

# LESSON

# 4

Avoiding A Faith Crisis

TODAY'S KEY WORD:

# Joseph Smith

TODAY'S MAIN POINT:

**Will you accept Joseph and the Restoration as the greatest things since Jesus Christ?**

“Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3)



“The second of the two things to which we must all give full faith is that the Father and the Son actually and in truth and very deed appeared to the Prophet Joseph in a vision in the woods” (J. Reuben Clark, “The Charted Course”).

## WEEKLY Q&A

Answer these questions in your study journal.

1. Why might it be difficult for some people to accept the truthfulness of Joseph Smith's vision?
2. What principle did Joseph Smith learn about how to find spiritual truth?
3. How has your testimony of the First Vision influenced your belief in the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. What doctrinal truths can be learned from the First Vision?
5. Why does the “whole strength” of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rest upon the validity of the First Vision? (See the back side of this sheet, excerpts from Gordon B. Hinckley, Oct. 2002.)

## QUOTE OF THE DAY



Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration. His spiritual work began with the appearance of the Father and the Son, followed by numerous heavenly visitations. He was the instrument in God's hands in bringing forth sacred scripture, lost doctrine, and the restoration of the priesthood. The importance of Joseph's work requires more than intellectual consideration; it requires that we, like Joseph, “ask of God.” Spiritual questions deserve spiritual answers from God.

Many of those who dismiss the work of the Restoration simply do not believe that heavenly beings speak to men on earth.

Impossible, they say, that golden plates were delivered by an angel and translated by the power of God. From that disbelief, they quickly reject Joseph's testimony, and a few unfortunately sink to discrediting the Prophet's life and slandering his character.

We are especially saddened when someone who once revered Joseph retreats from his or her conviction and then maligns the Prophet.

“Studying the Church ... through the eyes of its defectors,” Neal A. Maxwell once said, is “like interviewing Judas to understand Jesus. Defectors always tell us more about themselves than about that from which they have departed.” (Neil L. Andersen, Oct. 2014).



*“In addition to the Internet, we think we have found a timeless way to do missionary work.”*

# The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith

By President Gordon B. Hinckley, General Conference, October 2012



We declare without equivocation that God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, appeared in person to the boy Joseph Smith.

When I was interviewed by Mike Wallace on the 60 Minutes program, he asked me if I actually believed that. I replied, “Yes, sir. That’s the miracle of it.”

That is the way I feel about it. Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision. It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens.

Reflect upon it, my brethren and sisters. For centuries the heavens remained sealed. Good men and women, not a few—really great and wonderful people—tried to correct, strengthen, and improve their systems of worship and their body of doctrine.

To them I pay honor and respect. How much better the world is because of their bold action. While I believe their work was inspired, it was not favored with the opening of the heavens, with the appearance of Deity.

Then in 1820 came that glorious manifestation in answer to the prayer of a boy who had read in his family Bible the words of James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Upon that unique and wonderful experience stands the validity of this Church.

In all of recorded religious history there is nothing to compare with it. The New Testament recounts the baptism of Jesus when the voice of God was heard and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw the Lord transfigured before them. They heard the voice of the Father, but they did not see Him.

Why did both the Father and the Son come to a boy, a mere lad? The instrument in this work of God was a boy whose mind was not cluttered by the philosophies of men. That mind was fresh and without schooling in the traditions of the day.

It is easy to see why people do not accept this account. It is almost beyond comprehension. And yet it is so reasonable. Those familiar with the Old Testament recognize the appearance of Jehovah to the prophets who lived in that comparatively simple time. Can they legitimately deny the need for an appearance of the God of heaven and His resurrected Son in this very complex period of the world’s history?

That They came, both of Them, that Joseph saw Them in Their resplendent glory, that They spoke to him and that he heard and recorded Their words—of these remarkable things we testify.

I knew a so-called intellectual who said the Church was trapped by its history. My response was that without that history we have nothing. The truth of that unique, singular, and remarkable event is the pivotal substance of our faith.

But this glorious vision was but the beginning of a series of manifestations that constitute the early history of this work.

As if that vision were not enough to certify to the personality and the reality of the Redeemer of mankind, there followed the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Here is something that a man could hold in his hands, could “heft,” as it were. He could read it. He could pray about it, for it contained a promise that the Holy Ghost would declare its truth if that witness were sought in prayer.

There followed the restoration of the priesthood—first, of the Aaronic under the hands of John the Baptist, who had baptized Jesus in Jordan.

Then came Peter, James, and John, Apostles of the Lord, who conferred in this age that which they had received under the hands of the Master with whom they walked, even “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” with authority to bind in the heavens that which they bound on earth (see Matt. 16:19).

Subsequently came the bestowal of further priesthood keys under the hands of Moses, Elias, and Elijah.

Think of it, my brothers and sisters. Think of the wonder of it. This is the restored Church of Jesus Christ. We as a people are Latter-day Saints. We testify that the heavens have been opened, that the curtains have been parted, that God has spoken, and that Jesus Christ has manifested Himself, followed by a bestowal of divine authority.



## HOMWORK

**Study Joseph Smith.** FIRST, visit [history.lds.org/firstvision](http://history.lds.org/firstvision). SECOND, do an Internet search of “Joseph Smith First Vision” or “Ask of God Joseph Smith’s First Vision.” THIRD, visit other reliable Internet sources: The Joseph Smith Papers; BYU Religious Studies Center; BYU Studies; Joseph Smith Foundation.org. FOURTH, to learn about Joseph Smith and polygamy, visit two websites: [JosephSmithPolygamy.org](http://JosephSmithPolygamy.org) and [JosephSmithsPolygamy.org](http://JosephSmithsPolygamy.org). As you study, record in your study journal what you learned and felt.