

He Knows You by Name

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You may not have heard the Lord call you by name, but He knows each one of you and He knows your name.

It was on “the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty” when 14-year-old Joseph Smith went into the grove, knelt in prayer, and “saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above [him] in the air.” He said: “One of them spake unto me, *calling me by name* and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”¹ Can you imagine how 14-year-old Joseph must have felt to see God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to hear Heavenly Father call him by his name?

When I visited the Sacred Grove, I tried to imagine what it must have been like to have been Joseph Smith. In those quiet moments, the Spirit whispered to my beating heart that I was standing on holy ground and that all that the Prophet Joseph Smith had said was true. Then came the powerful realization that we are all the beneficiaries of his faith, courage, and steadfast desire to obey God. He had received an answer to his humble prayer. He had seen the Father and His Beloved Son. There in the Sacred Grove, I knew that Heavenly Father not only knew Joseph Smith by name, but He also knows each of us by name. And just as Joseph Smith had an important part to play in this great and marvelous work, we too have an important part to play in these latter days.

Did you know that Heavenly Father knows you personally—by name? The scriptures teach us that this is true. When Enos went into the woods to pray, he recorded, “There came a voice unto me, saying: *Enos*, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.”² Moses not only prayed but also talked to God face-to-face, and God said to Moses, “I have a work for thee, *Moses*, my son.”³ The Lord knew Jacob’s name and changed it to *Israel* to more accurately reflect his mission on the earth.⁴ Similarly, He changed the names of Paul and Abraham and Sarah. In Doctrine and Covenants, section 25, Emma Smith is given a blessing for her comfort and guidance in life. The Lord begins this blessing by saying, “Hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, while I speak unto you, *Emma Smith*, my daughter.”⁵

You may not have heard the Lord call you by name, but He knows each one of you and He knows your name. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said: “I testify to you that God has known you individually ... for a long, long time (see D&C 93:23). He has loved you for a long, long time. He not only knows the names of all the stars (see Ps. 147:4; Isa. 40:26); He knows your names and all your heartaches and your joys!”⁶

How can you know that your name and needs are known by our Heavenly Father? Elder Robert D. Hales counseled: “Turn to the scriptures. Kneel in prayer. Ask in faith. Listen to the Holy Ghost. ... Live the gospel with

patience and persistence.”⁷

That’s what Joseph did. His testimony helps all of us know that we are known and loved by our Heavenly Father. We are truly daughters of a Heavenly Father who loves us.⁸ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has told us: “No one of us is less treasured or cherished of God than another. ... He loves each of us—insecurities, anxieties, self-image, and all. ... He cheers on *every* runner, calling out that the race is against sin, *not* against each other.”⁹

Once Joseph Smith received this knowledge, his life didn’t get easier. In fact, he was faced with intense pressure from peers and adults. Joseph Smith’s history provides an important pattern for each of us. We can apply his teachings when we don’t know what to do, when we are faced with peer pressure, when we feel surrounded by temptation, or feel unworthy or alone. We can pray! We can call upon God in the name of His holy Son, Jesus Christ, and seek comfort, guidance, and direction. Have you ever had a problem and not known what to do? Joseph said: “My mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness. ... I often said to myself: What is to be done?”¹⁰

How did he receive comfort and guidance? He studied the scriptures, pondered their promises, and then “came to the determination to ‘ask of God.’”¹¹ The answer he received that beautiful spring day changed his life and direction. He *knew*. He gained a testimony of God and Jesus Christ, and his testimony enabled him to live the gospel with patience and persistence. He was undeterred by peer pressure and persecution, for in his words he said, “I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it.”¹² He could stand firm because of his testimony. And so can you.

If you have ever felt the tug of peer pressure, pray, ask in faith, and listen to the Holy Ghost. Then live the gospel. Joseph keenly realized his imperfections and weaknesses. Again—he prayed. In response to this prayer, he was visited by the angel Moroni. Joseph recounted: “*He called me by name*” and said “that God had a work for me to do.”¹³

As we pray, the Lord will guide and prepare us to do our part. One summer, while touring Europe with the BYU International Folk Dancers, I learned an important lesson. I was sick and I became discouraged. I wanted to quit and go home. We were in Scotland to perform our show for the members, investigators, and missionaries. We went to the mission home for a prayer. As I entered, I glanced at a stone in the front garden. Chiseled in the stone were the words “What-e’er thou art act well thy part.” That message went like electricity to my heart. I felt that that stone was speaking to me. It changed me. I knew at that instant that I had a part to play not only on that dancing tour but throughout my life and that it was very important to “act well” my part.¹⁴

What does the Lord expect us to do? He expects us to play our part in the final scenes prior to His coming. He expects us to prove ourselves worthy to return and live with Him. He expects us to become like Him. Follow Joseph’s pattern. I love the words in the hymn the choir just sang: “But undaunted, still he trusted / In his Heav’nly Father’s care.”¹⁵ To be *undaunted* means unshaken in purpose, resolutely courageous. Joseph described himself as a “disturber” of the adversary’s kingdom. He said, “It seems as though the adversary was aware ... that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom.”¹⁶ I have written in the margin of my scriptures, “*Be a disturber!*” Trust in your Heavenly Father’s care.

Each of us will play an important part if we follow the pattern established by Joseph Smith. The Lord strengthened Joseph Smith for his divine mission. He will strengthen you for yours. He may even send His holy angels to tutor you. Now the challenge is this: Will you be in such a place that angels can enter? Will you be still

enough to hear? Will you be undaunted and trust?

We are living at a time when the fulness of the gospel has been restored to the earth through the Lord's prophet, Joseph Smith. We are living in a time when we have the Book of Mormon to guide us. We are living in a time when we have a living prophet, the priesthood power on the earth, and the sealing power to bind families together for eternity in holy temples. Truly these are days "never to be forgotten!"¹⁷

It is my prayer that each one of us might be firm in our faith, that we might follow the pattern Joseph Smith established for us to gain a testimony. I also pray that each of us will worthily represent the Savior as we take upon ourselves His name. He has promised: "As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, ... so shall your ... name remain."¹⁸

My testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ has served as a guide and an anchor in my life. I am grateful to stand before you today and say with all the energy of my heart, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet."¹⁹ I am so grateful for the integrity of a 14-year-old young man who prayed for an answer to his questions and then remained true to the knowledge he received.

Each of you has a part to play in this great and marvelous work. The Savior will help you. He will lead you by the hand.²⁰ He knows you by name. I so testify, in the sacred *name* of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. JS—H 1:14, 17; emphasis added.

2. Enos 1:5; emphasis added.

3. Moses 1:6; emphasis added.

4. See Bible Dictionary, "Israel," 708.

5. D&C 25:1; emphasis added.

6. "Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2004, 46.

7. "Receiving a Testimony of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ," *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 31.

8. See Young Women theme.

9. “The Other Prodigal,” *Liahona*, July 2002, 72; *Ensign*, May 2002, 64.

10. JS—H 1:8, 10.

11. JS—H 1:13.

12. JS—H 1:25.

13. JS—H 1:33; emphasis added.

14. President David O. McKay was motivated by this same stone when he was on his mission in Scotland. The stone was later purchased and placed in the front yard of the mission home in Scotland so it would be a source of inspiration for the missionaries. It is now in the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, Utah.

15. “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer,” *Hymns*, no. 26.

16. JS—H 1:20.

17. JS—H 1:71, note.

18. Isa. 66:22.

19. *Hymns*, no. 19.

20. See D&C 112:10; Abr. 1:18.

