

# The Holy Ghost

By Elder Robert D. Hales  
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

I express my love and gratitude to Heavenly Father for the gift of the Holy Ghost, through which He reveals His will and sustains us.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I speak today as a servant of the Lord and also as a great-grandfather. To you and to my beloved posterity, I teach and bear testimony of the remarkable gift of the Holy Ghost.

I begin by acknowledging the Light of Christ, which is given to “every man [and woman] that cometh into the world.”<sup>1</sup> All of us benefit from this holy light. It is “in all and through all things,”<sup>2</sup> and it allows us to distinguish right from wrong.<sup>3</sup>

But the Holy Ghost is different from the Light of Christ. He is the third member of the Godhead, a distinct personage of spirit with sacred responsibilities, and one in purpose with the Father and the Son.<sup>4</sup>

As members of the Church, we may experience the companionship of the Holy Ghost continually. Through the restored priesthood of God, we are baptized by immersion for the remission of our sins and then confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In this ordinance, we are given the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands of the holders of the priesthood.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, we can receive and retain the companionship of the Holy Ghost by always remembering the Savior, keeping His commandments, repenting of our sins, and worthily partaking of the sacrament on the Sabbath day.

The Holy Ghost provides personal revelation to help us make major life decisions about such things as education, missions, careers, marriage, children, where we will live with our families, and so on. In these matters, Heavenly Father expects us to use our agency, study the situation out in our minds according to gospel principles, and bring a decision to Him in prayer.

Personal revelation is essential, but it is only one part of the work of the Holy Ghost. As the scriptures attest, the Holy Ghost also testifies of the Savior and God the Father.<sup>6</sup> He teaches us “the peaceable things of the kingdom”<sup>7</sup> and

God the Father. He teaches us the peaceable things of the kingdom and causes us to “abound in hope.”<sup>8</sup> He “leadeth [us] to do good ... [and] to judge righteously.”<sup>9</sup> He gives “to every man [and woman] ... a [spiritual] gift ... that all may be profited thereby.”<sup>10</sup> He “giveth [us] knowledge”<sup>11</sup> and “bring[s] all things to [our] remembrance.”<sup>12</sup> Through the Holy Ghost, we “may be sanctified”<sup>13</sup> and receive “a remission of [our] sins.”<sup>14</sup> He is the “Comforter,” the same who was “promised unto [the Savior’s] disciples.”<sup>15</sup>

I remind all of us that the Holy Ghost is not given to control us. Some of us unwisely seek the Holy Ghost’s direction on every minor decision in our lives. This trivializes His sacred role. The Holy Ghost honors the principle of agency. He speaks to our minds and our hearts gently about many matters of consequence.<sup>16</sup>

Each of us may feel the influence of the Holy Ghost differently. His promptings will be felt in different degrees of intensity according to our individual needs and circumstances.

In these latter days, we affirm that only the prophet may receive revelation through the Holy Ghost for the entire Church. Some forget this, as when Aaron and Miriam tried to convince Moses to agree with them. But the Lord taught them and us. He said:

“If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him. ...

“With him will I speak mouth to mouth.”<sup>17</sup>

Sometimes the adversary tempts us with false ideas that we may confuse with the Holy Ghost. I testify that faithfulness in obeying the commandments and keeping our covenants will protect us from being deceived. Through the Holy Ghost, we will be able to discern those false prophets who teach for doctrine the commandments of men.<sup>18</sup>

As we receive the inspiration of the Holy Ghost for ourselves, it is wise to remember that we cannot receive revelation for others. I know of a young man who told a young woman, “I’ve had a dream that you are to be my wife.” The young woman pondered that statement and then responded, “When I have the same dream, I’ll come and talk to you.”

All of us may be tempted to let our personal desires overcome the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Joseph Smith pleaded with Heavenly Father for permission to lend the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon to Martin Harris. Joseph thought it was a good idea. At first the Holy Ghost did not give him confirming feelings. Eventually, the Lord allowed Joseph to lend the pages anyway. Martin Harris lost them. For a season, the Lord withdrew the Prophet’s

anyway. Martin Harris lost them. For a season, the Lord withdrew the prophet's gift to translate, and Joseph learned a painful but valuable lesson that shaped the remainder of his service.

The Holy Ghost is central to the Restoration. Regarding his boyhood reading of James 1:5, the Prophet Joseph recounted, "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine."<sup>19</sup> The power described by Joseph Smith was the influence of the Holy Ghost. As a result, Joseph went into a grove of trees near his home and knelt down to ask of God. The First Vision that followed was truly momentous and magnificent. But the path to that in-person visitation of the Father and the Son began with a prompting from the Holy Ghost to pray.

The revealed truths of the restored gospel came through the pattern of seeking in prayer and then receiving and following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Consider these examples: translating the Book of Mormon; the restoration of the priesthood and its ordinances, beginning with baptism; and the organization of the Church—to name a few. I testify that today, revelation from the Lord to the First Presidency and the Twelve comes according to this same sacred pattern. This is the same sacred pattern that allows personal revelation.

We pay tribute to all who have followed the Holy Ghost to receive the restored gospel, beginning with Joseph Smith's own family members. When young Joseph told his father about Moroni's visit, his father received a confirming witness for himself. Immediately, Joseph was released from his farm responsibilities and encouraged to follow the angel's direction.

Let us, as parents and leaders, do likewise. Let us encourage our children and others to follow the direction of the Holy Ghost. In doing so, let us follow the example of the Holy Ghost ourselves, leading through gentleness, meekness, kindness, long-suffering, and love unfeigned.<sup>20</sup>

The Holy Ghost is a medium for God's work in families and throughout the Church. With that understanding, may I share a few personal examples of the Holy Ghost in my own life and Church service? I offer them as a personal witness that the Holy Ghost blesses us all.

Many years ago, Sister Hales and I planned to host some of my work associates at a special dinner in our home. On my way home from the office, I had an impression to stop at the house of a widow whom I home taught. When I knocked on the sister's door, she said, "I have been praying for you to come." Where did that impression come from? The Holy Ghost.

Once, following a serious illness, I presided at a stake conference. To conserve

my energy, I planned to leave the chapel immediately after the priesthood leadership session. However, following the benediction, the Holy Ghost said to me, "Where are you going?" I was inspired to shake hands with everyone as they left the room. As one young elder stepped forward, I was prompted to give him a special message. He was looking down, and I waited for his eyes to come up and meet mine, and I was able to say, "Pray to Heavenly Father, listen to the Holy Ghost, follow the promptings you are given, and all will be well in your life." Later the stake president told me that the young man had just returned early from his mission. The stake president, acting on a clear impression, had promised the young man's father that if he brought his son to the priesthood meeting, Elder Hales would speak with him. Why did I stop to shake everyone's hand? Why did I pause to talk to this special young man? What was the source of my counsel? It's simple: the Holy Ghost.

In early 2005, I was guided to prepare a general conference message about senior missionary couples. Following the conference, a brother recounted: "As we listened to conference, ... immediately the Spirit of the Lord touched my very soul. ... There was no mistaking the message for me and for my sweetheart. We were to serve a mission, and the time was now. When I ... looked at my wife, I realized that she had received the very same impressions from the Spirit."<sup>21</sup> What had brought this strong simultaneous response? The Holy Ghost.

To my own posterity and all within the sound of my voice, I offer my testimony of the personal revelation and constant flow of daily guidance, caution, encouragement, strength, spiritual cleansing, comfort, and peace that have come to our family through the Holy Ghost. Through the Holy Ghost, we experience "the multitude of [Christ's] tender mercies"<sup>22</sup> and miracles that do not cease.<sup>23</sup>

I bear my special witness that the Savior lives. I express my love and gratitude to Heavenly Father for the gift of the Holy Ghost, through which He reveals His will and sustains us in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.