

D&C LESSON #6

“I WILL TELL YOU IN YOUR MIND AND IN YOUR HEART, BY THE HOLY GHOST”

By Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: The scriptures mention a multitude of different ways in which the Spirit can communicate with us. Many of these are in the D&C, but other volumes of the standard works also teach rich and rewarding lessons on this topic. In this lesson, I will try to give an overview of the many passages from the scriptures that suggest the different forms that inspiration and revelation can take.

If we seek divine direction, but anticipate that it will only come in one way, we may miss the very thing for which we have asked.

1. UNDERSTANDING HOW THE HOLY GHOST COMMUNICATES WITH US

T 1 Sam. 3:4,5,10: An audible voice. Samuel heard the voice so clearly he thought Eli was calling him. President Harold B. Lee recorded this experience:

As a young boy I was out on a farm, waiting for my father to finish his day's work, playing about, manufacturing things to while away the time, when I saw over the fence into the neighbor's yard some broken-down buildings with the sheds caving in and with rotting timbers. I imagined as a young boy that that might be a castle that I should explore, so I went over to the fence and started to climb through, then I heard a voice as distinctly as you are hearing mine. "Harold, don't go over there." I looked in every direction to see where the speaker was. I wondered if it was my father, but he couldn't see me. There was no one in sight. I realized that someone was warning me of an unseen danger. (Harold B. Lee, "The Way to Eternal Life," Ensign, Nov. 1971)

T **Job 32:8:** Inspiration giving understanding—There is a spirit in us that is fashioned to respond to the whisperings of the Spirit, and often those whisperings give us understanding—understanding of problems or of solutions or of the intent of hearts or the meaning of passages of scripture.

Longer ago that I care to admit, I began teaching in the Church Educational System. During one of my first few years my supervisor came to my class and administered an evaluation to my students about their feelings regarding seminary and their seminary teacher. The computed scores from that evaluation were lower than I could have imagined. I was devastated and my supervisor was puzzled. We had both expected that my scores would be much higher.

I could not sleep that night, and at 4:30 in the morning I was in my office again at the seminary, pondering and wondering and aching. At about 5:00 the phone rang. It was my boss. He told me that he was also in his office (in a nearby city—he supervised many seminaries in Northern Arizona) looking at my papers and trying to decide what was happening with my teaching. “The reason I called,” he told me, “is to tell you that I now understand what is wrong.” And he did. He gave me counsel based on spiritual understanding that changed my teaching and my life.

T **D&C 6:14,15:** Instruction and light from the Spirit---Sometimes the whisperings of the Spirit give us instruction about things to do or not to do. M. Russell Ballard gave the following illustration of this principle:

At the risk of having all of you lose your faith I am going to tell you a story about my own life. When most of you were still in the spirit world, I signed an Edsel franchise with Ford Motor Company. Some of you may not know what the Edsel was. The older brethren know that that was probably the most disastrous national marketing mistake that was ever made in the United States. Ford Motor Company had spent over two hundred million dollars pulling together an automobile. Henry Ford II was then the president of Ford Motor Company. The car would carry his father’s name. The promotion, the anticipation, the excitement

were just unbelievable.

You could appreciate what it was like for me, being a relatively young businessman and having all the power of Ford Motor Company being brought about to encourage me to become the Edsel dealer for Salt Lake City. I wrestled with that. I said to my father, who was a great man in my life, "Before I sign the franchise, I want to see the car." They made a special arrangement for us to fly to California to view the car. Now, I am wrestling about this, I'm talking to the Lord about it, I'm asking for direction, it's a big decision, it involves a lot of money, a lot of commitment on my part. We walked in, my father and I, and saw that line of automobiles, and the minute I saw them, I had the distinct impression not to go ahead with the franchise.

I got away from that circumstance, and then the powers started to work on me again, influential sales techniques, all the promises of what this line of cars was going to do. It was going to be the greatest thing that ever came into the automobile industry. And I allowed myself to drift from that mooring . . . I wavered from the impression that the Lord had given me, and I made the decision to sign the franchise, then went through the torments of the damned, almost. If we had more time, I could tell you that it's not fun to lose a lot of money fast. (M. Russell Ballard, "Thinking Straight," New Era, Mar. 1985, 49,50)

T **D&C 6:22,23:** The Spirit speaks (gives) peace—this experience in my life has usually been one that assures me that the Lord has things under control. I may not know how things will work out, or even if they will work out according to my desires, but I know that the Lord will cause things to work according to his will. This imparts a great sense of peace.

My wife and I had been trying for years to move to a larger house. We had nine, and then ten, children in a house with 3200 square feet. The house was so congested that I felt like I had to go outside to change directions. We had sold our home more, than once, put money down on new homes, even made a down payment on a lot where we would build. But something

always went wrong with the deal on one end or the other. I remember standing late at night on a vacant lot in Pleasant Grove. It was *my* lot. We were going to build our home on that spot. But things had gone wrong enough that I was nervous. I poured out my soul to my Father for some kind of confirmation about what we were going to do, and I was filled with peace. I knew, standing there, that things would be all right. And they were. The purchase of the lot did not materialize. The building of the house did not take place. But as we waited to understand the will of the Lord, I remembered that sense of peace I experienced on that hillside.

T **D&C 8:2,3:** I will tell you in your mind and in your heart—The Lord tell us that this experience—the combination of intellect and spirit—is the spirit of revelation. Many of you will remember experiences in the mission field when you taught the gospel or were being taught the gospel, and this phrase was spoken: “I have always believed that.” That is the heart confirming the intellectual evidence of the mind.

T **D&C 8:4:** The gift (of the Spirit) will deliver you out of the hands of your enemies—The experience of Joseph Smith with the 116 pages and those who sought his repudiation is clear evidence of this principle. In the same context, the spirit will show us the way of escape when troubles arise.

T **D&C 11:12:** the Spirit leads to do good—We are told that Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38). Often we are satisfied with just going about. In any situation, those moved by the Spirit will choose to do the good thing. We are led by the Spirit to offer ourselves in service to others, for which we will be blessed. “And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.” (D&C 58:28)

T **D&C 11:12:** The Spirit leads us to do justly—In addition to doing good, we must do the right thing, the just thing, the fair, appropriate thing. The Spirit will lead us to treat people fairly.

T **D&C 11:12:** The Spirit leads to walk humbly—

A temple president once told a group of young people attending

the temple: “After your own baptism, you were told to receive the Holy Ghost, which means that the Holy Ghost will guide and bless you if you are worthy. If anyone should oppose you, or bring harm to you, you can overcome that opposition by the influence of the Holy Ghost.” President Lee gave this illustration of walking humbly:

The president soon noticed one young woman sobbing. She explained that her mother opposed her activity in the Church and was angry that she had left for the temple. “I have been fasting ever since I left home that here in the temple I would be given a guide and the power to overcome the opposition of my mother. I was going away disappointed. But now, at the last moment, you have given me the key. ... I am going to bring Mother within the influence of the power of the Holy Ghost.”

A few weeks later the temple president received a letter. The young woman explained that her mother was still angry when she returned home. She wrote: “On other occasions I had fought back, but this time I walked over and put my arm around her shoulder. ... I told her what a wonderful experience I had had in the temple. And to my amazement, Mother burst into tears and begged my forgiveness” (The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 96–97).

T D&C 11:12: The Spirit leads us to judge righteously—

The King James Version reads: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1), making it sound as if no one should ever judge others. But the JST footnote clarifies the doctrine: “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged: but judge righteous judgment.”

The context of verses 2–5 suggests that looking for fault in others or critically condemning others is what is being censured by the Savior. He has counseled us to be merciful, to deal justly, and to judge others righteously—to make appropriate ethical appraisals of others under the influence of the Spirit (see Alma 41:14; D&C 11:12; D&C 121:41–45). He warned us to “cease to

find fault one with another” (D&C 88:124) because “with [that same] judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (Matt. 7:2). (W. Jeffrey Marsh, “Prophetic Enlightenment on the Sermon on the Mount,” Ensign, Jan. 1999, 20)

- T** **D&C 11:13:** My spirit will fill your soul with joy” I sat in the temple ten years ago for the sealing of my daughter to wonderful returned missionary. It was a sublime moment, one we had hardly dared hope for over the preceding years. I was nearly overcome with the sense of joy and victory.
- T** **2 Nephi 31:13:** Through the instrumentality of the Spirit, we can be led to speak with the tongue (words, voice) of angels. Nearly all of us have been a part of a meeting in which a great speech was delivered. We have given it or heard it and we have known that the words being spoken were not the words of the one speaking. He or she was speaking with the tongue of angels,
- T** **D&C 9:7-9 :** The Spirit can cause our hearts to burn, or give us a stupor of thought—My church calling was at the MTC for several years. A neighbor appeared at the front desk one day, looking for a particular branch president. I knew his location and offered to serve as a guide. As we walked down the hall, my friend suddenly stopped, wrapped his arms around himself, and exclaimed, “This place feels so good!” What he was feeling, I suspect, was the warmth, the burning of the Spirit, offering a divine confirmation of what he already felt about that holy place.
- T** **1 Nephi 4:6:** Just as the Spirit led Nephi to Laban, the spirit can lead us to unknown and/or unseen destinations—My wife was informed by school children one morning that someone had just walked into our garage and ridden off on my 12-year-old’s bike. My boy had worked hard to earn the money for that bicycle. My wife got dressed, collected the baby, and got in the car. She offered a prayer and drove a couple of miles being lead by the spirit until she turned into a cul-de-sac where found the bike with the young man standing next to it talking to friends.
- T** **Alma 14:11:** We can be constrained or restrained by the spirit.

Another way in which the Spirit operates is by constraint. To constrain means to impose stricture, restriction, or limitation; to confine, to hold back. When the wicked inhabitants of Ammonihah were about to burn the believers, Amulek suggested that he and Alma exercise the power of God within them and stay the flames. Alma replied, "The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing ... that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just." (Alma 14:11.) The Lord held Alma back from doing something contrary to divine plan.

Wilford Woodruff related a similar encounter he had with the Spirit. He was bringing some Saints from New England and Canada to the West. They had scheduled passage on a boat, but the Spirit spoke to Elder Woodruff, "Don't go aboard that steamer, nor your company." He obeyed the voice. The boat departed and, some fifty yards downstream, caught fire and sank. (See *A Story to Tell*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1945, p. 320.)

Two missionaries related that one night they were walking a familiar countryside road. Suddenly, they both had an impression that they should go no farther in that direction. They retraced their steps and took another way home. The next day, they wondered why they had felt constrained to stop. They went back, this time in daylight, and found that, within a few feet of where they had stopped, a bridge had washed out. These are a few examples of the Spirit constraining people from doing something. (Jay E. Jensen, "Have I Received an Answer from the Spirit?" *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 25)

T **Enos 1:10:** A voice might speak in our mind. President Marion G. Romney said that the Lord sometimes reveals answers to prayer in complete sentences (See *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1961, pp. 947–49), or what others have called finished sentences. At times, a person may actually hear an audible voice; at other times, a person may have an impression or a thought come into his mind expressed in one or

more complete sentences. Enos reported that while he was “struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into [his] mind.” (Enos 1:10.)

T Acts 2:37: Investigators on the day of Pentecost were “pricked n their hearts.” I suspect this means that they felt guilt, which can clearly be a manifestation of the Spirit. Haven’t you had an experience when you have done something , and the memory of that act has pricked your heart with a sense that you were wrong and ought to go fix something? On the day of Pentecost, those who heard the apostles speak said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

T Mosiah 5:2: the presence of the Spirit can take away our disposition to do evil. You have all experienced this. When you have felt the spirit your inclination to sin in any manner disappears, does it not? Under the right circumstances it can even change our disposition.

T 1 Kings 19:12: the Spirit can speak in a still, small voice.

The means by which the Spirit speaks to both the mind and the heart is through the still, small voice spoken of in the scriptures. This voice is often called the “voice of the Spirit” (1 Ne. 4:18). Sometimes that voice is heard within, but more often it is felt. It may prompt us with both a thought and a feeling concerning a matter.

Elder Packer described the still, small voice with these words: “These delicate, refined spiritual communications are not seen with our eyes nor heard with our ears. And even though it is described as a voice, it is a voice that one feels more than one hears.” (L. Lionel Kendrick, “Personal Revelation,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1999, 1;

T Moses 6:6: If we call upon God we can write by the Spirit of inspiration. This is a wonderful gift to those who desire to share their testimonies or their concerns with loved ones, or for those who are trying to record a spiritual experience in a journal or other sacred place. Consider this instruction.

Some people say, “I don’t have anything to record. Nothing spiritual happens to me.” I say, “Start recording, and spiritual things will happen. They are there all the time, but we become more sensitive to them as we write.” (Elder John H. Gorberg, *ensign*, May 1980, pp. 48,49)

T **D&C 128:1:** Concerns sometimes occupy our minds or our feelings. We feel a repeated impression to visit a friend or to act on a certain matter or to write a letter. In the last conference, president Hinckley said:

Perhaps, out of all we have heard, there may be a phrase or a paragraph that will stand out and possess our attention. If this occurs, I hope we will write it down and reflect on it until we savor the depth of its meaning and have made it a part of our own lives. (*Ensign*, Nov. 2001, p. 88)

Of course there are other ways to receive revelation—dreams and visions and angelic ministers. The purpose of this discussion is to increase our awareness of the multitude of ways in which the Spirit might work with us.

2. CAUTIONS ABOUT PERSONAL REVELATION

The history of this church is filled with examples of people who have been led away from the truth by revelation from a source not approved by heaven. I had a missionary companion who received revelations faster than he could write them down. He was certain when he was 20 years old that he was soon to be called to fill a vacancy in the quorum of the twelve. He had ideas to revolutionize the missionary work in my mission. He had no time to proselyte! There were more important things to do. Only the strongest counsel turned him away from a course that might have led to destruction.

On another occasion I witnessed troubling events unfold as a sister in a branch began to receive revelations about the manner in which the elders ought to conduct their missionary labors. The Lord’s timely intervention and the arrival of an inspired leader again averted what might have been a calamity.

I have an acquaintance who has had a multitude of visions and revelations

and who has started his own church. He has received a revelation calling me to the quorum of the twelve in his new organization.

And the stories go on and on. Beginning with Hiram Page in D&C 28 and continuing on with the numerous and troubling examples in our own day, we have records and personal experience with people who have not been able to discern between what is divine and true and what is not.

D&C 28 gives us some important direction.

1. “But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses.” The word “in” in this verse has been interpreted to mean “for.” Only one man can receive revelation “for” the Church. The same is true of wards and stakes and families. There is an order in this process that is as critical as any in the church. (28:2)
2. “And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it. But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom . . .” (28:3,4) “thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment.” (28:8) We can speak under the Spirit of inspiration. We ought to. But we are not permitted to publish our insights as commandments.
3. “And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church . . .” (28:6) Only one person can give commandments to the President of the Church, and that is the Head of the Church.
4. And again, thou shalt take thy brother, Hiram Page, between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me and that Satan deceiveth him; For, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants. (28:11,12) Nothing shall be appointed to the church contrary to the covenants of the church. This is a great standard for the protection of the people and the perception of the truth.

5. "For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith." (28:12) The raising of the right hand to sustain leaders and to acknowledge their right to receive revelation for us is a powerful antidote to any efforts of Lucifer to divert the energies of the Church.

3. WHEN REVELATION IS NOT RECEIVED OR RECOGNIZED

For all of us there seem to come times when we seek to know the will of the Lord but no answers come. At such times it is not uncommon for supplicants to question their own worthiness, thinking that perhaps the problem is with them. Of course this may be true at times. A pattern of disobedience will make us less receptive to the whisperings of the holy Spirit. But other considerations may also be a part of the equation.

Ponder these two conditions along with the counsel given in the lesson manual.

1. *WHAT WE ASK FOR MUST BE RIGHT*

- A. "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is right* . . ." (3 Nephi 18:20, *emphasis added*)
- B. "And now, if God . . . doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask *that is right* . . ." (Mosiah 4:21, *emphasis added*)
- C. "My God will give me, *if I ask not amiss* . . ." (2 Nephi 4:35, *emphasis added*)
- D. "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given you, *that is expedient for you*." (D&C 88:64, *emphasis added*)

If we come before the Father in prayer, but we are not certain that the thing we request is right, then we must follow the Savior's example in Luke 22:42: ". . . Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

So very much of pure prayer seems to be the process of discovering, rather than requesting, the will of our Father in heaven and then aligning ourselves therewith. (Elder Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, p. 93)

The Bible Dictionary of the Church's edition of the King James Version tells us that

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*, p. 752,753)

On occasion, the Lord has granted requests for things that were, perhaps, better left ungranted, in order to teach a lesson, and in order to satisfy the demands of a servant who will not accept 'No' for an answer. Martin Harris, Joseph Smith, and the one hundred and sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript offer a striking illustration (See *Doctrine and Covenants*, section headings for sections 3 and 10) Martin had rendered such valuable aid to Joseph, and was under such pressure from his family, that Joseph could not bear to turn down his request to take the translated pages home in order to prove the inspiration of the work.

It was only after "much solicitation" and having "wearied the Lord in asking" that permission was finally given for the pages to be entrusted to Martin, who covenanted to show them only to a small group of relatives. Martin Harris did not keep his covenant, and the manuscript pages were lost. (See *Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 20, 21) Joseph shared the responsibility for the loss because he had not been willing to accept the Lord's refusal when first he sought consent. The Lord chastened Joseph for his part in the affair: "For, behold, you should not have feared man more than God." (*Doctrine and Covenants* 3:7) The Lord also said, "Because you delivered up those writings . . . into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them. And you have also lost your gift [to translate]." (*Doctrine and Covenants* 10:1,2)

No matter how desirable a blessing seems to us, and no matter how marvelous (in our perspective) the benefits might be, we must submit to the Lord's will and the Lord's answers, lest we find ourselves, as Joseph did, in great difficulty.

Boyd K. Packer explained:

On several occasions when a member has insisted that something be done his way, I have remembered that great lesson from Church history. I have said to myself in my mind:

All right, Joseph, give the manuscript to Martin Harris. Do it your own way, and see where you get. Then when you're confounded and confused, come back and we'll get you set on the course that you might have taken earlier if you had been submissive and responsive. Someone wrote:

*With thoughtless and impatient hands
We tangle up the plans
The Lord hath wrought.
And when we cry in pain He saith,*

'Be quiet, man, while I untie the knot.'
(Anonymous)
(*Ensign*, November 1979, p. 21)

2. WE MUST BE RIGHT

- A. "For the Lord hath heard thy prayers and hath *judged of thy righteousness.*" (Mosiah 3:4, *emphasis added*)
- B. "And now, if God . . . doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, *in faith, believing that ye shall receive . . .*" (Mosiah 4:21, *emphasis added*)
- C. "*Ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith . . .*" (Moroni 10:4, *emphasis added*)
- D. "All things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for *thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.*" (Helaman 10:5, *emphasis added*)
- E. "But let him *ask in faith, nothing wavering . . .*" (James 1:6, *emphasis added*)

Remember that the Lord may say, in answering our requests, "No" or "Not yet." If we get either of these answers, there are two possible reasons. First, what we have asked for may not be right, and a "Yes" answer might impede the plans of God for the welfare of his children. Second, we might not be right, and a "Yes" answer would do us more harm than good by teaching us incorrect principles, or reinforcing our unworthiness. It is imperative that we never lose sight of the reality that we are being proved in this mortal environment (Abraham 3:25) We should not expect God to remove all of our problems because we pray. Sometimes we must endure in faith while we pray, waiting on the will of God, and knowing that whatever he is doing to us will be good for us if we are willing.

We tend to think only in terms of our endurance, but it is God's patient long-suffering which provides us with our chances to improve, affording us urgently needed developmental space or time (see Alma 42:4-5)

Paul observed, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). Such "peaceable fruit" comes only in the appointed season thereof, after the blossoms and the buds.

Otherwise, if certain mortal experiences were cut short, it would be like pulling up a flower to see how the roots are doing. Put another way, too

many anxious openings of the oven door, and the cake falls instead of rising. Moreover, enforced change usually does not last, while productive enduring can ingrain permanent change (see Alma 32:13-16). (Elder Neal A. Maxwell, C.R., April 1990, p. 42)

CONCLUSION: Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke of the experience of receiving and responding to revelation in this way:

Some answers will come from reading the scriptures, some from hearing speakers. And, occasionally, when it is important, some will come by very direct and powerful inspiration. The promptings will be clear and unmistakable.

You can learn how, in your youth, to be led by the Holy Ghost.

As an Apostle I listen now to the same inspiration, coming from the same source, in the same way, that I listened to as a boy. The signal is much clearer now.

And on occasions, when it is required for His work, for instance when we are to call members to high positions in the stakes, we can ask a question in prayer and receive an immediate, direct revelation in return.

No message is repeated more times in scripture than the simple thought: "Ask, and ye shall receive" (D&C 4:7).

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