
Repetitive Expressions, Admonitions, and Qualifications

D&C 4:1–4

It cannot be a coincidence that the first contemporary of the Prophet Joseph Smith mentioned by name in the Doctrine and Covenants was his father, Joseph Smith Sr. After all, Father Smith was mentioned by name in the Book of Mormon when Father Lehi in quoting Joseph of Old said, “His name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father” (2 Nephi 3:15). Likewise, it cannot be circumstantial that many of the expressions, admonitions, and qualifications given to Joseph Smith Sr. in Doctrine and Covenants section 4 were restated to others called to the work of the Lord—Oliver Cowdery (D&C 6:1–6), Hyrum Smith (11:1–6), Joseph Knight Sr. (12:1–6), and David Whitmer (14:1–6). These men, like Father Smith, were told that a great and marvelous work had come forth, the field was white and ready to be harvested, and they were called to serve.

To be called to the work of the Lord requires more than knowledge of the great and marvelous work or of the field being ready for harvest. The qualifications to serve are Christlike characteristics—an eye single to the glory of God, faith, virtue, knowledge, diligence, etc. President David O. McKay, in noting the qualifications for being called to the work, concluded that those so called had “not the possession of wealth, not social distinction, not political preferment, not military achievement, not nobility of birth; but a

desire to serve God with all your 'heart, mind, and strength'—spiritual qualities that contribute to nobility of soul.”¹

Elder Dale G. Renlund wrote of one such young man called to be a missionary:

Some years ago a wonderful young man named Curtis was called to serve a mission. He was the kind of missionary every mission president prays for. He was focused and worked hard. At one point he was assigned a missionary companion who was immature, socially awkward, and not particularly enthusiastic about getting the work done.

One day, while they were riding their bicycles, Curtis looked back and saw that his companion had inexplicably gotten off his bike and was walking. Silently, Curtis expressed his frustration to God; what a chore it was to be saddled with a companion he had to drag around in order to accomplish anything. Moments later, Curtis had a profound impression, as if God were saying to him, “You know, Curtis, compared to me, the two of you aren’t all that different.” Curtis learned that he needed to be patient with an imperfect companion who nonetheless was trying in his own way.²

¹ David O. McKay, “The following I take from section 4 . . .,” in *Conference Report*, April 1954, 22–23.

² Dale G. Renlund, “Latter-day Saints Keep on Trying,” *Ensign*, May 2015.