

Essential Truths—Our Need to Act

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The First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith brought forth knowledge and truth that are essential to our happiness in this life and to our exaltation.

When I was about seven years old, I asked my mother, “When you and I die and go to heaven, will you still be my mother?” She was not expecting such a question. But answering to the best of her knowledge, she said, “No, in heaven we are going to be brothers and sisters. I will not be your mother.” That was not the answer I was hoping for.

Sometime after that short interaction, two young men arrived at the gate of our home. By some miracle, my father allowed them to come in. They said they were missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These elders, as we learned to call them, started to teach our family. I vividly remember our feelings of happiness and excitement every time they came to our home. They told us that a young man had gone to a grove to ask God which church was true and that he saw God and Jesus Christ.¹ The elders showed us an illustration of that vision, and when I saw it, I knew that Joseph Smith had indeed seen God the Father and Jesus Christ. The missionaries said that because of this vision, the true Church of Jesus Christ was again upon the earth.²

The missionaries also taught us God’s plan of happiness and answered our family’s questions about religion. They taught us that families truly can be together after this life as father, mother, and sons and daughters.

Our family was baptized. The road to changing old habits, giving up traditions, and becoming active members of the Church was at times bumpy. But because of the mercy and love of God and with the help of many leaders and members, we made it through the first challenging years.

Millions who have already joined the Church, as well as the many who are being converted and baptized each week, have gained a testimony of the First Vision. The Holy Ghost can repeat this witness often to each one of us as we strive to live the simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith brought forth additional knowledge and truth that are essential to our happiness in this life and our exaltation in the presence

of God. I will mention three of the truths we gained and must act on because a young boy knelt in sincere prayer.

God Calls Prophets to Lead and Guide Us

An essential truth we learn from the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith is that God calls prophets,³ seers, and revelators to instruct, guide, warn, and lead us.⁴ These men are God's mouthpieces on earth,⁵ with the authority to speak and act in the name of the Lord.⁶ By strictly following their counsel, we will be protected and receive choice blessings in our journey on this earth.

While studying at Brigham Young University as a young, single returned missionary, I attended a priesthood session of general conference in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. President Ezra Taft Benson, then-President of the Church, urged every returned missionary to take marriage seriously and make it a top priority in his life.⁷ After the session, I knew I had been called to repentance and needed to act on the prophet's counsel.

Thus, I decided to go to my home country, Brazil, to find a wife. Before leaving for Brazil on a two-month internship, I called my mom and some friends on the phone and came up with a list of about 10 young women—each of them a potential wife.

While in Brazil, after much pondering and prayer, I met, dated, got engaged to, and set a date to marry one of the young women on the list. It was not record-breaking time for students in Provo, Utah, to date and become engaged, but it was fast by Brazil standards.

A few months later, I married Elaine. She is the love of my life and a choice blessing.

I am not suggesting that everyone should make a similar list, but I am suggesting—maybe more than suggesting—that we always act when our living prophets speak.

God's prophet today is President Thomas S. Monson, and we will be blessed by following his counsel with exactness.

The Knowledge of the True Nature of God

Another truth we learn because of the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith is the true nature of God. Just imagine how blessed we are to know that God is a being with a body of flesh and bones as tangible as ours,⁸ that we can worship a God who is real, whom we can understand, and who has shown and revealed Himself and His Son to His prophets—both prophets of old and prophets in these latter days.⁹ He is a God who hears and answers our prayers;¹⁰ a God who watches us from heaven above¹¹ and is constantly concerned about our spiritual and temporal well-being; a God who gives us agency to decide for ourselves to follow Him and obey His commandments

without coercion;¹² a God who gives us blessings and allows us to face trials so we can grow and become like Him.

He is a loving God who provided a plan through which we can enjoy happiness in this life and in eternity.

Jesus Christ Is Our Savior

From the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith, we received knowledge of the reality and sacred mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the cornerstone of our religion.

Because death was introduced into the world, as surely as we live now, we will all die one day. One of the effects of death would be the permanent loss of our physical body; we wouldn't be able to do anything to reclaim it. In addition, because we all sin during our journey here on earth, we would never be able to return to our Heavenly Father's presence.

Can you imagine the consequences of being deprived of God's presence and never again having a body?

A Savior and Redeemer was needed to free us from death and sin. Under Heavenly Father's direction, Jesus Christ came to earth, suffered, died on the cross, and was resurrected so that we too can be resurrected and, with sincere repentance and the making and keeping of sacred covenants, be once again in the presence of God.

Jacob explained, "O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit."¹³

Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Lawgiver, the Holy One of Israel, our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer, our King, our All.

May we all continue to act upon these essential truths and knowledge, offering our obedience to God and His Beloved Son. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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