wrote: "In all this there is not the slightest hint of compulsion; persons foreordained to fill special missions in mortality are as abundantly endowed with free agency as are any other persons. By their foreordination the Lord merely gives them the opportunity to serve him and his purposes if they will choose to measure up to the standard he knows they are capable of attaining" (Mormon Doctrine, p. 290).

President Harold B. Lee taught: "But now there is a warning: Despite that calling which is spoken of in the scriptures as "foreordination," we have another inspired declaration: "Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen (D&C 121:34)." This suggests that... there are many who were foreordained before the world was, to a greater state than they have prepared themselves for here. Even though they might have been among the noble and great, from among whom the Father declared he would make his chosen leaders, they may fail of that calling here in mortality" (Stand Ye In Holy Places, p. 9). "Like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency... and are losing their birthright and the blessing that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling" (Youth and the Church, p. 172).

Elder McConkie wrote: "Certain of the spirit children of the Father earned the right... of being natural heirs to the blessings of the gospel. But some of them, ...turn from the course of righteousness and become children of the flesh; that is, they walk after the manner of the world, rejecting the spiritual blessings held in store for Israel. They are disinherited; they shall not continue as children in the family of the prophets when the chosen race continues as a distinct people in the eternal worlds. Thus they are descendants of the prophets in this life but shall not inherit with the sons of God in the life to come" (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 2:276-277).

Elder LeGrand Richards taught: "It should be remembered that the devil and his angels, when cast down to this earth, were not deprived of the knowledge they had while in the [pre-earth life].... Consider the experience Jesus had with the man possessed by unclean spirits, whom no man could bind with chains (in Mark 5:6-9).... Because the spirits cast out of heaven with Satan have retained their knowledge and recollection of what happened there before they were cast out, they knew Jesus and the power given to him.... The same was true with respect to the mission of Joseph Smith.... Many other boys of that age had prayed without Satan's molesting them.... Therefore, except for Satan's knowledge and acquaintance that he brought with him from the spirit world, he would not have known that Joseph Smith was different from any other young boy, but he knew who "the noble and great" spirits were (A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, pp. 282-84)."

Elder McConkie taught in relation to this: "Knowledge can be obtained and used in unrighteousness; Satan gains his power on this principle.... The devil has tremendous power and influence because of his knowledge (Mormon Doctrine, p. 86)."

The Balance between "the Foreknowledge of God," "Foreordination," and "Agency"

President Brigham Young said: "Fore-ordination, for instance, and free grace are both true doctrines; but they must be properly coupled together and correctly , o as to produce harmony between these two apparently opposite doctrines" (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 56).

President George Q. Cannon taught: "People confound foreknowledge with foreordination. Because God fore-knows a thing, it does not follow that He has foreordained it. He foreknew that Pharaoh would fight Israel and would reject the testimonies which Moses and Aaron bore to him. But Pharaoh had the full use of his agency. It was in his power to have accepted the message which Moses delivered; it was in his power also to reject that message. He chose to reject it, and God magnified His name in the earth by showing His wonderful works among the Egyptians. But He did not foreordain Pharaoh to be damned. His foreknowledge extends to the uttermost end of life. He knows all about us.... I would like you to clearly understand that foreknowledge is one thing and predestination is another, and there is a great distinction between the two.... Every human being is ordained to be saved, if he will be. If he is damned, it is because he chooses the path that leads to condemnation" (Gospel Truth, 1:142-143).

President Joseph F. Smith said: "The Lord's hand is over all, and therein I acknowledge his hand. Not that men are at war, not that nations are trying to destroy nations, not that men are plotting against the liberties of their fellow creatures, not in those respects at all; but God's hand is not shortened. He will control the results that will follow. He will overrule them in a way that you and I, today, do not comprehend, or do not foresee, for ultimate good. He foresees the end.... The Lord God Almighty is not pleased, nor was it his purpose or design, or intent, to foreordain the condition that the world is in today; nor did he do so. He foresaw what would come, ...but he had given them their agency, under which they are bringing it to pass. The results of it, eventually, will be overruled for the good of those who shall live after, not for the good of those who shall destroy themselves because of their wicked propensities and crimes" (Gospel Doctrine, p. 89).

The Doctrine of Perfection

1. It is Heavenly Father's plan for us to be as perfect as He is (Matt. 5:48).

President Benson said: "The scriptures teach that man was created in the image and likeness of his Creator (Genesis 1:26-27). Fundamental to the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the belief that the purpose of man's whole existence is to grow into the likeness and image of God. We accept quite literally the Savior's mandate: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48; see 3 Nephi 12:48). As eternal beings, we each have in us a spark of divinity. As God's offspring, we have His attributes in us. We are gods in embryo, and thus have an unlimited potential for progress and attainment. (*Teachings of Pres. Benson*, pp. 20-21)

President Lorenzo Snow said: "If there ever was a thing revealed to man perfectly, clearly, so that there could be no doubt or dubiety, this was revealed to me, and it came in these words: 'As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be.' This may appear to some minds as something very strange and remarkable, but it is in perfect harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ and with His promises. He said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). The Apostle Paul also taught in this wise: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God..." (Philippians 2:5-8). This is the high destiny of the sons of God, they who overcome, who are obedient to His commandments, who purify themselves even as He is pure. They are to become like Him; they will see Him as He is; they will behold His face and reign with Him in His glory, becoming like unto Him in every particular (*Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, p. 5)."

In 3 Nephi 12:48 Christ re-worded the command given before his death and resurrection. Instead of "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48)," He said, "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect"--thus implying his attainment of that divine possibility. However, Elder McConkie stated that "He had an advantage that none of us has. He was the Son of God, and he came into this life with a spiritual capacity and talent and an inheritance that exceeded beyond all comprehension what any of the rest of us was born with. . . ." (1976 *Devotional Speeches of the Year*, p. 400.)

While this realization may seemingly put this divine attainment beyond our feeble grasp, the scriptures testify that there are *mortals* who have attained perfection as well. D&C 132:37 states: "Abraham... Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods." Elder McConkie said of this verse: "This concept that some of the children of our Father have already become gods is a sound doctrinal reality. . . This high status is now enjoyed by all of the prophets and righteous saints who were with Christ in his resurrection. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as examples and prototypes, whose attainments stand as a pattern of all others similarly situated, are specifically named by revelation as having already attained Godhood (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, Vol 1, FOOTNOTES, p. 32)."

2. We should not expect this level of perfection in mortality.

Joseph Smith said: "When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel--you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave (*TPJS*, p. 348)."

Joseph F. Smith said: "We do not look for absolute perfection in man. Mortal man is not capable of being absolutely perfect. Nevertheless, it is given to us to be as perfect in the sphere in which we are called to be and to act, as it is for the Father in heaven to be pure and righteous in the more exalted sphere in which he acts. We will find in the scriptures the words of the Savior himself to his disciples, in which he required that they should be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect; that they should be righteous, even as he is righteous. I do not expect that we can be as perfect as Christ, that we can be as righteous as God. But I believe that we can strive for that perfection with the intelligence that we possess, and the knowledge that we have of the principles of life and salvation (*GD*, p. 132)."

Joseph Fielding Smith said: "Salvation does not come all at once; we are commanded to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. It will take us ages to accomplish this end, for there will be greater progress beyond the grave, and it will be there that the faithful will overcome all things, and receive all things, even the fulness of the Father's glory. I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect, That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like God. But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in this probationary state, to prepare us for that perfection. It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. Why? Because we are on that road, if we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection." (*DS*, 2:18).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said this about "that road to perfection": "As members of the Church, if we chart a course leading to eternal life; if we begin the processes of spiritual rebirth, and are going in the right direction; if we chart a course of sanctifying our souls, and degree by degree are going in that direction;... then it is absolutely guaranteed--there is no question whatever about it--we shall gain eternal life (1976 *Devotional Speeches of the Year*, p. 400)."

Brigham Young gives us this to ponder: "It is written, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This is perfectly consistent to the person who understands what perfection really is. . . . We can alter the phraseology of the sentence, and say, "Be ye as perfect as ye can," for that is all we can do, though it is written, be ye perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. He cannot be any more perfect than he knows how, any more than we. When we are doing as well as we know how in the sphere and station which we occupy here, we are justified in the justice, righteousness, mercy, and judgment that go before the Lord of heaven and earth. We are as justified as the angels who are before the throne of God. The sin that will cleave to all the posterity of Adam and Eve is, that they have not done as well as they knew how." He added: "When we use the term perfection, it applies to man in his present condition, as well as to heavenly beings. We are now, or may be, as perfect in our sphere as God and angels are in theirs, but the greatest intelligence in existence can continually ascend to greater heights of perfection (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 89)."

President Joseph F. Smith said: "I sincerely hope that the spirit of the conference will abide with us, will go with us to our homes, and that we will be able to continue to build on the foundations of the gospel of the Son of God until we become perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect, according to the sphere and intelligence that we act in and possess. I do not expect that any of us will ever become in mortality quite so perfect as God is perfect; but in the spheres in which we are called to act, and according to the capacity and breadth of intelligence that we possess, in our sphere, and in the existence of the talent, the ability, and intelligence that God has given to us, we may become as perfect in our sphere as God is perfect in his higher and more exalted sphere. I believe that (*GD*, p. 252)."

Elder James E. Talmage said: "Our Lord's admonition to men to become perfect, even as the Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48) cannot rationally be construed otherwise than as implying the possibility of such achievement. Plainly, however, man cannot become perfect in mortality in the sense in which God is perfect as a supremely glorified Being. It is possible, though, for man to be perfect in his sphere in a sense analogous to that in which superior intelligences are perfect in their several spheres; yet the relative perfection of the lower is infinitely inferior to that of the higher. A college student in his freshman or sophomore year may be perfect as freshman or sophomore; his record may possibly be a hundred per

cent on the scale of efficiency and achievement; yet the honors of the upper classman are beyond him, and the attainment of graduation is to him remote, but of assured possibility, if he do but continue faithful and devoted to the end (*Jesus the Christ*, chapter 17, "relative to perfection")."

3. Becoming "perfect, even as our Father," is a process, not an event.

Luke 2:52 states that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." The word "increased" implies growth, learning--and how could He grow and learn if he were already perfect? D&C 93:12-17 reveals that even the Lord Jesus Christ did not receive of the "fulness at first, but received grace for grace." President Lorenzo Snow said simply: "Perfection comes in stages (*Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, p. 32)."

President Ezra Taft Benson gives us some excellent guidance as to **how** the process of becoming like Heavenly Father works: "The process of adding one godly attribute to another, as described by Peter, becomes the key Let our actions be Christlike so that by our diligence and with God's grace we may add to our character faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, and diligence. Our objective is to attain such a 'divine nature (2 Peter 1:5-7)' (*Teachings of President Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 3, 328)." As just quoted, President Benson points out that two things are required for us to become perfect: "our diligence" and "God's grace." Let us examine each of these one at a time, beginning with "our diligence."

Spencer W. Kimball taught that the power to overcome our weaknesses and become like God lies within each of us. He said: "We are sons and daughters of God, possessing seeds of godhood. We are not limited by instinct as are the beasts. We have godly power to grow and to overcome and become perfect. Sin was permitted in the world, and Satan was permitted to tempt us, but we have our free agency. We may sin or live righteously, but we cannot escape responsibility. To blame our sins upon the Lord, saying they are inherent and cannot be controlled, is cheap and cowardly. To blame our sins upon our parents and our upbringing is the way of the escapist. One's parents may have failed; our own backgrounds may have been frustrating, but as sons and daughters of a living God we have within ourselves the power to rise above our circumstances, to change our lives. Man can change human nature. Man must transform his life. We will be punished for our sins. We must accept responsibility for our sins. We can overcome. We must control and master ourselves." (*Faith Precedes The Miracle*, pp. 175-176.) Joseph Smith taught that "All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him." (*Teachings*, p. 181.)

But how do we even begin to master ourselves and overcome Satan, sin and temptation? President Benson suggests the practical process of goal-setting. He suggests that we conquer these things one at a time. He said: "Every accountable child of God needs to set goals, short--and long-range goals. A man who is pressing forward to accomplish worthy goals can soon put despondency under his feet, and once a goal is accomplished, others can be set up. Some will be continuing goals. Each week when we partake of the sacrament we commit ourselves to the goals of taking upon ourselves the name of Christ, of always remembering Him and keeping His commandments (see Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:27)."

Understanding the Principles of Personal Revelation
By Ronald E. Bartholomew

1. Introduction: An experience common to Latter-day saints is the life-long task of learning how to receive and understand personal revelation. Elder S. Dilworth Young, member of the Seventy said: "I can testify to you that . . . none of you [will] have any adventure greater, more thrilling, and more joyful than to find out how to interpret the Spirit which comes into you . . . Young folks have to learn how, and so do we older folks. We have to find out the technique by which the Spirit whispers to our hearts. We have to learn to hear it and to understand it and to know when we have it, and that sometimes takes a long time."¹ The revelations contained in Doctrine and Covenants sections 6 through 11 contain a number of principles and conditions relative to personal revelation. This paper will outline and analyze some of these principles and the conditions in an effort to help students and teachers gain a better understanding of how the Lord taught his children to receive and recognize personal revelation.

2. Principle #1: Ask and you shall receive according to the conditions prescribed by the Lord
 - a. The Lord gave Oliver Cowdery a principle of truth that applies to all of His children: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, blessed art thou for what thou hast done; for thou hast inquired of me, and behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit (D&C 6:14)." This highlights the importance of the first principle we will discuss: "ask and ye shall receive."
 - b. Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasizes the importance of our asking in order to receive personal revelation. He said: "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. 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.' Prayer is your personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil."³
 - c. In order to receive, however, the Lord outlines several conditions upon which this principle is based.
 - d. *Condition #1: Ask for the "right things."* In order to receive personal revelation, we must ask according to the Lord's will. In the Bible Dictionary under "Prayer," it states: "Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them." The ancient Nephite Disciples exemplified this principle: ". . . and they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled with desire (3 Nephi 19:24)." They knew what to pray for [the Lord's will] because it "was given unto to them" by the Holy Ghost. In other words, you have to be in tune with the Spirit of Revelation to receive personal revelation--so you will know what the Lord's will is and then pray for *it*. D&C 46:30 confirms this truth: "He that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh." In D&C 6:5-9, the Lord promises Oliver Cowdery that if he asks he will receive, and then he carefully instructs Oliver on what to ask for: "Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you. Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion; seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you; and if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation. Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments, and assist to bring forth my work, according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed." The Lord gave a similar message about asking for the right things to Hyrum Smith: "And then shall ye know, or by this shall you know, all things whatsoever you desire of me, *which are pertaining unto things of righteousness* (D&C 11:14, italics added)."
 - e. *Condition #2: Have the "right desires."* Closely related to "asking for the right things" is having the "right desires." D&C 7 is an excellent example of two brethren who both receive because of their "right desires." Peter and John receive what they ask of the Lord, even though they ask for very different things. Peter asks to return speedily to the Savior in heaven upon completion of his mission in this life; John asks to "have power over death, that I may live and bring souls" to the Savior beyond the time normally allotted in this life. Because both had what the Savior considered "a good desire (D&C 7:5)," He told them that both would receive according to their desires and have joy in that (D&C 7:8). The Lord's promise to Oliver Cowdery in this regard applies to us today: "If you

have good desires (D&C 6:27)," the Lord will bless you to be able to be a part of bringing to forth his will and kingdom on the earth.

- f. *Condition #3: Believe that you will receive.* Once you have obtained knowledge regarding the Lord's will for you, and your heart is filled with the "right desires," the next step is to proceed with faith, believing that you will receive that thing, if you ask for it, according to the promises of the Lord. Again, to Oliver Cowdery, the Lord said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer, even so surely shall you receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith . . . believing that you shall receive" (D&C 8:1). The ancient prophets of the Book of Mormon provide an excellent example of this principle. The Lord explained that those prophets were receiving according to their righteous desires because they had asked Him, believing they would receive: "The remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers (D&C 10:46-47)." Elder Packer explained how "asking in faith" works: "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 . . . As you test gospel principles by believing without knowing, the Spirit will begin to teach you. Gradually your faith will be replaced with knowledge."⁴
3. Principle #2: While seeking and receiving, trifle not with sacred things
 - a. As we obtain the will of the Lord, have righteous desires, and ask in faith, we must not "trifle with [the] sacred things" we receive. To Oliver, the Lord said: "Behold thou hast a gift, and blessed art thou because of thy gift . . . Remember it is sacred and cometh from above-make not thy gift known unto any save it be those who are of thy faith. Trifle not with sacred things (D&C 6:10, 12)." The Lord has given each of us gifts as well, including the gift of the Holy Ghost, and access to the several gifts of the Spirit. These things are sacred and are not to be treated lightly. There are several conditions mentioned in relation to this principle in D&C sections 6-11.
 - b. *Condition #1: Don't ask for what you shouldn't.* In relation to asking for the "right things," and with the "right desires," the Lord simply told Oliver Cowdery: "Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not (D&C 8:10)."
 - c. *Condition #2: You must study it out in your mind.* Having already begun his labors as Joseph Smith's scribe, a somewhat discontented Oliver Cowdery also "desired to be endowed with the gift of translation (heading to D&C section 8)." The Lord responded with these words of encouragement: "ask . . . that you may translate . . . those ancient records which have been hid up, that are sacred; and according to your faith shall it be done unto you (D&C 8:11)." When he attempted to translate, however, he failed. One of the reasons he did not succeed was given to him in this explanation from the Lord: "Behold, 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 . . . you shall feel that it is right (D&C 9:7-8)." Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said this regarding these verses: "Being taught by the Spirit is not a passive thing. Often the Lord's communication does not come until we have studied matters out in our own minds. Then we receive a confirmation."⁵ Elder Bruce R. McConkie, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles added: "We are to solve our own problems and then to counsel with the Lord in prayer and receive a spiritual confirmation that our decisions are correct."⁶
 - d. *Condition #3: Keep sacred things sacred.* Once we are able to receive revelation from the Lord, we need to work as hard to keep those things sacred as we did to receive the revelation. After Joseph lost the manuscript containing the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, the Lord chastened and warned him: "Therefore, you have delivered them up, yea, that which was sacred, unto wickedness . . . But behold, here is wisdom, and because I show unto you wisdom, and give you commandments concerning these things, what you shall do, show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work of translation. Marvel not that I said unto you: Here is wisdom, show it not unto the world-for I said, show it not unto the world, that you may be preserved. Behold, I do not say that you shall not show it unto the righteous; But as you cannot always judge the righteous, or as you cannot always tell the wicked from the righteous, therefore I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter (D&C 10:9, 34-37)." Because of this experience, Joseph Smith learned a painful but powerful lesson about "keeping sacred things sacred."
 - e. In connection with sacred communication from the Holy Ghost that we might receive, Elder Boyd K. Packer taught: "I have come to believe also that it is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts you to

use them to the blessing of others . . . We are, I believe, to keep these things and ponder them in our hearts."⁷

- f. *Condition #4: Once is enough.* Both Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith learned for themselves that in the economy of God, one does not need to receive the same revelation more than once. Even though he had already received a witness of the truthfulness of the Prophet Joseph Smith's testimony regarding the plates, Oliver sought an additional witness from the Lord. The Lord patiently responded to Oliver's query by reminding him of the revelation he had already received: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God? And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth [Joseph Smith was unaware of Oliver's experience when he inquired of the Lord in his behalf], have you not received a witness (D&C 6:22-24)?" He learned that if the Lord has already revealed something to you, then "trifle not with sacred things" by asking for the same revelation again.
- g. Joseph Smith had already learned this painful lesson in connection with the lost manuscript of the Book of Lehi. He recorded: "Some time after Mr. Harris had begun to write for me, he began to importune me to give him liberty to carry the writings home and show them; and desired of me that I would inquire of the Lord, through the Urim and Thummim, if he might not do so. I did inquire, and the answer was that he must not. However, he was not satisfied with this answer, and desired that I should inquire again. I did so, and the answer was as before. Still he could not be contented, but insisted that I should inquire once more. After much solicitation I again inquired of the Lord, and permission was granted him to have the writings on certain conditions . . . In accordance with this last answer, I required of him that he should bind himself in a covenant to me in a most solemn manner that he would not do otherwise than had been directed. He did so. He bound himself as I required of him, took the writings, and went his way. Notwithstanding, however, the great restrictions which he had been laid under, and the solemnity of the covenant which he had made with me, he did show them to others, and by stratagem they got them away from him, and they never have been recovered unto this day."⁸
- h. *Condition #5: Continue as you commenced.* As was mentioned above, when Oliver Cowdery attempted to translate the ancient record, he failed. Rather than continue to try to learn how to translate by the gift and power of God, he returned to his position as scribe. Shortly thereafter, Joseph Smith received the following in Oliver's behalf: "Behold, I say unto you, my son, that because you did not translate according to that which you desired of me, and did commence again to write for my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., even so would I that ye should continue until you have finished this record, which I have entrusted unto him . . . And, behold, it is because that you did not continue as you commenced, when you began to translate, that I have taken away this privilege from you (D&C 9:1, 5)." Relating this experience to our lives and the receipt of personal revelation, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught: "In the process of revelation and making important decisions, fear plays a destructive, sometimes paralyzing role. To Oliver Cowdery, who missed the opportunity of a lifetime because he didn't seize it in the lifetime of the opportunity, the Lord said, 'You did not continue as you commenced.' . . . After you have gotten the message, after you have paid the price to feel His love and hear the word of the Lord, go forward. Don't fear, don't vacillate, don't quibble, don't whine . . . dismiss your fears and wade in with both feet."⁹
- i. *Condition #6: You need to obtain all that has been revealed before more can be added.* Hyrum Smith, ever anxious to help his younger brother and the Lord build up the cause of Zion, received this in response to his desire to proclaim the word: "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men. But now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating, yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation, and then shall all things be added thereto (D&C 11:21-22)."
- j. In connection with this promise given Hyrum-"all things shall be added thereto" *after* "you have obtained all which I shall grant unto . . . this generation," Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve taught: "Just as continuing revelation enlarges and illuminates the scriptures, so also a study of the scriptures enables men and women to receive revelations. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, "I sometimes think that one of the best-kept secrets of the kingdom is that the scriptures open the door to the receipt of revelation" (Doctrines of the Restoration, ed. Mark L. McConkie, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989, p. 243). This happens because scripture reading puts us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord . . . 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 revelation¹⁰ . . . The best way to have the spirit of revelation is

to listen to and study words spoken under the influence of the Holy Ghost. In other words, we obtain the Spirit by reading the scriptures or reading or listening to the talks of inspired leaders.¹¹

4. Principle "3: We must know how to recognize the Spirit when it comes

- a. *Condition #1: I will tell you in your mind and in your heart.* The Lord told Oliver Cowdery that He will speak "in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart (D&C 8:2)." Of this, Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy, said, "The means by which the Spirit speaks to both the mind and the heart is through the still, small voice spoken of in the scriptures. This voice is often called the "voice of the Spirit" (1 Nephi 4:18). Sometimes that voice is heard within, but more often it is felt. It may prompt us with both a thought and a feeling concerning a matter."¹² Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve more fully elaborated on this: "The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you feel more than you hear. It is described as a 'still small voice.' 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' . . . 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.'"¹³
- b. Elder Richard G. Scott, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, explained in detail how this process works: "An impression to the mind is very specific. Detailed words can be heard or felt and written as though the instruction were being dictated. A communication to the heart is a more general impression. The Lord often begins by giving impressions. Where there is recognition of their importance and they are obeyed, one gains more capacity to receive more detailed instruction to the mind. An impression to the heart, if followed is fortified by a more specific instruction to the mind . . . It is through the repeated process of feeling impressions, recording them, and obeying them that one learns to depend on the direction of the Spirit more than the communication through the five senses . . . We often leave the most precious personal direction of the Spirit unheard because we do not record and respond to the first promptings that come to us when the Lord chooses to direct us or when impressions come in response to urgent prayer."¹⁴
- c. *Condition #2: You will either feel that it is right or that it is not.* Many questions have arisen regarding recognizing personal revelation because of the Lord's words to Oliver Cowdery in D&C 9:8-9: ". . . 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. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the things which is wrong." Of this passage, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve said: "This may be one of the most important and misunderstood teachings in all the Doctrine and Covenants. The teachings of the Spirit often come as feelings. That fact is of the utmost importance, yet some misunderstand what it means. I have met persons who told me they have never had a witness from the Holy Ghost because they have never felt their bosom "burn within" them. What does a "burning in the bosom" mean? Does it need to be a feeling of caloric heat, like the burning produced by combustion? If that is the meaning, I have never had a burning in the bosom. Surely, the word "burning" in this scripture signifies a feeling of comfort and serenity. That is the witness many receive. That is the way revelation works. Truly, the still, small voice is just that, "still" and "small."¹⁵
- d. In addition, Elder Boyd K. Packer, also of the Twelve said: "This burning in the bosom is not purely a physical sensation. It is more like a warm light shining within your being . . . 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!"¹⁶
- e. *Condition #3: The Spirit will speak peace to your mind.* In an attempt to help him recognize the Spirit of Revelation, the Lord said to Oliver Cowdery: "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God (D&C 6:23)?" This teaches two very valuable principles regarding the recognition of personal revelation: (1) The voice of God is a voice of peace, and (2) this is one of the greatest witnesses we can receive from Him. Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy said: "The most frequent confirmation of the Spirit comes to us as peaceful feelings . . . President Brigham Young quoted these words of the Prophet Joseph Smith: "They can tell the Spirit of the Lord from all other spirits-it will whisper peace and joy to their souls." Feelings of peace are promptings and proof that the Spirit is bearing witness to us in response to our petitions."¹⁷
- f. *Condition #4: Revelation will enlighten your mind.* Through his brother Joseph, Hyrum learned: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind (D&C 11:13)." Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy taught in relation to this verse: "Prophets, seers, and revelators have described this process of receiving personal revelation through the enlightenment of the mind: "When you feel pure intelligence flowing into you," said the Prophet Joseph Smith, "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." Elder Marion G. Romney said, "This is a very common means of revelation. It comes into one's mind speaking words and sentences." President Harold B. Lee further taught, "When there come to you things that your mind does not know, when you have a sudden thought that comes to your mind, if you will learn to give heed to these things that come from the Lord, you will learn to walk by the spirit of revelation."¹⁸

- g. *Condition #5: Revelation will lead you to do what is right.* The final condition for learning to recognize the Spirit that will be discussed in this paper was spoken by the Lord to Hyrum Smith this way: "And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good-yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit."

5. Summary:

- a. As we continue to learn for ourselves and help our students better understand the principles of personal revelation, together we will be able to "receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that [we may] know the mysteries and peaceable things--that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal (D&C 42:61)."

Notes

1. S. Dilworth Young, *Improvement Era*, vol. 62, no. 6, June 1959, 449.
2. J. Reuben Clark, "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," 4-5.
3. Boyd K. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," *Ensign*, November 1994, 59.
4. *Ibid*, 60.
5. Dallin H. Oaks, "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit," *Ensign*, March 1997, 13.
6. Bruce R. McConkie, "Why the Lord ordained prayer," *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11.
7. Boyd K. Packer, "The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53.
8. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:21.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence," *Ensign*, March 2000, 10.
10. Dallin H. Oaks, "Scripture Reading and Revelation," *Ensign*, January 1995, 7-8.
11. Oaks, "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit," 9.
12. L. Lionel Kendrick, "Personal Revelation," *Ensign*, September 1999, 11.
13. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," 60.
14. Elder Richard G. Scott, "Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led," CES Symposium, 11 August 1998, 3-4, 11.
15. Oaks, "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit," 13.
16. Packer, "Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise," 60-61
17. Kendrick, "Personal Revelation," 13.
18. *Ibid*, 12.

Understanding the Process of Spiritual Rebirth

2006 Campus Education Week—Ron Bartholomew

“For it is expedient that an atonement should be made... but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another... therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.... And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety....” (Alma 34:9-16)

Unique Qualities of Jesus Christ

- Son of Mary (Mortal)
 - Had to die.
 - Able to suffer pain, sorrow and problems of mortality.
 - Subject to temptation and sin.

- Son of God (Divine Nature)
 - Power over death.
 - Had the ability to suffer infinite pain.
 - Able to overcome temptation and be perfect.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said:

"A mortal man could not have stood it.... I do not care... what his power, there was no man ever born into this world that could have stood under the weight... that was upon the Son of God, when he was carrying my sins and yours and making it possible that we might escape from our sins.... He was willing to carry all that tremendous load and weight of sin--not his own, for he had no sin. He did it that we might escape. He paid the price, the penalty of our sinning (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:130).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

“This sacrifice, which only a God could make, took place in Gethsemane when he sweat great goutts of blood from every pore, ‘which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all,’ he says, ‘to tremble because of pain, and to bleed from every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit’ (D&C 19:18)”... (McConkie, Bruce R. A New Witness for the Articles of Faith. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1985, 109).

The Infinite *and* Intimate Atonement

- Alma 7:11-13—*The Savior suffered afflictions and temptations of every kind so that he would know how to “succor” his people.*
- Mosiah 15:10-12—*All those who have believed in and relied on the Savior are his seed and heirs of the kingdom of God.*
- Elder Merrill J. Bateman explains how this doctrine makes the atonement not only *infinite* but also *intimate*:

“Unlike mortals who inherit the seeds of death from both parents, Jesus was born of a mortal mother but an immortal Father. The seeds of death received from Mary meant that He could die, but the inheritance from His Father gave Him infinite life, which meant death was a voluntary act. Thus, Jesus told the Jewish people, ‘For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself’ (John 5:26).

“On another occasion He stated: ‘Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father’ (John 10:17–18).

“The infinite nature received from His Father gave Jesus power to perform the Atonement, to suffer for the sins of all. The prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus not only took upon Himself our sins but also our pains, afflictions, and temptations. Alma also explains that Jesus took upon Himself our sicknesses, death, and our infirmities (see Alma 7:11–13). This He did, Alma said, so that His ‘bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know. . . how to succor his people’ (Alma 7:12).

“The prophet Abinadi further states that ‘when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed’ (Mosiah 15:10). Abinadi then identifies the Savior's seed as the prophets and those who follow them. For many years I thought of the Savior's experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people, as Jesus felt ‘our infirmities’ (Hebrews 4:15), ‘[bore] our griefs, . . . carried our sorrows . . . [and] was bruised for our iniquities’ (Isaiah 53:4–5).

“The Atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us.

“The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were ‘numberless as the sand upon the sea shore’ (Moses 1:28). If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptations. He knows our weaknesses. But more than that, more than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith. That is why a young Hispanic woman suddenly realized that she was more than a speck in the universe when the Holy Spirit gave her a witness of the Restoration. She felt God's love, that she was His daughter, and realized that He knew her. It also explains why the plan of salvation seemed familiar to my Japanese friend as the missionaries taught him and as the Holy Spirit confirmed his purposes on earth and his potential” (“A Pattern for All,” Ensign, Nov. 2005, 74).

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “And it also took place as he hung on the cruel cross of Calvary. During the last three hours of that agonizing ordeal, which darkness overspread the land, all the pains and suffering of Gethsemane returned. He came into the world, not alone to suffer in Gethsemane, but also at Golgotha” (New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p. 109).

- Creation: Moses 1:6, 13, 39; 2:27; Psalms 82:6, Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:7
- This is true doctrine: We were created in the image of God with the potential to become like Him (see above references).

We Need A Savior

- The Fall: Mosiah 3:19, 4:5, 16:3-4; 2 Nephi 9:8-9.
- Doctrine: Because of the fall, we have become lost and fallen, carnal, sensual and devilish, becoming subject unto the Devil himself (see Mosiah 16:3).
- The Atonement: 2 Nephi 2:5-8, 26; Ether 12:27; Moroni 10:32-33.
- Doctrine: Because of the fall, we need a Savior, and because of the Savior, we can completely overcome the effects of the fall.
- The Atonement overcomes the Effects of the Fall

The Savior's Invitation to all:

- “Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28-30).

President Howard W. Hunter taught:

“In biblical times the yoke was a device of great assistance to those who tilled the field. It allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the plow or wagon. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke. His yoke requires a great and earnest effort, but for those who truly are converted, the yoke is easy and the burden becomes light.

“Why face life’s burdens alone, Christ asks, or why face them with temporal support that will quickly falter? To the heavy laden it is Christ’s yoke, it is the power and peace of standing side by side with a God that will provide the support, balance, and the strength to meet our challenges and endure our tasks here in the hardpan field of mortality.

“Obviously, the personal burdens of life vary from person to person, but every one of us has them. Furthermore, each trial in life is tailored to the individual’s capacities and needs as known by a loving Father in Heaven. Of course, some sorrows are brought on by the sins of a world not following the counsel of that Father in Heaven. Whatever the reason, none of us seems to be completely free from life’s challenges. To one and all, Christ said, in effect: As long as we all must bear some burden and shoulder some yoke, why not let it be mine? My promise to you is that my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (See Matt. 11:28–30.)” (“Come unto Me,” Ensign, Nov. 1990, 17).

- “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*” (Hebrews 4:15-16, emphasis added).

Christ is our “advocate” with the Father

- D&C 45:3-5: “Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him--Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.”

The Process of Spiritual Rebirth

- In order to overcome the effects of the fall in mortality, we need to experience what the scriptures refer to as a “mighty change of heart,” or “spiritual rebirth,” and become the begotten sons and daughters of Christ (see D&C 76:24).

- Mosiah 3:19 teaches: (a) if we yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, we can “put off” the natural man and become a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and (b) in order to do that we need to become as a little child with the following characteristics--submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

- How can we experience this change and become as this little child, putting off the natural man and become a “saint” through the atonement of Christ the Lord?

- Mosiah 4:1-3 teaches: They acknowledge their fallen state: “they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth.” Before anyone will completely come unto Christ (Ether 12:27, Moroni 10:32-33) they must be humble, which word (humility) is defined as acknowledging one’s fallen condition and absolute need for the Savior’s atonement, which they do next.

- Mosiah 4:2 teaches: The first principle of the gospel is “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” These people call upon the Savior for help, or put their trust and faith in His redeeming grace, not their own power, because of their acknowledgement of their fallen, carnal state: “And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God”

- Mosiah 4:3 and Mosiah 5:2: Once they had acknowledged their fall and absolute need for the power of the Savior, and put their faith and trust in him and him alone (2 Nephi 2:5-8), their hearts were changed within them AND they received a remission of their sins, as manifest unto them by the power of the Holy Ghost.

- Alma taught this powerfully after his own conversion: Mosiah 27:25-27:

- We must be born again (v. 25)

- Changed from our carnal fallen state to a state of righteousness (conversion means being changed from one state to another)—v. 25

- We must become the sons and daughters of God (Mosiah 5:7, 27:25)

- We must become “new creatures” (v. 26)

- Ezekiel 36:26