



Ask, Seek, and Knock

By Milton Camargo

First Counselor in the Sunday School General Presidency

An important part of Heavenly Father’s plan is the opportunity to communicate with Him anytime we want.

Four months ago, in my study of the scriptures, I was reading about Alma’s mission in Ammonihah when I came across this suggestion in *Come, Follow Me*: “As you read about the great blessings God gave the people of Nephi (see Alma 9:19–23), ponder the great blessings He has given you.”¹ I decided to make a list of God’s blessings to me and record it in my digital version of the manual. In a matter of minutes, I had listed 16 blessings.

Foremost among them were the great blessings of the Savior’s mercy and atoning sacrifice on my behalf. I also wrote of the blessing I had to represent the Savior as a young missionary in Portugal and, later, with my loving eternal companion, Patricia, in the Brazil Porto Alegre South Mission, where we served with 522 powerful and wonderful missionaries. Speaking of Patricia, many of the blessings I recorded that day are blessings we have enjoyed together throughout our 40 years of marriage—including our sealing in the São Paulo Brazil Temple, our three wonderful children, their spouses, and our 13 grandchildren.

My thoughts turned also to my righteous parents, who raised me in the principles of the gospel. I was reminded in particular of a moment when my loving mother knelt with me to pray by my bedside when I was around 10 years of age. She must have felt that if my prayers were going to reach my Father in Heaven, they would need to improve. So she said, “I will pray first, and after my prayer, you pray.” She continued this pattern for many nights, until she was confident I had learned by principle and by practice how to speak to Heavenly Father. I will be forever grateful to her for teaching me to pray, for I learned that my Heavenly Father hears my prayers and answers them.

In fact, that was another blessing that I included in my list—the gift to be able to hear and learn the will of the Lord. An important part of Heavenly Father’s plan is the opportunity to communicate with Him anytime we want.

An Invitation from the Lord

When the Savior visited the Americas after His Resurrection, He repeated an invitation that He had given to His disciples in Galilee. He said:

“Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

“For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (3 Nephi 14:7–8; see also Matthew 7:7–8).

Our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has given a similar invitation in our day. He said: “Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will ‘grow into the principle of revelation.’”²

President Nelson added, “In coming days, it will not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost.”³

Why is revelation so essential to our spiritual survival? Because the world can be confusing and noisy, full of deception and distractions. Communication with our Father in Heaven enables us to sort through what is true and what is false, what is relevant to the Lord’s plan for us and what is not. The world can also be harsh and heartbreaking. But as we open our hearts in prayer, we will feel the comfort that comes from our Father in Heaven and the assurance that He loves and values us.

Ask

The Lord said that “every one that asketh, receiveth.” Asking seems simple, and yet it is powerful because it reveals our desires and our faith. However, it takes time and patience to learn to understand the voice of the Lord. We pay attention to thoughts and feelings that come to our minds and hearts, and we write them down, as our prophet has counseled us to do. Recording our impressions is an important part of receiving. It helps us recall, review, and refeel what the Lord is teaching us.

Recently a loved one said to me, “I believe personal revelation to be true. I believe the Holy Ghost will show me all things I should do.⁴ It is easy to believe when I feel my bosom burn with undoubting conviction.⁵ But how can I have the Holy Ghost always speak to me at this level?”

To my loved one and to all of you, I would say that I too would like to constantly feel those strong impressions from the Spirit and always see clearly the path to follow. But I don’t. However, what we might feel more often is the still, small voice of the Lord whispering to our mind and heart: “I am here. I love you. Go on; do your best. I will support you.” We don’t always need to know everything or see everything.

The still, small voice is reaffirming, encouraging, and comforting—and many times that’s just what we need for the day. The Holy Ghost is real, and His impressions are real—the big ones and the small ones.

Seek

The Lord went on to promise, “He that seeketh, findeth.” Seeking implies mental and spiritual effort—pondering, testing, trying, and studying. We seek because we trust the Lord’s promises. “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). When we seek, we are humbly acknowledging that we still have much to learn, and the Lord will expand our understanding, preparing us to receive more. “For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; ... for unto him that receiveth I will give more” (2 Nephi 28:30).

Knock

Finally, the Lord said, “To him that knocketh, it shall be opened.” To knock is to act in faith. When we actively follow Him, the Lord opens the way before us. There is a beautiful hymn that teaches us to “wake up and do something more than dream of [our] mansion above. Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure, a blessing of duty and love.”⁶ Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve recently explained that revelation often comes while we are in the act of doing good. He said: “As we try to reach out in service to those around us, I think the Lord gives us an extra measure of His love for them and therefore for us. I think we hear His

voice—we feel Him in a different way—as we pray to help those around us because that’s one of the prayers that He most wants to answer.”⁷

Alma’s Example

That simple suggestion in *Come, Follow Me* to think about my blessings brought a sweet spirit and some unexpected spiritual insights. As I continued reading about Alma and his ministry in Ammonihah, I discovered that Alma provides a good example of what it means to ask, seek, and knock. We read that “Alma labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer, that he would pour out his Spirit upon the people.” That prayer, however, was not answered the way he hoped, and Alma was cast out of the city. “Weighed down with sorrow,” Alma was about to give up, when an angel delivered this message: “Blessed art thou, Alma; therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice, for thou hast great cause to rejoice.” The angel then told him to return to Ammonihah and try again, and Alma “returned speedily.”⁸

What do we learn from Alma about asking, seeking, and knocking? We learn that prayer requires spiritual labor, and it does not always lead to the outcome we hope for. But when we feel discouraged or weighed down with sorrow, the Lord gives us comfort and strength in different ways. He may not answer all of our questions or solve all of our problems right away; rather, He encourages us to keep trying. If we then speedily align our plan with His plan, He will open the way for us, as He did for Alma.

It is my testimony that this is the dispensation of the fulness of the gospel. We can enjoy the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in our lives. We have the scriptures widely available to us. We are led by prophets who teach us the will of the Lord for the difficult times we live in. In addition, we have direct access to our own revelation so the Lord can comfort and guide us personally. As the angel said to Alma, we have “great cause to rejoice” (Alma 8:15). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.