

He Hears and Answers

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Several years ago I had the opportunity to work at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. During the Apollo 12 mission I received a telephone call from the capsule communicator in mission control. He had been communicating with Richard F. Gordon, who was orbiting the moon while the other two astronauts—Charles Conrad, Jr., and Alan L. Bean—were on the lunar surface. Although he was 250,000 miles from the earth, he was able to communicate with the capsule communicator. He had encountered a problem. He needed guidance and direction. He needed an answer. I possessed the technical information Richard Gordon needed to resolve his problem. This information was given to the capsule communicator, who was able to relay the answer. Likewise, in our earthly journey, we will need answers to questions and guidance in our lives. Through prayer we can communicate with the God of Heaven and receive answers.

An example of prayer and divine communication is recorded in the Book of Mormon. Aaron, one of the sons of Mosiah, had the remarkable experience of teaching the gospel to the Lamanite king who was king over all the land:

And Aaron . . . said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God? And the king said: . . . If now thou sayest there is a God, behold I will believe.

And now when Aaron heard this, . . . he said: Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God. [Alma 22:7–8]

Aaron then read and expounded to him the scriptures (doctrine) about the Creation, the Fall, and the plan of redemption.

After Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? . . .

But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

And . . . the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying:

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O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee. [Alma 22:15–18]

God answered the king's humble prayer and instructed him in eternal truths. The king then ministered to his family and servants and opened the door for the preaching of the gospel throughout his kingdom. "And thousands were brought to the knowledge of the Lord" (Alma 23:5).

There are several true principles included in the scriptural account of the king's conversion and his coming to know God. These teachings demonstrate the spiritual power of

- Testimony (Alma 22:8)
- Scriptures (Alma 22:12–13)
- Desire (Alma 22:16)
- Faith and Hope (Alma 22:16)
- Repentance (Alma 22:16, 18)
- Ministering (Alma 22:23, 25–27)
- Prayer (Alma 22:16–18)

Application of these principles can help us—as they did the Lamanite king—to know God and come unto Him.

There is a God. It is vitally important that we know Him. The Redeemer of the World, in His great intercessory prayer, declared: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

President James E. Faust said:

Having such a relationship can unchain the divinity within us, and nothing can make a greater difference in our lives as we come to know and understand our divine relationship with God and His Beloved Son, our Master. . . .

*We should earnestly seek not just to know about the Master, but to strive, as He invited, to be one with Him (see John 17:21). ["That We Might Know Thee," *Ensign*, January 1999, 2]*

President Howard W. Hunter taught, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him" ("He Invites Us to Follow Him," *Ensign*, September 1994, 5).

Not only is it important for us to know Him, it is equally important we know that He knows us.

Our latter-day apostles and prophets have proclaimed:

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. . . .

*In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. ["The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102]*

His knowledge of us is illustrated in a journal entry of pioneer Joseph Millett, who with his large family was suffering through some very difficult times.

"One of my children came in and said that Brother Newton Hall's folks was out of bread, had none that day.

"I divided our flour in a sack to send up to Brother Hall. Just then Brother Hall came.

"Says I, 'Brother Hall, are you out of flour?'

"'Brother Millett, we have none.'

"'Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you was out.'

"Brother Hall began to cry. He said he had tried others, but could not get any. He went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord, and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett.

“Well Brother Hall, you needn’t bring this back. If the Lord sent you for it you don’t owe me for it.”

That night Joseph Millett recorded a remarkable sentence in his journal:

*“You can’t tell me how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew there was such a person as Joseph Millett.” [Diary of Joseph Millett, holograph, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; in Boyd K. Packer, “A Tribute to the Rank and File of the Church,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 63]*

We can communicate with the Almighty through prayer. Prayer is a sacred two-way communication with God, and we have been invited to “pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name” (D&C 65:4).

The LDS Bible Dictionary provides some sacred insights about our relationship with God as we approach Him in prayer:

As soon as we learn the true relationship in which we stand toward God (namely, God is our Father, and we are his children), then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part (Matt. 7:7–11). Many of the so-called difficulties about prayer arise from forgetting this relationship. Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them. [Bible Dictionary, s.v. “prayer,” 752–53]

In Gethsemane the Savior taught a great lesson about being submissive. His example to us was that the will of the Father, not His own will, be done.

And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. [Mark 14:35–36]

This same spirit of submissiveness was illustrated in a recent article by Elder Neal A. Maxwell. He related an account of nine-year-old Melissa Howes as she participated in family prayer shortly before her father died of cancer. Her unselfish pleading included the following prayer:

*“Heavenly Father, bless my daddy, and if you need to take him and need him more than us, you can have him. We want him, but Thy will be done. And please help us not to be mad at you” (letter from Christie Howes, 25 Feb. 1998). [“Testifying of the Great and Glorious Atonement,” *Ensign*, October 2001, 14]*

When the resurrected Lord appeared to the Nephites, He taught and ministered unto them. Although His ministry was short, many of His teachings focused on prayer. Sacred events—so sacred a record of them was not written—occurred because of His prayers unto the Father. He also gave some specific instructions regarding the use of His name:

“Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name” (3 Nephi 18:19).

“Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and children may be blessed” (3 Nephi 18:21).

The Bible Dictionary states:

We pray in Christ’s name when our mind is the mind of Christ, and our wishes the wishes of Christ—when his words abide in us (John 15:7). We then ask for things it is possible for God to grant. Many prayers remain unanswered because they are not in Christ’s name at all; they in no way represent his mind, but spring out of the selfishness of man’s heart. [Bible Dictionary, s.v. “prayer,” 753]

The Lord has cautioned, “Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips” (D&C 63:61). According to Elder Dallin H. Oaks:

This caution applies to all that is done in the name of the Lord, from the performance of sacred priesthood ordinances at one end of the spectrum to the things said in sermons, teachings, and prayers at the other. [His Holy Name (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 18]

After the first day of the Savior’s Nephite ministry, the disciples whom Jesus had chosen

ministered unto the people. . . .

And . . . they . . . prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus.

And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them. . . .

And . . . the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire. . . .

And . . . Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them. . . .

And . . . Jesus . . . bowed himself to the earth, and he said:

Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen. . . .

Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words. [3 Nephi 19:7–9, 13, 15, 19–21]

The Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead, is a revelator, a guide, a teacher, a comforter, a purifier, a sanctifier, and a testifier. The Holy Ghost will guide us “into all truth” (John 16:13) and testify that Jesus is the Christ (see John 15:26 and 1 Corinthians 12:3). Nothing is more fundamentally important than knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

There is a relationship between prayer (asking) and revelation (the answer). President Marion G. Romney stated:

Just as prayer is the means by which men address the Lord, so revelation is the means by which God communicates to men. . . .

Now I know . . . and bear witness to the fact that revelation from the Lord comes through the spoken word, by personal visitation, by messengers from the Lord, through dreams, and by way of visions, and by the voice of the Lord coming into one’s mind.

*Most often, however, revelation comes to us by means of the still, small voice. [“Prayer and Revelation,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 50]*

The Lord has declared:

Behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation. [D&C 8:2–3]

A process of revelation is included in the Doctrine and Covenants:

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought. [D&C 9:8–9]

In summary, that process is:

- Study it out
- Make a decision
- Ask the Lord
- Observe feelings and thoughts

I was taught a powerful lesson by my mission president regarding this process. I was a student at Utah State University. My mission president, also from Logan, lived nearby. I frequently visited him and

his wife. He always inquired about my dating experiences and if I was making any progress in finding an eternal companion. I always replied that I was working on it.

One night when he asked the question, I stated, “I have it narrowed down to two.”

He asked, “What have you been doing about it?”

I replied, “I have been praying that the Lord would direct me to the right one.”

He then said, “If I was the Lord, I wouldn’t answer a prayer like that.” He then reminded me of the revelatory process included in the Doctrine and Covenants—that I needed to make a decision and then seek confirmation through prayer. The matter was studied out, a decision made, confirmation sought, and a prayer answered.

The Lord Himself has given this promise:

If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal. [D&C 42:61]

The Lord has also said:

Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you. [D&C 88:63–64]

The word *ask* is included in many of the scriptures referenced previously. This same pattern prevails throughout the scriptures. The Prophet Joseph Smith was deeply impressed with this scripture:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. [James 1:5–6]

The Prophet wrote:

Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. . . .

. . . I at length came to the determination to “ask of God.” . . .

So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. . . .

. . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . .

. . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! [JS—H 1:12–14, 16–17; emphasis in original]

The appearance of the Father and the Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith is the foundation of the restored gospel. Through his humble prayer the heavens were again opened, and his prayer was answered. Millions, both among the living and the dead, have been blessed because of the Prophet’s prayer that opened the door of the Restoration. Countless others will be blessed as “thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2).

A similar pattern of prayer (asking) and revelation (answer) is included in the final writings of Moroni:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and

if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. [Moroni 10:4–5; emphasis added]

Untold numbers have asked for and received the answer that the Book of Mormon is true. This promise is extended to all of us.

There is an inner peace that comes from calling home and simply talking to God through fervent and sincere prayer. There are times when we may be discouraged, faced with trials and tribulations or the loss of a loved one or a severe illness. We may have a feeling of being all alone, that no one cares. There may be those moments when we need to forsake sin and make midcourse corrections in life. At such times we can literally open heaven's door and communicate with the Almighty and know that He is there—that He listens and that He understands. He knows how to succor.

The Prophet Joseph Smith offered these words of prayer in Liberty Jail: "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1). The Lord answered, "My son, peace be unto thy soul" (D&C 121:7).

Alma the Younger cried unto the Lord and found peace:

And it came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But behold, I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul. [Alma 38:8]

Enos prayed mightily "all the day long . . . ; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. . . . Wherefore my soul did rest" (Enos 1:4, 17).

To Oliver Cowdery the Lord said, "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:23).

This peace can come to all of us, both young and old. Several years ago my older children and I were returning from a trip to eastern Utah. On the way home we encountered a terrible storm. The snow was deep. The road had not been plowed. No other cars were on the road. The wind was blowing, making it difficult to see. My sons were asleep in the back of the car. My daughter, age seven, was in the front seat by me. There was complete silence as the car slowly made its way over a steep mountain pass.

She broke the silence by saying, "Dad, we're going to be okay."

I responded, "How do you know?"

She replied, "I just talked to Heavenly Father, and I feel warm inside, warmer than when I gave my talk in church. I know we are going to be okay."

Someday most of you will be parents. Remember that the Lord has commanded, "And they [parents] shall also teach their children to pray" (D&C 68:28). Personally, one of my greatest hopes and desires as a father and grandfather is that my children and grandchildren will develop a pattern of regular prayer. President Heber J. Grant said:

I have little or no fear for the boy or the girl, the young man or the young woman, who honestly and conscientiously supplicate God twice a day for the guidance of His Spirit. I am sure that when temptation comes they will have the strength to overcome it by the inspiration that shall be given to them. Supplicating the Lord for the guidance of His Spirit places around us a safeguard, and if we earnestly and honestly seek the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, I can assure you that we will receive it. [Gospel Standards: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Heber J. Grant (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1969), 26]

The Bible Dictionary also states, "Blessings require some work or effort on our part before

we can obtain them. Prayer is a form of work, and is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “prayer,” 753).

There may be times when we pray and expect the Lord to do everything—we expect that everything depends upon Him. For example, we may pray that the Lord will bless the poor and the needy and the sick and the afflicted. We need to help the Lord answer those prayers. What if we said, “Today is fast day. I promise Thee that I will give a generous offering that the needs of the poor in our ward and stake will be taken care of—that Sister White’s utility bill may be paid and the gas not turned off.”

The prophet recently counseled the youth to be prayerful. He said:

*You need His help. . . . You cannot do it alone. . . . So live that in good conscience you can speak with the Lord. Get on your knees and thank Him for His goodness to you and express to Him the righteous desires of your hearts. The miracle of it all is that He hears. He responds. He answers—not always as we might wish He would answer, but there is no question in my mind that He answers. [Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, January 2001, 10]*

Lawrence Johnson is a dear friend who lives in Provo. During World War II he was a bomber pilot. One night his crew was given a mission to bomb a certain target. It was a dark

night over the South China Sea. The antiaircraft artillery was heavy. Searchlights illuminated the sky. After they had passed over the drop zone, “The navigator stuck his head into the cockpit and said, ‘I don’t have any idea as to where we are. I got so scared back there that I just stopped keeping our position.’” Brother Johnson continued, “To complicate things, our radar went out after the bomb run. None of that seemed to bother me because of a sweet calm and a feeling that all was well. I pointed to a position on the map I was holding and told the navigator he could assume that was our position. He looked dubiously at me and asked, ‘Are you sure?’ I assured him it was—my quick little prayer seemed to leave little doubt.” From those coordinates on the map the navigator plotted the direction to their home base. After flying for seven hours they spotted the runway lights of their home base and landed safely. (Lawrence H. Johnson, personal history.) Likewise, through prayer and spiritual guidance, we also will be able to return safely to our home base—home with God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

I know and testify there is a God. I know He knows us. He hears and answers our prayers. He has not left us alone on our earthly journey. I know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, His Only Begotten Son. I testify that He is our Savior and Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.