

# Continuing Revelation

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Human judgment and logical thinking will not be enough to get answers to the questions that matter most in life. We need revelation from God.

My hope for us today is that we may all feel love and light from God. There are many listening today who feel a pressing need for that blessing of personal revelation from our loving Heavenly Father.

For mission presidents, it may be a pleading prayer to know how to encourage a struggling missionary. For a father or a mother in a war-ravaged place in the world, it will be a desperate need to know whether to move their family to safety or whether to stay where they are. Hundreds of stake presidents and bishops are praying today to know how to help the Lord rescue a lost sheep. And for a prophet, it will be to know what the Lord would have him speak to the Church and to a world in turmoil.

We all know that human judgment and logical thinking will not be enough to get answers to the questions that matter most in life. We need revelation from God. And we will need not just one revelation in a time of stress, but we need a constantly renewed stream. We need not just one flash of light and comfort, but we need the continuing blessing of communication with God.

The very existence of the Church stems from a young boy knowing that was true. Young Joseph Smith knew that he could not of himself know which church to join. So he asked of God, as the book of James told him he could. God the Father and His Beloved Son appeared in a grove of trees. They answered the question that was beyond Joseph's power to resolve.

Not only was he then called of God to establish the true Church of Jesus Christ, but with it was restored the power to invoke the Holy Ghost so that revelation from God could be continuous.

President Boyd K. Packer described that identifying mark of the true Church this way: "Revelation continues in the Church: the prophet receiving it for the Church; the president for his stake, his mission, or his quorum; the bishop for his ward; the father for his family; the individual for himself."<sup>1</sup>

That wonderful process of revelation begins, ends, and continues as we receive personal revelation. Let's take the great Nephi, son of Lehi, as our example. His father had a dream. Others in Nephi's family viewed Lehi's dream as evidence of mental confusion. The dream included a command from God for Lehi's sons to run the terrible risk of returning to Jerusalem for the plates which contained the word of God so that they could take them on their journey to the promised land.

We often quote Nephi's brave declaration when his father asked them to go back to Jerusalem. You know the words:

“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded.”<sup>2</sup>

When Lehi heard Nephi speak those words, the scripture says that “he was exceedingly glad.”<sup>3</sup> He was glad because he knew that Nephi had been blessed with confirming revelation that his father’s dream was a true communication from God. Nephi did not say, “I will go and do what my father told me to do.” Rather he said, “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded.”

From your experience in your own families, you also know why Lehi was “exceedingly glad.” His joy came from knowing that Nephi had received confirming revelation.

Many parents have set family rules for when a teenage child is to return home at night. But think of the joy when the parent learns, as one did just a few weeks ago, that a child who had recently left home not only set a curfew for herself but also kept the Sabbath just as she had been taught at home. The revelation of a parent has its lasting effect in the personal revelation that continues in the child.

My mother must have understood that principle of revelation. As a young man, I would close the back door very quietly when I came home late in the evening. I had to pass my mother’s bedroom on the way to mine. However quietly I tiptoed, just as I got to her half-opened door, I would hear my name, ever so quietly, “Hal. Come in for a moment.”

I would go in and sit on the edge of her bed. The room would be dark. If you had listened, you would have thought it was only friendly talk about life. But to this day, what she said comes back to my mind with the same power I feel when I read the transcript of my patriarchal blessing.

I don’t know what she was asking for in prayer as she waited for me those nights. I suppose it would have been in part for my safety. But I am sure that she prayed as a patriarch does before he gives a blessing. He prays that his words will come to the recipient as the words of God, not his. My mother’s prayers for that blessing were answered on my head. She is in the spirit world and has been for more than 40 years. I am sure she has been exceedingly glad that I was blessed, as she asked, to hear in her counsel the commands of God. And I have tried to go and do as she hoped I would.

I have seen that same miracle of continuing revelation in stake presidents and bishops in the Church. And, as is true in the revelation to family leaders, the value of the revelation depends on those who are being led receiving confirming revelation.

I saw that miracle of revelation in the aftermath of the breaking of the Teton Dam in Idaho in 1976. Many of you know the story of what happened. But the example of continuing revelation that was passed through a stake president could bless all of us in the days ahead.

Thousands of people were evacuated as their homes were destroyed. Directing the relief efforts fell to a local stake president, a farmer. I was in a classroom at Ricks College just a few days after the disaster. A leader from the federal disaster agency had arrived. He and his chief assistants came to the large room where the stake president had assembled bishops and even some ministers of other local religions. I was there because many of the survivors were being cared for and housed on the campus of the college where I was the president.

As the meeting began, the representative from the federal disaster agency stood and began to say with the voice of authority what needed to be done. After he listed each of the five or six tasks he said were essential, the stake

president responded quietly, “We’ve already done that.”

After a few minutes, the man from the federal disaster agency said, “I think that I will just sit down and watch for a while.” He and his deputies then listened as bishops and elders quorum presidents reported what they had done. They described what direction they had received and followed from their leaders. They talked as well about what they had been inspired to do as they carried out the instructions to find families and to help them. It was late that day. They were all too tired to show much emotion except their love of the people.

The stake president gave a few final directions to the bishops, and then he announced a time for the next report meeting, early the following morning.

The next morning the leader of the federal team arrived 20 minutes before the report and assignment meeting was scheduled to begin. I stood nearby. I heard him say quietly to the stake president, “President, what would you like me and the members of my team to do?”

What that man saw I have seen in times of distress and testing all over the world. President Packer was right. Continuing revelation comes to stake presidents to lift them above their own wisdom and capacities. And, beyond that, the Lord gives to those whom the president leads a confirming witness that his commands come from God through the Holy Ghost to an imperfect human being.

I have been blessed to be called to follow inspired leaders much of my life. As a very young man I was called to be counselor to an elders quorum president. I have in turn been counselor to two district presidents and to a Presiding Bishop of the Church, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and a counselor to two Presidents of the Church. I have seen the revelation given to them and then confirmed to their followers.

That personal revelation of acceptance, for which we all long, does not come easily, nor does it come simply for the asking. The Lord gave this standard for the capacity to receive such witnesses from God. It is a guide for anyone seeking personal revelation, as we all must.

“Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion.”<sup>4</sup>

From that I draw counsel for us all. Don’t take lightly the feeling you get of love for the prophet of God. Wherever I go in the Church, whoever the prophet is at the time, members will ask, “When you get back to Church headquarters, will you please tell the prophet how much we love him?”

That is far more than hero worship or the feelings we sometimes have of admiring heroic figures. It is a gift from God. With it you will receive more easily the gift of confirming revelation when he speaks in his office as the Lord’s prophet. The love you feel is the love the Lord has for whoever is His spokesman.

That is not easy to feel continually because the Lord often asks His prophets to give counsel that is hard for people to accept. The enemy of our souls will try to lead us to take offense and to doubt the prophet’s calling from God.

I have seen how the Holy Ghost can touch a softened heart to protect a humble disciple of Jesus Christ with confirming revelation.

The prophet sent me to confer the sacred sealing power on a man in a small city far away. Only the prophet of God has the keys to decide who is to receive the sacred power which was given by the Lord to Peter, the senior Apostle. I had received that same sealing power, but only by direction of the President of the Church could I confer it on another.

So, in a room in a chapel far from Salt Lake, I laid my hands on the head of a man chosen by the prophet to receive the sealing power. His hands showed the signs of a lifetime of tilling the soil for a meager living. His tiny wife sat near him. She also showed signs of years of hard labor alongside her husband.

I spoke the words given by the prophet: “Under delegation of authority and responsibility from,” and then the name of the prophet, “who holds all the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time, I confer the sealing power on,” and I gave the name of the man and then the name of the temple where he would serve as a sealer.

Tears flowed down his cheeks. I saw that his wife was also weeping. I waited for them to compose themselves. She stood up and stepped toward me. She looked up and then said timidly that she was happy but also sad. She said that she had so loved going to the temple with her husband but that now she felt that she should not go with him because God had chosen him for so glorious and sacred a trust. Then she said that her feeling of being inadequate to be his temple companion came because she could neither read nor write.

I assured her that her husband would be honored by her company in the temple because of her great spiritual power. As well as I could with my small grasp of her language, I told her that God had revealed things to her beyond all earthly education.

She knew by the gift of the Spirit that God had given, through His prophet, a supernal trust to the husband she loved. She knew for herself that the keys to give that sealing power were held by a man she had never seen and yet knew for herself was the living prophet of God. She knew, without having to be told by any living witness, that the prophet had prayed over the name of her husband. She knew for herself that God had made the call.

She also knew that the ordinances her husband would perform would bind people for eternity in the celestial kingdom. She had confirmed to her mind and heart that the promise the Lord made to Peter still continued in the Church: “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.”<sup>5</sup> She knew that for herself, by revelation, from God.

Let us go back to our starting point. “Revelation continues in the Church: the prophet receiving it for the Church; the president for his stake, his mission, or his quorum; the bishop for his ward; the father for his family; the individual for himself.”<sup>6</sup>

I bear you my witness that is true. Heavenly Father hears your prayers. He loves you. He knows your name. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and our Redeemer. He loves you beyond your ability to comprehend.

God pours out revelation, through the Holy Ghost, on His children. He speaks to His prophet on the earth, who today is Thomas S. Monson. I witness that he holds and exercises all the keys of the priesthood on earth.

As you listen in this conference to the words of those God has called to speak for Him, I pray that you will receive the confirming revelation you need to find your way on the journey home again, to dwell with Him in a sealed family forever. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Boyd K. Packer, "We Believe All That God Has Revealed," *Ensign*, May 1974, 95.

2. 1 Nephi 3:7.

3. 1 Nephi 3:8.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.

5. Matthew 16:19.

6. Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, May 1974, 95.