

God has made possible for you and me this blessing, a change in our very natures: "And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God" (Moroni 8:26).

I pray that we may make the simple choices which will lead us there to dwell with Him. And I pray that we will remember and be grateful for the gift of the Atonement and the gift of the Holy

Ghost, which make that journey possible. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "Joy in the Morning" without announcement.

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### President Hinckley

Bishop Henry B. Eyring addressed us, after which the Mormon Youth Chorus sang "Joy in the Morning."

It will now be our pleasure to listen to Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve.

## Elder Boyd K. Packer

### Personal revelation

Following baptism, one is confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in a brief ordinance during which there is conferred the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thereafter, all through life, men, women, and even little children receive the right to inspired direction to guide them in their lives—personal revelation! (see Alma 32:23).

The Holy Ghost communicates with the spirit through the mind more than through the physical senses. This guidance comes as thoughts, as feelings, through impressions and promptings. It is not always easy to describe inspiration. The scriptures teach us that we may "feel" the words of spiritual communication more than hear them, and see with spiritual rather than with mortal eyes (see 1 Nephi 17:45).

The patterns of revelation are not dramatic. The voice of inspiration is a still voice, a small voice. There need be no trance, no sanctimonious declaration. It is quieter and simpler than that.

The Book of Mormon teaches that "angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 32:3) and records that even though an angel spoke to some, they "were past *feeling*, that [they] could not *feel* his words" (1 Nephi 17:45; italics added).

If you have experienced inspiration, you understand.

### Revelation and the Word of Wisdom

Our physical body is the instrument of our spirit. In that marvelous revelation the Word of Wisdom, we are told how to keep our bodies free from impurities which might dull, even destroy, those delicate physical senses which have to do with spiritual communication.

The Word of Wisdom is a key to individual revelation. It was given as "a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints" (D&C 89:3).

The promise is that those who obey will receive "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19). If we abuse our body with habit-forming substances or misuse prescription drugs, we draw curtains which close off the light of spiritual communication.

Narcotic addiction serves the design of the prince of darkness, for it disrupts the channel to the Holy Spirit of Truth. At present the adversary has an unfair advantage. Addiction has the capacity to disconnect the human will and nullify moral agency. It can rob one of the power to decide. Agency is too fundamental a doctrine to be left in such jeopardy.

It is my conviction, and my constant prayer, that there will come through research, through inspiration to scientists if need be, the power to conquer narcotic addiction through the same means which cause it.

I plead with all of you to pray earnestly that somewhere, somehow, the way will be discovered to erase addiction in the human body.

It is not just human suffering, even human life, which is at risk; it is all of the personal and social and political and spiritual freedoms for which humanity has struggled for ages. At risk is all that was purchased by the blood of martyrs. Moral agency itself is in jeopardy! If we all pray fervently, the Lord will surely help us. And with those prayers, teach your children to obey the Word of Wisdom. It is their armor and will protect them from habits which obstruct the channels of personal revelation.

### Spiritual things are like leavening

Things of the Spirit need not—indeed, should not—require our uninterrupted time and attention. Ordinary work-a-day things occupy most of our attention. And that is as it should be. We are mortal beings living in this physical world.

Spiritual things are like leavening. By measure they may be very small, but by influence they affect all that we do. Continuing revelation is fundamental to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I assure you that revelation attends our prophet President and those ordained as Apostles, as prophets, seers, and revelators. But revelation is not limited to them. The Lord desires that “every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world” (D&C 1:20).

### Promptings from evil sources

Not all inspiration comes from God (see D&C 46:7). The evil one has the power to tap into those channels of revelation and send conflicting signals which can mislead and confuse us. There are

promptings from evil sources which are so carefully counterfeited as to deceive even the very elect (see Matthew 24:24).

Nevertheless, we can learn to discern these spirits. Even with every member having the right to revelation, the Church can be maintained as a house of order.

### Revelation and order

Revelation comes in an orderly way in the Church. We are entitled to personal revelation. However, unless we are set apart to some presiding office, we will not receive revelations concerning what others should do.

Revelation in the Church comes to those who have been properly called, sustained, ordained, or set apart. A bishop, for instance, will not receive any revelation concerning a neighboring ward, because that is out of his jurisdiction.

Occasionally someone will claim to have received authority to teach and bless without having been called and set apart. Less than a year after the Church was organized (February 1831), a revelation was received which the Prophet specified “embrac[ed] the law of the church.” It includes this verse:

“It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and *it is known to the church that he has authority* and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11; italics added).

That is why the process of sustaining those called to office is so carefully protected in the Church—that all might know who has authority to teach and to bless.

An unusual spiritual experience should not be regarded as a personal call to direct others. It is my conviction that experiences of a special, sacred nature are individual and should be kept to oneself.

Few things disturb the channels of revelation quite so effectively as those people who are misled and think themselves to be chosen to instruct others when they are not chosen.

Others, fearing they also might go astray, then hold back and do not seek the source of divine revelation. Obedience to constituted priesthood authority will protect us from going astray.

### Revelation and change

There are those within the Church who are disturbed when changes are made with which they disagree or when changes they propose are not made. They point to these as evidence that the leaders are not inspired.

They write and speak to convince others that the doctrines and decisions of the Brethren are not given through inspiration.

Two things characterize them: they are always irritated by the word *obedience*, and always they question revelation. It has always been so. Helaman described those who "began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face" (Helaman 4:23). "They were left in their own strength" (4:13), and "the Spirit of the Lord did no more preserve them; yea, it had withdrawn from them" (4:24).

Changes in organization or procedures are a testimony that revelation is ongoing. While doctrines remain fixed, the methods or procedures do not.

### Changes in the scriptures

For instance, when the most recent editions of the scriptures were published, many corrections were made on the basis of original or printer's manuscripts, some of which had not previously been available. For instance, in Alma chapter 16, verse 5, the word *whether* had appeared. The original manuscript for that verse does not exist. However, when we found the printer's copy, we saw that the Prophet Joseph Smith had changed the word to *whither*. *Whether* means "if"; *whither* means "where." The next verse verifies *whither* to be correct.

Another example: in Alma chapter 32, verse 30, the words "sprouteth and

beginneth to grow" occurred three times. An obvious typesetting error left one of them out. In the 1981 edition, thirty-five words were restored. It now conforms to the original text.

There were many such changes. None altered the doctrine. Each change, however small in detail, was carefully and prayerfully considered and approved by the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in a meeting in the temple.

### Guidance through authorized servants

All such matters are determined that way. The Lord established that process when He gave revelations relating to temple ordinances.

In 1841 the Saints were commanded to build a temple in Nauvoo in which to perform baptisms for the dead, and they were given time to do it. They would be rejected if they failed. The Lord said:

"I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me; . . .

"And if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God" (D&C 124:31-32).

The Saints did not fail. However impossible it may have seemed to them, given the terrible opposition they faced, the Lord promised to guide them through His appointed servants:

"If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place.

"But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest" (D&C 124:45-46; italics added).

Later, speaking on the same subject of temple ordinances, the Lord affirmed again that He will reveal His will to His authorized servants:

"For him to whom these keys are given there is no difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of facts in relation to the salvation of the children of men" (D&C 128:11).

### Changes come through revelation

That principle of revelation has been with the Church ever since. Those who hold the keys have obtained knowledge of what to do. When changes have come, they have come through that process. The Lord does as He said He would do:

"I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good" (D&C 56:4).

"I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing" (D&C 58:32).

He told the Saints that when enemies prevented them from keeping a commandment, He would no longer require them to do so. And He said, "The iniquity and transgression of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hindered my work, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not" (D&C 124:50).

The gospel plan was revealed line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. And it goes on: "We believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

There will be changes made in the future as in the past. Whether the Brethren make changes or resist them depends entirely upon the instructions they receive through the channels of revelation which were established in the beginning.

The doctrines will remain fixed, eternal; the organization, programs, and procedures will be altered as directed by Him whose church this is.

### Revelation continues today

We who have been called to lead the Church are ordinary men and women with ordinary capacities struggling to administer a church which grows at such a pace as to astound even those who watch it closely. Some are disposed to find fault with us; surely that is easy for them to do. But they do not examine us more search-

ingly than we examine ourselves. A call to lead is not an exemption from the challenges of life. We seek for inspiration in the same way that you do, and we must obey the same laws which apply to every member of the Church.

We are sorry for our inadequacies, sorry we are not better than we are. We can feel, as you can see, the effect of the aging process as it imposes limitations upon His leaders before your very eyes.

But this we know. There are councils and counselors and quorums to counter-balance the foibles and frailties of man. The Lord organized His church to provide for mortal men to work as mortal men, and yet He assured that the spirit of revelation would guide in all that we do in His name.

And in the end, what is given comes because the Lord has spoken it, "whether by [His] own voice or by the voice of [His] servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). We know His voice when He speaks.

Revelation continues with us today. The promptings of the Spirit, the dreams, the visions and the visitations, and the ministering of angels all are with us now. And the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost "is a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path" (Psalm 119:105). Of that I bear witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "True to the Faith" without announcement.

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### President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer has addressed us, and the Mormon Youth Chorus has sung "True to the Faith."

It will now be our pleasure to listen to President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, who will be our concluding speaker for this session.