
Testimony

D&C 62:3

On August 13, 1831, in Chariton, Missouri, Joseph Smith and his traveling party met elders Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, Harvey Whitlock, and David Whitmer, who were on their way to Independence, Missouri. After “joyful salutations with which brethren meet each other, who are actually ‘contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints,’” Joseph received a revelation from the Lord.¹ In this revelation, the elders were told to rejoice, “for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you, and your sins are forgiven you” (D&C 62:3).

What was the testimony these elders had shared? A testimony is always a spiritual witness given by the Holy Ghost. The foundation of a testimony is “the knowledge that Heavenly Father lives and loves His children; that Jesus Christ lives, that He is the Son of God, and that He carried out the infinite Atonement; that Joseph Smith is the prophet of God who was called to restore the gospel; that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Savior’s true Church on the earth; and that the Church is led by a living prophet today.”²

Such a testimony was shared by President Russell M. Nelson:

During decades prior to my call to the Twelve, I ... have been to the place of the Prophet’s birth in Vermont and to the vicinity of his childhood, where he was operated upon without the mercy of an anesthetic. I have trod their farmland in the State of New York and have reverently entered that grove made sacred by his First Vision in 1820. I have climbed Cumorah’s Hill as well as the steps of Kirtland’s Temple inwardly rejoicing in the experiences he had there. I have wept for him

¹History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 145. Joseph Smith Papers.

²“Testimony,” in Gospel Topics, churchofjesuschrist.org.

at the jails of Liberty and Carthage. Now, I do know for myself that these things are true. The Lord God has manifest them unto me by the power of his Spirit. This is the witness of revelation which is in me.

I testify not only to the reality that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is his church restored in these latter days, but I fervently and sincerely declare that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God foreordained from before the foundations of the earth to the mission assigned to him, for which he paid with his life.³

Elder Boyd K. Packer in his general conference address in October 2007 shared the story of bearing his testimony to the First Presidency of the Church:

Forty-six years ago I was a 37-year-old seminary supervisor. My Church calling was as an assistant teacher in a class in the Lindon Ward.

To my great surprise, I was called to meet with President David O. McKay. He took both of my hands in his and called me to be one of the General Authorities, an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

A few days later, I came to Salt Lake City to meet with the First Presidency to be set apart as one of the General Authorities of the Church. This was the first time I had met with the First Presidency—President David O. McKay and his counselors, President Hugh B. Brown and President Henry D. Moyle.

President McKay explained that one of the responsibilities of an Assistant to the Twelve was to stand with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a special witness and to bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ. What he said next overwhelmed me: “Before we proceed to set you apart, I ask you to bear your testimony to us. We want to know if you have that witness.”

I did the best I could. I bore my testimony the same as I might have in a fast and testimony meeting in my ward. To my surprise, the Brethren of the Presidency seemed pleased and proceeded to confer the office upon me.

³ Russell M. Nelson, “At the Heart of the Church,” in *The Prophet and His Work: Essays from General Authorities on Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 64–65.

That puzzled me greatly, for I had supposed that someone called to such an office would have an unusual, different, and greatly enlarged testimony and spiritual power.

It puzzled me for a long time until finally I could see that I already had what was required: an abiding testimony in my heart of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that we have a Heavenly Father, and that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. I may not have known all about it, but I did have a testimony, and I was willing to learn.⁴

⁴ Boyd K. Packer, "The Weak and the Simple of the Church," *Ensign*, November 2007.