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Ask, Seek, and Knock

Author(s): Eldred G. Smith

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Abstract: This article discusses how Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith learned that one of the concepts of the Gospel is to ask, seek, and knock. The process of translation was more than just looking into the Urim and Thummim. Revelation does not come without effort.

revealed, and our duty and obligation lies clearly before us. Small wonder then that the Lord instructed us as I have read before, that even if we build temples, if we do not also perform a labor of love therein, we will be rejected. The blood of our righteous ancestors will come upon our heads, and instead of blessings we will bring upon ourselves cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments. The Lord has called such neglect both a folly and an abomination.

What a time this is, then, for repentance! It is a time to seek the Lord humbly by knocking at the doors

of his holy house with the sheaves of our offerings in our hands. These sheaves of offerings are the names of our progenitors to present before the Lord, that we and they may be saved through a sealing in that family relationship which is characteristic of the patriarchal order of the priesthood.

I bear you my witness of the divinity of this work given to us by God our Heavenly Father through living prophets. This privilege of having this knowledge comes to us only through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. Of him I testify that he lives! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ask, Seek, and Knock

therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me." (D&C 9:7-9.)

As it was with Oliver Cowdery, so also we may have assumed that all the Prophet Joseph Smith did was to look into the Urim and Thummim and all the rest was done for him, with no other effort on his part.

As we look into the record, we find that after the first visit to the Hill Cumorah, Joseph told the story of the history of the early American inhabitants to his family. His mother wrote: "From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth—all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age. . . ." This sounds like the first family home evening of this dispensation.

Then she continued to say: "We were now confirmed in the opinion that God was about to bring to light something upon which we could stay our minds, or that would give us a more perfect knowledge of the plan of salvation and the redemption of the human family. This caused us greatly to rejoice, the sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house, and tranquility reigned in our midst.

"During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could

be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them." (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, pp. 82-83.)

This was before he received the plates. He must have received this by revelation, for he knew the whole story of the content of the record that is now the Book of Mormon. He had had five long visits with Moroni, and his mother says he received many revelations.

When Joseph finally received the plates, he did not take them directly home.

When Moroni, an angel of the Lord, gave him the gold plates, he told Joseph: "Now you have got the Record into your own hands, and you are but a man, therefore you will have to be watchful and faithful to your trust, or you will be overpowered by wicked men; for they will lay every plan and scheme that is possible to get it away from you, and if you do not take heed continually, they will succeed. While it was in my hands, I could keep it, and no man had power to take it away! but now I give it up to you. Beware, and look well to your ways, and you shall have power to retain it, until the time for it to be translated." (*Ibid.*, p. 110.)

He had also been instructed not to let anyone see the plates except as he would be instructed. Now he was going home in broad daylight, with the plates, wrapped in his linen frock, under his arm. He must have felt quite uneasy about this, so, while still about three miles from home, he went into a grove of trees and hid the plates in a partially rotted log, which he had hollowed out with his pocket knife.

When he returned later to get them, he found them safe. He wrapped them in his linen frock, put them under his arm, and started home. On the way, "as he was jumping over a log, a man sprang up from behind it and gave him a heavy blow with a gun. Joseph turned around and knocked him down, then ran at the top of his speed. About half a mile farther he was attacked again in the same manner as before; he knocked this man down in like manner as the former and ran on again; and before he reached home he was assaulted the third time. In striking the last one, he dislocated his thumb, which, however, he did

SMITH, Elder Eldred G.

Patriarch to the Church

● I too would like to begin my message today with the same passage that President Tanner used this morning, this oft-repeated passage found in the 11th chapter of Luke where the Lord said: "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given 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." (Luke 11:9-10.)

He says, "ask," "seek," and "knock." It's as if he were standing there with outstretched hands, waiting for us to reach out and take them. If we do not reach out, he cannot help.

It seems quite simple, but to "ask," "seek," or "knock" involves effort on our part.

Oliver Cowdery learned this lesson too. It seems that he had made an attempt to translate and failed, as a result of which we have the revelation given in Section 9 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is a key to revelation, in which the Lord said to Oliver Cowdery through Joseph Smith: "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

"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 that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong;

not notice until he came within sight of the house, when he threw himself down in the corner of the fence in order to recover his breath. As soon as he was able, he arose and came to the house. He was still altogether speechless from fright and the fatigue of running." (*Ibid.*, p. 108.)

I consider this a rather remarkable physical feat: to carry the plates under his arm, knock down three men, and run the approximate three miles.

I think the Lord gave him this experience purposely, to show him by his own experience that the adversary would exert every effort to get the plates and would stop at nothing to hinder the work of the Lord; also, to teach him that he would be given help as may be needed if he would exert his own efforts first. The Lord must have given him extra strength beyond his own physical abilities to carry the plates, knock down three men, and run three miles.

When the Prophet started to translate, he had to study the characters for quite awhile. Then his wife Emma did some writing for him. Then Martin Harris became his scribe. Then after the 116 pages of transcription were lost, Oliver Cowdery came to be his scribe.

By this time, Joseph had had considerable experience at translating, and the work went forth with good speed.

Not even with the Urim and Thummim does it come without effort. Joseph had to exert all his effort, physically and mentally. He had to put forth his full effort. So it is with us today. We must put forth our full effort, give our full Church-service time.

The promise is also to us: we will be given the help that we need to fulfill the Lord's work if we will put forth our effort first.

May I say to all who are not yet members of the Church of Jesus Christ:

seek, ask, and knock. The Lord may someday ask you if you tried to find his Church. We are trying to bring this great message of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world. We would that all could rejoice, as the Prophet's mother did as she said, "This caused us greatly to rejoice, the sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house, and tranquility reigned in our midst." (*Ibid.*, p. 83.)

This is our message to the world: to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ, with its peace, happiness, and tranquility, into every family, the world over.

Ask, seek, and knock.

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

I testify to you that this is truly the work of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and do so in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

The Eternal Life of Man

Elder William J. CRITCHLOW Jr.

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● "All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely
players:
They have their exits and their
entrances;
And one man in his time plays many
parts,
His acts being seven ages."
(William Shakespeare, *As You Like
It*, Act I, scene 7.)

Yes, the world is truly a huge stage, and upon it the greatest drama ever conceived and produced is still coursing 6,000 years after the curtains were opened to unveil a beautiful scene in Act I called the Garden of Eden.

In a single sentence the author of this great drama set forth concisely a purpose, a motive, and an objective for his marvelous work. He said:

"For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

In that simple sentence, I find a fitting title: "The Eternal Life of Man." You who like brevity may shorten it to "Eternal Life." I like it either way. I hope the author will approve.

Later in my remarks I shall comment on the author's purpose.

Members of the drama's cast respectfully address the author as God. Frequently we dispense with formality and affectionately call him "Our Father which art in heaven." (Matt.

6:9.) His real name is Elohim. (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 465-473.) May he pardon me for calling him the author. This I do reverently to avoid too frequent use of the sacred title, God.

The theme of the great drama is *free agency*, meaning man's agency or freedom to choose. The script is divided into seven acts, each 1,000 years in length. The play has advanced far into the sixth act. Soon the curtain will rise for the seventh or millennial act.

To stage and direct the drama, the author needed a director. Bidding for it, a talented and ambitious character known as Lucifer, frequently called Satan, offended and insulted the author. His bid offended because he proposed to alter the author's script in a way that nullified the author's theme concept—free agency; it insulted because the bidder sought as his price the author's honor and power: ". . . wherefore give me thine honor," and give unto me thine "own power." (Moses 4:1-4.) His bid rejected, he rebelled and cried out in anger, ". . . I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the most High." (Isa. 14:13-14.)

The author awarded the directing job to his son Jehovah, who agreed to "go down" and prepare the world stage and to direct the play according

to the author's script.

Lucifer's rebellion escalated into a war in heaven. It spread to earth, a fierce struggle between Lucifer and Jehovah. Battles are still raging on the stage here in the sixth act. Approximately one third of the cast selected for the great drama defected and sided with Lucifer. For so doing, they were dropped from the cast and thus denied physical appearances on the stage. This infuriated them. They vowed to make the play flop, and to that end they have used freedom—the very agency they at first protested—to destroy "free agency."

Lucifer's strategy is to induce the cast to use their individual agency in a way that will produce chaos on the stage. By exposing the cast to as much evil as possible, he hopes to gain numerical strength so that he might shout when the curtain rolls down at the end of the play, "I have the majority of the heavenly host on my side; numerical strength is my power. Now I can claim 'thine honor'; now 'I will ascend into heaven'; now 'I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.'" (See Isa. 14:12-20.)

One thing we are forced to admit: Despite the fact that Lucifer's spirit followers were eliminated from the cast and thus deprived of physical appearances on the stage, their power to tempt and adversely influence the cast has been tremendous.