

Revelation

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Author: Riddle, Chauncey C.

Receiving personal revelation is a vital and distinctive part of the LDS religious experience. Response to personal revelation is seen as the basis for true faith in Christ, and the strength of the Church consists of that faithful response by members to their own personal revelations. The purpose of both revelation and the response of faith is to assist the children of men to come to Christ and learn to love one another with that same pure love with which Christ loves them.

TYPES OF REVELATION. A dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a series of personal revelations from God. These revelations may be direct manifestations from God, as in the following typical cases:

1. theophanies (seeing God face-to-face), as in the first vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which came at the beginning of the present dispensation ([JS-H 1:15-20](#))
2. revealed knowledge from the Father that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" ([Matt. 16:13-17](#); see also [Spirit of Prophecy](#))
3. visitations of angelic persons, such as the appearance of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith ([JS-H 1:30-32](#))
4. revelations through the Urim and Thummim, by which means Joseph Smith translated the book of mormon
5. open visions, as when Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were shown the kingdoms of the hereafter (see [Doctrine and Covenants: Section 76](#))
6. physically hearing the voice of God, as is recorded in [3 Nephi 11](#)
7. receiving the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit, as in the experience of Elijah ([1 Kgs. 19](#));
8. receiving the gifts of the spirit ([D&C 46](#))
9. having a burning in the bosom as an indication of the will of God, as in the explanation given to Oliver Cowdery ([D&C 9:8](#))
10. dreams ([1 Ne. 8:2-32](#))
11. manifestations of the Light of Christ, by which all men know good from evil ([Alma 12:31-32](#); [D&C 84:46-48](#)).

Such direct manifestations of the mind and will of God are known as gifts and are contrasted with signs. Gifts always have a spiritual component, even when they have a physical aspect. Signs are physical manifestations of the power of God and are a form of revelation from God, though they may be counterfeited and misinterpreted. Signs may show that God is at work, but spiritual gifts are required to know how one should respond.

REVELATION TO THE CHURCH. In every dispensation, God appoints his prophet to guide his people. The prophet's purpose is not to be an intermediary between God and others, though a prophet must often do so. His purpose is, rather, to assist others to receive from God the personal revelation that he, the prophet, has taught God's truth, which will show the way to Christ.

The prophet as head of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and all other persons who preside in the Church, including General Authorities, stake presidents, bishops, general presidencies, and parents, may receive revelation for the benefit of those over whom they preside. These revelations can be passed on to the membership of the Church through conference and other talks and in personal counsel. But each individual is entitled to know by personal revelation that these messages given through presiding authorities are truly from the Savior himself. President Brigham Young expressed concern that the Latter-day Saints would "have so much confidence in their leaders" that they would "settle down in a state of blind self-security," abandoning the responsibility to obtain their own revelation: "Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not" (*JD* 9:150).

Presiding quorums in the Church are entitled to revelation for the Church on matters of doctrine, policies, programs, callings, and disciplinary actions, as each might be appropriate to a given quorum. Decisions of these quorums are to be made only by the personal, individual revelation of God to each member of that quorum. "And every decision made by either of these quorums must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other" ([D&C 107:27](#)).

The scriptures contain the inspired writings of God's appointed prophets and are provided to others for their edification ([D&C 68:2-4](#)). By this means, people have received the inspired words recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Through revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon (see [Book of Mormon Translation By Joseph Smith](#)) and received those things set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Latter-day Saints anticipate that more prophetic scripture will yet be revealed and that scripture written by past prophets but now lost to the world will be restored ([2 Ne. 29:11-14](#); [D&C 27:6](#); see also [Scriptures: Forthcoming Scripture](#)). The true meaning of all scripture is to be revealed by the power of the Holy Ghost to the individual reader or hearer ([2 Pet. 1:20](#); [D&C 50:17-24](#)).

PERSONAL REVELATION. After baptism and confirmation, each member has the right, when worthy, to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost (see [Gift of the Holy Ghost](#)). Through that companionship all the gifts of the Spirit are revealed to faithful individuals, who accomplish their mortal works in righteousness through the gifts and power of God revealed to and through them ([Moro. 10:25](#)). The challenges of living by personal revelation include (1) distinguishing revelation from God through his Holy Spirit from personal thoughts and desires, and from the influences of Satan (see [Devils](#)); (2) following the teachings and directions of the living prophet of God; and (3) living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God ([Matt. 4:4](#); [John 3:5-8](#); [D&C 50:13-24](#); [98:11-13](#); [Deut. 8:3](#)).

In modern societies, the idea of divine revelation is widely discounted for many reasons, including the violent acts that some have perpetrated while claiming divine direction. But God has made it known through the restoration of the gospel that revelation is available to all who seek it and that failure to seek spiritual guidance and direction is itself a mistake and a form of wishful thinking. Humans have eternal spirits, and each person

experiences the supernatural influences that work upon his or her own spirit. Better than to ignore the spiritual side of oneself is to study one's personal spiritual experiences until they make sense. Those who acknowledge spiritual experiences are called the "honest in heart," and they are candidates for the revealed riches of godliness ([D&C 8:1;97:8](#)).

The fundamental revelation from God is the knowledge of good through the Light of Christ ([John 1:9](#)). The prophet Lehi taught his children that because of the choices made by Adam and Eve, their descendants receive supernatural knowledge of both good and evil, making a choice between the two necessary in fulfillment of the purpose of earth life. After mortality God returns to each human being eternally the good or evil each chose in life ([Alma 41:1-5](#); [2 Ne. 2:27](#)).

But before any final judgment, each person will be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This gospel is the good news that the Son of God will assist all persons to stop doing evil and will save them from the consequences of all the evil they have done if they will believe in him and repent. Acting to accept this revelation constitutes faith in Jesus Christ, which, if it continues, may bring additional revelation from God: more instruction; the gifts of the Spirit; the knowledge imparted through saving ordinances of the new and everlasting covenant; angelic visitations; visions; the revelation to know God himself face to face; and finally, the revelation to be given the fulness of godhood, to be made joint-heirs with Christ ([D&C 121:29](#)).

The LDS concept of individual revelation as fundamental to all human experience helps explain other distinctive LDS teachings. The key to making the proper distinction between supernatural revelation and its counterfeit is that fundamental knowledge of good and evil. Individuals must experiment, being as honest in heart and mind as they can, until they can see clearly what is good and what is evil. Those who learn to distinguish good from evil in this life can then distinguish the good spirit from the evil spirit. They then can distinguish the true gospel of Jesus Christ from its counterfeits, the true path of righteousness from the byways of covenant breaking and bending, and the true and living God from the image of God produced by their own wishful thinking ([Moro. 7:5-19](#)).

Joseph Smith taught the Saints how to recognize and receive revelation: A person may profit by noticing the first intimation of the spirit of revelation; for instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus [*TPJS*, p. 151].

To learn to communicate with others by the gifts of that Holy Spirit makes it possible for one to be a prophet or prophetess of God. Latter-day Saints believe that through divine revelation every child of Christ may, and should, become a prophet or a prophetess to his or her own divinely appointed stewardship ([Num. 11:29](#)), holding fast to that which is good and rejecting that which is evil ([1 Thes. 5:19-21](#)).

Thus, the human problem is not to *get* revelation, but to *understand* the revelation one receives, to respond only to that which is good, and to minister only that which is good. The

servants of Christ are counseled to look to him and to him only for light and truth. They are told not to take counsel from any human being or to hearken to any person unless he or she speaks by the power of the Holy Spirit. Truth, light, righteous power, and salvation come from above, from God himself, through divine revelation, and not from human beings or from below ([2 Ne. 28:30-31](#)).