

Come Follow Me Class Insights (Doctrine and Covenants 6-9; Jan 25-31)

I'm Taylor.

And I'm Tyler.

This is Book of Mormon Central's Come, Follow Me Insights, Doctrine and Covenants section 6 through 9.

Now, to set the stage for sections 6, 7, 8, and 9, we need to take a step back, away from the scripture page, and look at the setting of what's going on, the timeline, so a very, very quick review here. September 22<sup>nd</sup> of 1827 was the date that Joseph receives the plates for the first time out of the hill, where he could secure them. So, what happens is, we get to spring of 1828, when we have completed this portion of the translation that would involve what story we talked about last time: the 116 pages, and Martin, at the end of the spring, 1828, takes those pages home to Palmyra, we lose them.

So, the summer of 1828 is miserable for Joseph and Emma. They've lost their first-born son named Alvin, we've lost the manuscript, he's lost the plates, the Urim and Thummim, he feels at one point like he has lost his soul, and it's pretty miserable. That's when the Angel Moroni came to him in the woods near their home in Harmony, showed him the Urim and Thummim with the beginnings of section 3 on the stones that he then recorded down, like we talked about last week, the first section recorded.

In the winter of 1828 – 1829, Joseph's parents, Joseph, Senior and Lucy, they came down to visit Joseph and in February of 1829, that's where Joseph receives section 4 that we talked about last time. Now, watch. Martin Harris arrives in March of 1829, that's where we got section 5. So, section 3 was back here; we're lining this out as we set the stage for section 6, where we jump in today.

So, before these events occurred in the early part of 1829, here on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, again, of 1828, the Angel Moroni had promised Joseph that if he humbled himself and repented, then the plates and the Urim and Thummim would be returned to him, which they were. So here he has the plates back, but he doesn't have a scribe, and he's struggling to just keep his financial head above water, so to speak, to survive in this world.

Well, God provided a means for the translation process to continue and move forward, and here's how he did it. In the fall of 1828, a man by the name of Oliver Cowdery came to Palmyra, New York to be the teacher for the city school there. And as was customary in that time, the teacher would then board at the homes of the various families that sent their children to the school, and they were also paying the salary for this teacher.

Oliver heard stories in Palmyra about a golden Bible, about a translation and angels. And while most of the people in Palmyra were mocking and making fun of these stories, it caught Oliver's attention because he, like Joseph, had become pretty discouraged with the religious landscape of

the day. And so he requested after hearing enough of these stories, he requested to get to go and stay with the Smith family, which he did. And he asked questions, and they could tell that he was more sincere, and so they opened up a little bit more with him than they had with others, because they had become quite quiet on a lot of fronts with a lot of people, because every time they said anything, they would bring on persecution.

Oliver loved what he was hearing, for the most part, and he wanted to somehow be a part of it. And as soon as that 1828 to 1829 school year ended, which would have been much earlier in the spring than what we're used to in our modern culture, sometime in early April or late March, somewhere in there, depending on the year, he decided, I'm going to go to Harmony. So, he and Samuel, Joseph's brother Samuel Smith, walked the nearly hundred-mile trek from Palmyra down to Harmony on muddy streets. It was a very wet journey for them, on foot, and very cold, by the way. Incidentally, when he arrived, he had a frost-bitten toe. And he's excited to finally meet Joseph, the Prophet who he had heard so much about, and now he met him, and it's one of those amazing friendships that was forged almost immediately.

Just for context, Joseph is quite tall. He's over six feet tall. Oliver Cowdery is about five foot four. Oliver is one year younger than him. And Oliver is extremely gifted with writing, and he's much more learned, as far as the world is concerned, than Joseph.

So, they began this process of now translating the rest of the Book of Mormon. Keep in mind, we lost 116 pages. Jack Welch has done a lot of work and a lot of study on this process: the translation process, and how long it took, and what days they're likely to be translating. And it's fascinating when you look at the situation. Picture Oliver Cowdery coming, and the first item of business that he helps Joseph with is to write a contract for his father-in-law, Isaac Hale, Emma's parent, to say, I will repay you for this land, and this home, and the spring, and the barn that's on Isaac Hale's property that Joseph and Emma are now living in. So that was the first thing Oliver helped him do, and then they began the translation process.

Can you imagine being Oliver Cowdery, having heard about this, when the first things that you hear fall from the lips of the prophet as you're scribing for him are probably the first few chapters that we have in our book of Mosiah? Picture your introduction to the translation of the Book of Mormon being King Benjamin's speech, and the precursors to King Benjamin's speech. Now picture being Oliver Cowdery in his situation, where he's a school teacher. He doesn't have a lot of money. And he is a little concerned about his physical well-being, and now he's living in the home with a poor farmer who's in debt with a wife, and they're struggling with money. And picture some of these words in their historical context, what it might have meant for those two men performing this work, and Emma, who's listening in much of the time in the room on what's going on.

Listen to these words from Mosiah 2, starting verse 23: "And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him. And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth

immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?" (Mosiah 2:23-24). Beautiful words that apply to their situation. But then, at a much deeper level, can you imagine what it might have felt like for Oliver Cowdery to be dipping that quill in ink, and listening to these words as he then puts them to paper in our dispensation, words like these: "For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord omnipotent who reigneth, who was and is from eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay," and then go on and on with this description of Jesus (Mosiah 3:5).

Can you imagine how sweet it must have been to Oliver to hear these words, and to record them, as he realizes, very early, on what he is now a part of, this unfolding of the Restoration of the Gospel and through this translation process of the Book of Mormon? Notice that the section heading to section 6 tells you that this was given to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in April of 1829. So, it's very shortly after he's arrived when this revelation comes to Oliver. And it opens, you'll notice, by the way, that it opens using a similar phrase that we heard back in section 4, and it's going to be used over and over again in subsequent sections: "A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:1).

And notice the context, verse 2: "Behold, I am God...". I love those three words: "I am God" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:2). This is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking directly to Joseph and Oliver, making very clear, I'm God, and I have a work that I'm going to bring forth, and you two are going to be instruments that I'm going to use in bringing this forth. But let's keep it clear, I'm God. It's, in my mind, it's the nicest way he has of saying, I know what I'm doing. You've got to trust me completely here. I know how to do this work, even if you're struggling, wondering about how you're going to pay bills, or how you're going to provide for your physical needs. Trust me as you do this great and marvelous work.

Notice he then goes on to verse 4: "...whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God." Now look at the qualifier in verse 5: "Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you." Verse 6 informs us: you already have asked, so let me give you an answer. I'm going to help you receive something right here. Look at verse 6: "Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion..." Did you notice that? They've asked the question, and his answer is, yes, seek to bring forth my kingdom and establish the cause of Zion. That's the answer.

Brothers and sisters, that's the answer for all of us, if we really ask, it's the same thing. Look at verse 7: "Seek not for riches but for wisdom..." These two men, and Emma as well, wondering about how to even pay bills, and here's God yet again reminding them, don't worry about the riches but for wisdom.

Brothers and sisters, what do you think Brother Joseph and Brother Oliver would say if they could speak directly with you today? Would they say, let me tell you how frustrating it was to be so poor so long, and always struggling with lack of funds? Do you think they would mention anything about money today, as they look back on their life? Or do you think they would say, oh, trust that the Lord will provide for the needs, as you do the best. It doesn't mean that we ignore it, it doesn't mean that we don't try to provide for our needs. It just means that if you seek for wisdom, "...the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:7).

It's a world that we live in that is very, very enticing to pull our attention towards the things that money and power can give us. And here the Lord's reminding us, that's all very fleeting. Look at verse 8: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you; and if you desire, you shall be the means of doing much good in this generation." And that is not fleeting. That doesn't go away when you die. That doesn't just fade into oblivion. That's work that stays done, and we are the beneficiaries of exactly that kind of work that these two accomplish.

Look at verse 10: "Behold thou hast a gift, and blessed art thou because of thy gift. Remember it is sacred and cometh from above--". Now, brothers and sisters, there's a section here, verse 10, 11, 12, where he talks about the gift, and don't make it known unto any, don't trifle with sacred things, and there's a lot there that seems difficult to understand. And it's going to come up again in section 8, and even a little in section 9, this idea that Oliver Cowdery has a rod, similar, that's compared to the rod of Aaron, or the rod of Moses, through which great miracles are performed, and revelation is given. I'm going to talk a little bit about that in section 8, but there's not a lot written about it, and there's not a lot that Oliver is going to say about it. Why? He's told, don't make these things known. Don't talk about them a lot, and so he doesn't.

Yes, if we look specifically at verse 12, it says: "Make not thy gift known unto any save it be those who are of thy faith. Trifle not with sacred things." So, let's consider other objects that God has used as means of revelation. We have the Urim and Thummim. We have seer stones. We have the Liahona that God prepared. So, this is not unusual for God to make use of objects to reveal his will. We have the scriptures today. They are an object, and they are means to reveal God's will. So, God will use means to convey his will to us. We have modern-day prophets who will speak to us, and on a regular basis, they speak God's will to us. And second of all, we have the opportunity to have God's Spirit in our lives. As we promise to keep the commandments at the sacrament, the return promise from God is we'll always have his Spirit to be with us, which is a form of having revelation continually with us. So, whether it's Aaron's rod, or the Liahona, or the seer stones, God will work with us, if we are willing to listen, to guide us with the revelation that we need for where we're at in our life and times.

And by the way, some people have looked at whether it's the rod of Aaron, and now we talk about the rod with Oliver Cowdery, or the Urim and Thummim anciently, or the Urim and

Thummim, or the seer stones with Joseph. Some would say, in our modern culture, they would say that's ridiculous. How can you believe that something like a stone can shine forth in the darkness, that the writing can change from time to time depending on the need? If even man can figure out how to do this, I think God can make all kinds of things work. And, by the way, in this translation process, there are a lot of questions that come up regarding the mechanics of it, and Oliver is now participating in that process for the first time.

It's fascinating that whenever Joseph Smith was asked to describe the translation process, he never went into great detail. He never told people the exact mechanics of how it worked. His answer was always the same: the Book of Mormon was "translated by the gift and power of God" (Book of Mormon, Testimony of Three Witnesses). In other words, he keeps removing himself from taking any kind of credit. He doesn't say, it was translated by the gift and power of my intellect, or my incredible ability with Reformed Egyptian or ancient languages. He never takes any of the credit for himself. He always says it was "translated by the gift and power of God" (Book of Mormon, Testimony of Three Witnesses).

Consequently, there are some who wonder about the hat, for instance, that you'll hear in Church history stories, or you can read it in the Church's gospel topic essays. And a lot of paintings will depict Joseph looking through the Urim and Thummim like glasses, like spectacles, looking down at the plates, and seeing the English words come through that way.

I love a more balanced approach to this. One of my colleagues at BYU, Tony Sweat, painted a beautiful depiction, one depiction of the translation process, with Joseph looking into the hat. And I asked him about that, and this whole question of the translation process, and I loved his answer. He said if we're not careful, we're going to swing the pendulum too far to one side or the other. We have first person witness accounts that talk about Joseph looking in the hat, with the Urim and Thummim or seer stones, and we have other accounts that talk about him just looking at the seer stones, and perhaps even at the plates, through them. And so I love the fact, like Taylor is saying, that God can use a variety of means to help bring us revelation. And in this case, some people have wondered, well, is the hat magical? Is there something fantastical about this hat? I think it's really simple. I don't think there's anything special about the hat, other than if I'm looking at a stone that's shining forth in the darkness, and if it's kind of bright, what do I do? I put that in a place that's a little darker, that makes it a little easier for my eyes so there's less eye strain to be able to read the words clearly that are written on that stone, so to speak.

So just as you move forward, you're going to hear people talking about the different mechanics. At the end of the day, I think if I were you, I would default to Joseph's statement of, it was "translated by the gift and power of God". Rather than getting focused on how, let's focus on what we got through the translation process (Book of Mormon, Testimony of Three Witnesses).

Now back to Oliver Cowdery, the man. He's wrestling with something. He wants a little further witness that this is the Lord's work. Does that tell you something? After everything that we've already talked about up to this point, he's experienced all these things with the translation process

in those early chapters of Mosiah, and he's still sitting there, like Martin Harris before him, saying, I need a little more proof. Does that tell you a little bit about revelation? That it's a process that unfolds, and it grows over time. It's not a big flash of light right at the beginning. Now, it was with the First Vision with Joseph, but for most of us it's not that way. It's this unfolding revelatory process.

So, notice verse 15 and 16, it's hinted here. He says: "Behold, thou knowest that thou hast inquired of me and I did enlighten thy mind; and now I tell thee these things that thou mayest know that thou hast been enlightened by the Spirit of truth;" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:15). And then he takes it further in verse 16: "Yea, I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart." So as Joseph is receiving that revelation for him, he is probably thinking oh, good. God's answering Oliver's question. But then it becomes crystal clear a few verses later. Look at verse 21: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Notice how, at the beginning of the section, he introduced himself: "I am God;" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:1). Here he clarifies, "...I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the same that came unto mine own, and mine own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:21). And now this part: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:22-23).

Brothers and sisters, Oliver is then going to share his full story with Joseph. That part of the story, that back in Palmyra when he was living in the Smith home, he had poured his heart out to God, and God had spoken peace to him that this is what he needed to do, was to go down to Harmony and help with this work. And now, Oliver hadn't told anybody about that experience, but now God is explaining exactly that experience. The two who had had it together, the Lord and Oliver, they're coming back together in this instance, at which point Oliver says okay, this is enough. Joseph has revealed things that nobody but God and I alone were aware of. And that was what he needed to be able to help propel him through the rest of this coming forth of the Book of Mormon process.

Notice verse 32 here towards the end of the section: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, as I said unto my disciples," so this is going back to the New Testament, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, as touching one thing, behold, there will I be in the midst of them – even so am I in the midst of you." I love the fact that here you have Joseph and Oliver, who are wrestling with some things, they're struggling with some things. They're doing the best they can with what they've got, but they recognize they're lacking, and here Jesus reminds them: where two or three are gathered in my name to do my work, there am I in the midst of them. And so now, that's exactly what you have going on here: Oliver and Joseph, with Jesus in the midst of them, strengthening them. And notice how he strengthens them, after all of this incredible section, look how he finishes it, verse 33. Notice you could mark these if you want: "Fear not..." (Doctrine and

Covenants 6:33). Notice now often it comes up. "Fear not to do good, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:33).

You can't plant weeds and grow fruit. If you grow, or if you plant good seeds, and nurture them, you're going to pick good fruit, and that's what he's reminding them here. And what they're sowing right now are some of the best seeds: the seeds of scripture, the seeds of the Spirit, the seeds of the Restoration are being sown by a poor farmer and his wife, and by this poor school teacher. They're doing the best they can. I love that. I love that God is doing his work through simple people, not through the big, famous, brilliant scholars of the day. But through these simple people God is bringing forth some of the greatest truths to ever come to light.

Notice verse 34: "Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you," which it will, by the way, "...for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail." Among all of the opposition, brothers and sisters, God could have made the coming forth of the Book of Mormon so easy, so pleasant, fully funded from the beginning, totally taken care of with no mob action, no family members fighting against you. Emma's father Isaac thought the whole thing was a sham and kept telling him, and her, to be done with it. He didn't believe it.

There's another relative of Emma's who comes and flippantly tells Joseph, if you have the gift to translate -- and he gives him some text in Greek -- says, use your Urim and Thummim and tell me what this says. And Joseph doesn't translate it for him, and he walks away saying, see, he's not a prophet, without ever giving any thought to the fact that God doesn't give prophetic power in order to answer the unbelief of naysayers, of people who want you to prove that the work is true, prove that you have a gift to translate, prove that you're a prophet, or prove that God exists, or prove that the book is true. God doesn't seem to use his power to answer those kinds of questions. But he does use his power to answer the heartfelt pleas of people who are asking in sincerity and lowliness of heart to know the truth so they can know which direction to go.

God could have made this entire process very easy, but he didn't. He let them wrestle, he let them struggle. I wonder if there's an applicable lesson in that for you and me today. You see, God could take away all of your pain. He could take away all of your doubts. He could take away all of your questions. He could fix every relationship that's struggling in your life. He could cure every disease that you or your loved ones face. He could solve every financial problem that you're facing right now, and he could do it just like that, but he doesn't. He lets us wrestle. He lets us move forward. He lets us recognize, over and over and over again, that, I can't do it alone. I can't do this work that I've been called to do on my own power alone, on my force of intellect alone, or my capacity for having influence alone. I have to rely on him. It's his work, and he's called me to assist in it. He hasn't called me to do it for him. And there's a beautiful principle that, if he'll even allow these early saints to struggle like that, I don't think you and I should feel like we should be immune from having to wrestle through difficult tests of mortality and trials of faith as we move forward on the covenant path as well.

Now you'll notice verse 36: "Look unto me in every thought;". He doesn't say, look unto the world, he doesn't say, go to the experts, go to the scholars and the learned people. He says, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:36). There's the third time: "...fear not" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:36). I think there's a message for us today. We live in a world that is filled with fear, filled with anxiety, filled with questions, and doubt, and struggle. And here's Jesus reminding these two men, and through them by extension, reminding you and me: fear not, fear not, fear not. I think hymn number 85 comes in handy here: "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed, for I am thy God and will still give thee aid. I'll strengthen thee, help thee and cause thee to stand, upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand." I think we have a pretty firm foundation for our faith, and a foundation that allows us to not fear.

Now, notice how he finishes that section: "Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet..." (Doctrine and Covenants 6:37). I wonder why Jesus would have ended the section that way. I wonder if perhaps he's reminding Joseph and Oliver, and once again by extension you and me, I wonder if he's saying, just because you do good things doesn't mean that the world's going to stand up and applaud you, and reward you openly for your goodness and your wonderful efforts to build the kingdom. Remember, it's not what the world has to offer you; it's what God has to offer you. I wonder if he's pointing them to the fact that, get ready, there's going to be some persecution. There's going to be some pain. There's going to be some abuse. You're going to hurt, but you're doing my work. And notice he says, "...be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:37). It's a pretty powerful scripture to receive if you're Oliver Cowdery, early on in this process. It's a flood from heaven.

Now, section 7 is very unique, because what it is -- it's brought on by a discussion, I guess we could probably even say a disagreement, that Joseph and Oliver had regarding John chapter 21 verse 22. And, by the way, if you'll look back in section 6 verse 26, the Lord informed them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that there are records which contain much of my gospel, which have been kept back because of the wickedness of the people;". It's interesting that the very next section is going to reveal just a little, teeny fragment, a parchment fragment of a writing that had been lost, or had been hidden, had been kept back, written by John the Beloved, or John the Revelator, the brother of James; Peter, James, and John -- that apostle.

The question that became kind of an argument between Joseph and Oliver was, did John actually die, or was he translated, and is he still alive today? And the discussion got to the point where they decided to ask God the answer to that question. And in this vision that they had, they see this parchment, and then with the aid of the Urim and Thummim, they're able to translate that parchment.

Now just as a side note, you'll notice your cross reference here is John chapter 21 verse 22, which is ambiguous at best in the King James Version of the Bible, leaving you open to argue either side if you want, regarding John's translated state, or whether he died. John would have

been writing his gospel and all of his writings in Greek. We have no record of Joseph ever, at this time in 1829, having studied Greek, and yet he's translating. Now once again, we need to make this clear. We use the word translation today to refer usually, traditionally, a translator is somebody who is gifted and fluent in two languages. He or she reads or hears something in one language, and then they can translate it into this other language that they know.

The thing that makes Joseph's work so remarkable is the fact that technically, he's really not fluent, so to speak, or extremely articulate at this stage, in any language. Even Emma, his wife, said, he could hardly dictate a coherent letter when I first married him. She gives this way later in life on looking back on this translation process. She said he struggled to even write well, or to speak well. So, what you get is the gift and power of God making it so that Joseph doesn't know Greek, but he doesn't need to know Greek, because God knows Greek perfectly. And he knows what John wrote perfectly, and it's lost. So, through this Urim and Thummim means, Joseph is able to take it and render it in English for us, and then from there, we can translate it into all the other languages of the world.

So, what you get here is a lost portion of the writings of John being restored to us. And it's amazing, especially if you look at the word “desire”, or “desired”, “desiredst”, because it comes up multiple times in this section. I'm only going to point out a couple of things here. Look at verse 4: "And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desired of me that he might bring souls unto me, but thou desiredst that thou mightest speedily come unto me in my kingdom." You both got what you desired. Why are you struggling with this, Peter?

Verse 5: "I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire; but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work yet among men than what he has before done." I love the fact here that Jesus, in this particular segment that we no longer have in our Bible, explains this concept of, please don't spend so much time comparing. Don't look at what you have compared to what somebody else has, and say, well I want what he has. Any comparisons should be with God and with the Savior, not horizontally. He says, Peter, look, you got exactly what you desired. John is getting what he desired. It's not a problem.

Look at verse 8: "Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which ye have desired." It's a good question. What does your heart desire? And I hope it's not the things that the people around you have. I hope it's the things that the Lord Jesus Christ has to offer you.

We're told multiple times in these sections, if you have righteous desires, “Ask, and you shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Doctrine and Covenants 4:7). Section 7 tells us, shows us, gives us evidence that is true, and we don't need to compare and say one person's better than the other, or less than, but we can find joy in the fulfillment, or the accomplishment, of our righteous desires. So, let your heart be full and brimming with righteous desires, and just pursue those righteous desires, and let God work out great good in your life.

I also want to just point out with this section, something that's quite significant that we might miss, back here in verse 7: "I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James; and unto you three I will give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come." So, in Joseph Smith's day, the Protestant revolution had, or the Protestant Reformation, had swept Europe, had taken, had come into America, and we had all these different Christian denominations who were basing their faith on scripture. And there's a Latin phrase called *sola scriptura*, which means that our faith is centered in what we can find in the word of God, in scripture. It's a powerful doctrine, a beautiful doctrine, but on its own, it is insufficient. The scriptures cannot save us.

And what I love here is that God is laying out, giving some indicators that the Priesthood will be revealed, and that the Priesthood ultimately, the power of God, has to be on earth in order for salvation to be accessible. So yes, we love the scriptures. But the keys of the Priesthood are what unlocks the power of salvation in our lives, and we will see, in the upcoming sections and upcoming months in Joseph's life, that the Priesthood was revealed. The keys of God's power through the Priesthood were redelivered to the earth, and have unlocked the Restoration, and now the ordinances of God are available to all who will put their faith in Jesus Christ, that they can come unto him and experience salvation.

You know, that's a really powerful concept in an age where we're being told that you really don't need a church; you really don't need prophets; we're enlightened now, we don't need these things. Brothers and sisters, you're looking at how much effort God is putting into establishing his church, establishing priesthood keys that unlock doors and that seal things on earth and in heaven. It's vitally important that we recognize more than just knowledge as required for us to be able to move forward on the covenant path. We need God's prophets. We need those ordinances, and the keys that they hold, to help us progress on this covenant path, and to take opportunities to receive the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ more fully.

Now, shift over to section 8. You'll notice he begins here, calling him by name, again: "Oliver Cowdery, verily, verily, I say unto you, that assuredly as the Lord liveth, who is your God and your Redeemer..." (Doctrine and Covenants 8:1). By the way, that's one of my favorite changes in the new version of the temple recommend questions, when it says question number 2: "Do you have a testimony of the atonement of Jesus Christ and of his role as your Savior and Redeemer?" I love that addition, that it's not just as the Savior and Redeemer, but it's as your Savior and Redeemer.

And notice what he says here: "...who is your God and your Redeemer..." (Doctrine and Covenants 8:1). And then he tells him: you will "receive a knowledge of whatsoever things you shall ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive..." (Doctrine and Covenants 8:1). And now, one of the most powerful verses of the scriptures regarding revelation. Look at verse 2: "Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart..." and we'll pause there.

Who is the "I"? "I will tell you." We're told repeatedly, especially by President Nelson, "Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith History, 1:17). We're listening for the words of Jesus Christ. You'll notice Heavenly Father has delegated the kingdom into the hands of Jesus Christ. He's the one who's doing the talking here in section 8, as well as most of the Doctrine and Covenants, which, by the way, as we've, here we are in this new year. This has been one of the rewarding aspects for me, as I've studied these sections deeper, is to feel more connected to a person, to a being, to a God named Jesus Christ, to hear his voice more clearly, speaking not just to Joseph and Oliver and Martin and Joseph, Senior and others, but speaking to Tyler, and to you, and to my family today, and all of us.

You'll notice, "I will tell you in your mind and in your heart..." (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2). Can I just say that if you look at that phrase, what would you think might be one of the most important words in all of what we've talked about in verse 2? For me, it's a word that's kind of insignificant to most. It was years ago when I first heard this from a good friend and colleague many years ago, Randy Bott, who said to him, the most important word there was "and". I love that. The point here is: revelation will flow to the mind and the heart. You'll notice the word isn't "or". He doesn't separate the two. Christ loves combining. It's the devil who loves dividing, and in creating divisions.

So, "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" (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2). It's beautiful, thoughts that are so clear that they can even be written down at times. Elder Scott, Richard G. Scott spoke about this multiple times from multiple angles, the process of revelation, and how you have feelings and impressions, and gentle tugs to go certain directions, and then thoughts will come very specifically at times, and other times it's just a flash across your mind. And the question that many people end up asking, over and over again is, was that just me or is that the Holy Ghost? I love the fact that if it's a good thing, if it persuades you to believe in God, or to come unto him, or to serve people, or to love God's children, then you can be assured that it's a good thing to do. And you can spend less time worrying about, was that just me or the Holy Ghost, and recognize that the Holy Ghost is going to work with what I have, like Taylor was talking about earlier. He's going to work with my resources to communicate with me, using those channels, which means, often, I will think, wait, that was just me? When, in fact, it is Jesus Christ, speaking to us through the Holy Ghost in those simple ways.

Now, some of you may go to Church, or listen to people in lessons or in talks, talking about big revelatory experiences, and miraculous things that happen. And some of you might sit there and, in your mind, think, I don't know how to receive revelation, I guess. Or, I'm not worthy to receive revelation, because I don't get that kind of direct, clear answer, when in fact, brothers and sisters, the promise in the scriptures is so sure, and it's repeated all over the place. "Ask, and [you] shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63).

It will probably, for many of you, simply come in basic ways. You won't be performing grand, miraculous things. You might be doing the dishes when a thought just comes across your mind: I should do this, or I should try this with my child. Or, I should help my neighbor in that way. And you don't stand up in sacrament meeting and say, let me tell you about a grand, miraculous event that happened. You just quietly go and do what the Lord Jesus Christ invited you to do, through the gift and power of revelation here, through the Holy Ghost coming to "your mind and in your heart..." (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2). Other times, you'll just feel a quiet, forgiving of somebody, or a letting go of tension, or frustration, or anger. And you'll think, I should let that one go; I should be kinder to that person. And we don't often see that as this huge miracle, when in reality, God's doing exactly what he promised us he would do. He's going to speak to us "in [our] mind and in [our] heart," using our thoughts and our feelings (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2).

Now, I get it, there will be occasions where you get mountain-peak type of revelation, where the light shines so brightly, the voice is speaking clearly for a specific need, but brothers and sisters, those are going to be the exception for most of us. And in some cases, some may never get those kinds of experiences, and it's okay. It's okay. Part of our problem is, once again, we suffer from comparisons. We sit there and think, my revelation isn't as good as hers, or isn't as good as theirs, when God isn't in his heavens comparing us. I love this verse, "mind" and "heart". Don't just rely on one or the other, rely on both.

Oh, and by the way, might I just add, if you are really logical-oriented person, God's probably going to use that strength to help you, but don't be shocked if, on occasion, he pushes you out of that comfort zone and puts you in situations that force you to rely on more of the "heart" aspect of revelation, and vice versa. If you're a more feeling/emotion -- if you have high emotional intelligence, then don't be surprised if, occasionally, God pushes you into the unknown realm of having to figure out how to logic and reason through things a little more than maybe you might be comfortable with. God's going to keep stretching us and growing us through this process.

Look at verse 3: "Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground." In other words, Moses didn't have everything just open up for him. It was the spirit of revelation that caused this idea to come to fruition, to save the entire house of Israel in that event. And, brothers and sisters, God will give you revelation, if you seek it, to open up the Red Seas in your family, and in your circle of influence, to bring salvation to the world through "small and simple things" that start in our mind and our heart, that result in great things being brought to pass (Alma 37:6).

Notice verse 10: "Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith." It doesn't do any good to go to God like Laman and Lemuel. When Nephi came down off the mountain, having had his incredible vision, he sees Laman and Lemuel, who are arguing with each other about what their father had taught. And then they turn to him and start asking him, Do you know what this means? And you notice what Nephi's first question was? "Have ye inquired of the Lord?" (1 Nephi 15:8). And then the response is, "We have not; for the Lord maketh no

such thing known unto us” (1 Nephi 15:9). There’s no faith in that answer. They’re saying, Nephi, get real. Why would we ask God? God doesn't talk to us about these kinds of things. We would never have asked him about this. Well, then they're never going to get an answer from God because they have no faith that God's going to give them an answer.

Brothers and sisters, if you forget everything that I've said, or that we've said today, don't forget this: if you will go to God with sincerity of heart, with faith in Christ, with real intent, being willing to do whatever it is that he asks you to do, his promise is sure, he will give you an answer. He doesn't promise that that answer will come when you're on your knees, or while you're in the moment of prayer. From my experience, most of the time, it doesn't come that way. Elder Richard G. Scott also said that most answers to prayer don't come while we're on our knees. They come when we're up, acting to the best of our ability, using our mind and our heart, to do, in faith, what we feel like the Lord wants us to do, and then the revelation flows, and sometimes in really simple ways, and sometimes in profound ways.

Now, section 9. Oliver Cowdery had wanted to translate. And so, he was so excited, and he started this process, and it didn't turn out well. It didn't end well. He wasn't able to complete it. And he has some questions here, and so the Lord answers those questions in section 9. Let's start in verse 3: "Be patient, my son, for it is wisdom in me, and it is not expedient that you should translate at this present time." Brothers and sisters, don't be shocked when, at times, what you want doesn't line up with what God wants for you. Oliver desperately was comparing with Joseph, saying I want to do what he's doing. I want his job too. And so, for a short little segment there, he was able to do it, and then it didn't last, and he's frustrated.

And so, what happens? Verse 4: "Behold, the work which you are called to do is to write for my servant Joseph." Some of our biggest frustrations in life come when we don't get what we want, but if we will swallow our will in the will of God, then we'll find true happiness. And the role Oliver was going to be called to fill was not as translator, but as scribe, in this case.

Verse 6: "Do not murmur, my son..." Keep in mind, this is Jesus speaking to Oliver, and he's referring to him as “my son” (Doctrine and Covenants 9:6). I love this familial feel. It's not ‘my brother’, it's “my son” (Doctrine and Covenants 9:6). Jesus is adopting us to be his children, his sons and his daughters, as is described beautifully in the Book of Mormon, in Mosiah chapter 5 verse 7, and Ether chapter 3 verse 14, just to name a few. And, by the way, Jesus knows something about being an adopted son. He knows about taking people to become your own, and raising them as your own, and that's what he's doing with Joseph, and Oliver, and with all of us.

So, notice verse 6: "Do not murmur, my son, for it is wisdom in me that I have dealt with you after this manner." And then he tells them, you didn't understand. You got something wrong here, Oliver, and I'm not condemning you for that. I'm going to shape you; you're going to learn from this. It's only a failure if you don't grow, and progress, and learn from it.

Look at verse 8: "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." So, you'll notice the feeling implies a little more of the heart, the thinking in your mind, studying it in your mind, in verse 8.

Brothers and sisters, here's the invitation from God: use both your mind and your heart in the revelatory process. And if God doesn't give you an exact answer right away, then study it out. Come up with a plan. Use your intelligence, use your experience. Counsel with wise people. Figure out a best-case scenario that you can come up with, a best solution. Take it to the Lord, and ask him if it's right, and move forward to the best of your ability, and he will help us to know through feelings.

Verse 9: "But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me." I think we probably need to mention a caution that if we're not careful, we'll think that we can never move forward in a decision unless we have a burning, like a fire in our heart just causing us to cry, or causing us to feel tingly all over, and if we don't get that, then it's wrong and we're not receiving revelation.

I can think of a couple of handfuls of situations in my life where I felt an overwhelming sense of the fire of the Holy Ghost in my heart. But those are pretty limited, and those are experiences that are pretty sacred that I don't share widely. Most of the time, 99.9 percent of the time, revelation for me is gentle feelings of peace, of long-suffering, of patience, of kindness, of love, that verifies to me this is what needs to happen.

Now, I'm not in the process of translating scripture at that time, so it's not, it doesn't have to be this pinnacle of revelation like maybe it is in this context for Joseph and Oliver. But I think sometimes you and I might struggle with our expectation level of telling God that our revelation has to be above a certain threshold of feeling and enlightenment, or it doesn't count as revelation. If, instead, we "be still and know that [he is] God", and trust that as we move forward, doing the best that we can with our thoughts and our feelings, with all of their attached limitations, then we're opening the door for God to continue to teach us more, and more, and more of his language of revelation, and we become more fluent in it, and we trust it more. We stop less, and say wait, should I really do that? And we act more in faith, more fluently in this communication process with God.

Let's look again at verse 11. Remember, back, a few sections ago, God had said, "fear not", "fear not", "fear not" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:33-34, 36). And then what happened? Oliver actually had fear, and that was partly why he didn't accomplish what he had hoped for. How many of us experience fear in our lives? Frankly, all of us. It's a very human thing. What God is saying is: act, choose, move forward. When we have fear, we actually stop ourselves from acting. And God is telling us, have faith, have courage, keep the commandments. Don't wait to be commanded in all things, you have the commandments, move forward in faith, and it says, here in verse 11,

"Behold, it was expedient when you commenced; but you feared, and the time is past, and it is not expedient now;".

So, if you do have a righteous desire, don't be afraid of declaring that. You don't have to say it publicly, but being clear to yourself of what you desire, and seeking, and searching, and God will actually reveal your life to you as you act. If you wait for revelation in all things before you act, that just actually does not feel like a very fun life.

We fought a War in Heaven to have agency to act. And the purpose of revelation is to provide us a bit of guard rails. If God had to reveal every last thing that you are supposed to do with your life, that actually destroys your agency. So, fear not. Love God. He is with you, and he will guide you.

Now, to finish, there may be some, either in your family, or your circle of influence, or maybe you, who have experienced this, where you feel like you're getting weary. You're tired of trying to move forward on the covenant path, or live the gospel of Jesus Christ, keep the commandments, do all the things that are expected of you as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And part of the struggle might be because you feel like God isn't speaking to you; you're not receiving revelation, and you don't know how much longer you can hold on. Notice what he says here. Verse 13: "Do this thing which I have commanded you, and you shall prosper. Be faithful, and yield to no temptation."

Brothers and sisters, if you feel like you're not getting revelation, can I just recommend that you spend less time looking on the internet for answers to life's biggest questions, and the decisions that you're making, and spend more time immersed in the scriptures, in heart-felt prayer, in the words of living prophets, looking for guidance, and direction, and answers? And don't assume that God is going to send angels, or give you big, burning feelings in your heart in order for it to be true, but pay attention to the simple thoughts, to the simple feelings, the urges that come over time. For some, they come early. For some, they come late. But you'll notice the scriptures are filled with examples of people who go to God with questions, and they don't instantaneously get an answer. There is usually a trial of faith. Sometimes there's an instant answer, but usually there's a trial of faith. Anybody can be good standing on a mountain peak of revelation. The true test of my discipleship comes, not when I receive these big, clear, direct answers to questions and prayers, but more when I'm in the valleys, in the dark troughs, filled with shadows and darkness, trying to figure out how to move forward in faith. That's where my discipleship is stretched. That's where I grow the most. It's not up on the mountain peaks. It's in the struggles of making ends meet, both physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and financially. It's the struggles of life. That's why we're here: to move forward in faith.

Look at verse 14: "Stand fast in the work wherewith I have called you...". I think that invitation is just as strong for you and me, today, as it was for Oliver, and Joseph, and Emma, in their setting back there in that little home in Harmony, Pennsylvania.

Brothers and Sisters, God lives. He is in his heavens, and he is watching over us. He knows what you're going through, and he could take it away, but he's not, for most of us. And there's a good reason for that, because there is growth to come from us working with him through those struggles, and those trials of mortality. Know that you are loved, and we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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