

Fireside
Seek the Face of the Lord

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Man is commanded to seek the face of the Lord:

One of the great privileges of the Gospel that has existed in every dispensation, is the privilege of obtaining a personal visitation of the Lord. The scriptures are replete with accounts of those who have sought and obtained this great gift. A notable few of those who have obtained the privilege of conversing with the God of heaven face to face include Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Peter, James, John, Paul, Lehi, Nephi, the brother of Jared, Alma, Moroni, the Nephite Twelve, Joseph Smith, and many others. It is also undoubtedly true that countless others, whose names are unknown to history, also obtained this sweet gift.

It is worth observing that even during times of spiritual decline and darkness, some sought and obtained this grand blessing. Many of the Old Testament prophets prevailed with the Lord while all around them wickedness reigned.

So sublime is this visitation, and so vast the blessings it bestows, that it is literally impossible to overstate its attendant blessings. In the following pages we will examine these blessings, as well as the requirements laid upon those who would be so bold as to seek the face of God.

We are literally commanded to seek His face.

And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life. (D&C 101:38)

Moses sought to bring his people out of spiritual darkness into the full light of the glory of God. He sought to prepare them that they might do as he had done, ascend the Holy Mount, and see the face of God. He labored diligently to prepare them to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is the power to enter within the veil.

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

Stated without double negatives it informs us that with the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is manifest unto men in the flesh; For with this man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

The Personal Visitation is for all

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

It requires monumental faith to translate a promise given to all mankind, into a personal belief so seemingly audacious as "I" can seek a personal audience with Deity. It almost seems irreverent to so believe, as if one is leapfrogging an entire paradigm of mortality – that God only appears to prophets, period. The internalization of a belief that you, or I, can and even must, find ourselves on the other side of the veil, is almost superhuman.

Mortal frailty notwithstanding, the promise has stood through time, sounding a divine invitation to awake, and behold.

Beyond human unbelief, the enemy of our souls does not want us to believe such lofty things, and carefully steals the precious seeds of veil-rending belief before they even touch the rich soils of our soul.

Still, the promise stands, and all mankind is invited to enter in.
Elder McConkie declared:

Seeing the Lord is not a matter of lineage or rank or position or place of precedence. (McConkie TPM p569)

Joseph Smith said:

"God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know him . . . from the least to the greatest." (*Teachings*, p. 149.)

We who, perhaps incorrectly, consider ourselves the "least saint" can take great hope from the foregoing promise. The reason this promise is extended to all, is that God will lead us to the veil as fast as we are able, or perhaps better stated, as fast as we are *willing*, to bear it.

The process to approach the veil is clearly defined in scripture:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. (D&C 93:1)

Chapters could be written on this divine formula. The power of what it tells us is that EVERY soul who follows this process may partake of the divine gift. The process is thus defined.

1- Forsake sins. Though this process must include repentance, it reaches much further than simply repenting faster than one sins. It is a state of forsaking, walking away from sin, abandoning it, and living life as sinlessly as mortals may. To do so is to drink from the divine river of grace. It is to qualify, through obedience to law, for a retooling of

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the soul which makes sinless living, far more than merely possible, but joyful. No mortal can forsake sin so completely unaided by the power of Christ's grace. However, when obedience, fueled by unconquerable desire, taps into the power of the atonement, all things are possible – all spiritual refinements, including forsaking all sin, becomes not just possible, but sweetly distills upon our souls as the dews from heaven. We become pure in heart, not by our own discipleship, but by the disciple of obedience, and upgrading of the soul by God.

2- Come unto me. How can one come unto Christ unless one perceives where Christ is? Faith Repentance, and Baptism bring the seeker to the church of Christ, but not necessarily to Christ himself. To come unto Christ, one must hear His voice, and turn toward the sound thereof with faith-born desire, and struggle if necessary, walk when able, and eventually run toward the sound of his voice.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Revelations 3:20)

If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him! What a marvelous promise. Christ's voice is Light and Truth and Spirit. (D&C 84:45) To walk without His voice is to walk in darkness. Throughout scripture, the Lord laments that man is walking in darkness at noon day. (D&C 95:6) Christ laments over and over that He is a light shining in darkness, and the darkness does not perceive the light. (D&C 6:21, 10:58, 34:2, 39:2, 45:7, 88:49)

More than in any other way, we come unto Christ by hearkening to his voice. Every other criteria follows as naturally as day follows the night: Ordinances, ordination, covenants, contracts, promises, perfections, visions, visitations and glories unspeakable all flow from this one obedience, and in no other way. It is not possible that someone unwilling to follow His voice would progress at all in His Gospel, no matter how many outward ordinances they wiggled themselves into.

3- Call on My name. The language here is interesting, and powerful. These words can't implied calling upon Him in prayer, since we pray not to Christ, but to the Father.

To call "upon" His name, is to invoke our covenant relationship with Christ when calling upon the Father. It is to stand, not behind, but upon his grace as he implores the father in our behalf.

I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom; and verily, I say, even as many as have believed in my name, for I am Christ, and in mine own name, by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them. (D&C 38:4)

Christ can plead with the Father in his own name by virtue of the blood which he spilt upon the cross and in Calvary, but we have no such standing in the divine court. Our relationship with God, our hope of divine intervention in our lives, our salvation, our hope of redemption and eternal glory is all in the name of Christ.

Hence, we must call "upon" his name.

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4- Obey my voice. Everywhere in scripture the injunction is the same; those who obey his voice will be exalted – those who do not, will not. More than obedience to the commandments, more than obedience to law, more than obedience to any doctrine or principle, obedience to the voice of the Lord is listed as the dividing line between righteousness and wickedness.

Christ's voice begins as the voice of conscience. This means that conscience is the most rudimentary (unrefined) manifestation of Christ's voice. Other, purer manifestations follow as greater obedience to this tiny voice of truth calls them forth. Promptings, insights, bursts of understanding, doctrine distilling upon our souls, revelations, visions, conversations, visitations, and even the divine presence, are increasingly more pure manifestations of revelation. One cannot evolve to the greater forms without first perfecting the lesser.

5- Keep my commandments. Lastly, having done all other things, the penitent must keep the commandments.

Then follows this last and greatest promise – that we shall be privileged to see His face, and know that He is. Then, faith turns to knowledge, and knowledge to power, and power to privilege.

These five steps define a pathway to the presence of God. They are the same that every prophet has trod to enter the divine presence. They will, in the timetable of the Lord, bring us to the same spiritual stature as the Brother of Jared.

If and when we obtain the spiritual stature of this man Moriancumer, then we shall see what he saw and know what he knew. (McConkie TPM p582)

Elder McConkie, adds this sweet and encouraging insight. Commenting upon D&C 88:62-63 (Call upon me while I am near—Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.) He exults:

Surely, this is what we must do if we ever expect to see his face. He is there waiting our call, anxious to have us seek his face, awaiting our importuning pleas to rend the veil so that we can see the things of the Spirit. (McConkie TPM p582)

How do men obtain a knowledge of the glory of God, his perfections and attributes?" the Prophet asked. His answer: "By devoting themselves to his service, through prayer and supplication incessantly strengthening their faith in him, until, like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they obtain a manifestation of God to themselves." (*Lectures on Faith* 2)

The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." (D&C 107:18-19.)

From all of this it follows, automatically and axiomatically, that if and when the holy priesthood operates to the full in the life of any man, he will receive its great and full

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blessings, which are that rending of the heavens and that parting of the veil of which we now speak. (McConkie: TPM 588, commenting on 107:18-19)

The mysteries are those principles of the Gospel which must be received and understood by the Holy Ghost. Mysteries are not to be shunned, but rather appropriately sought under the guidance of the Spirit. It is the mysteries which give us the key to the knowledge of God, and in time, the actual knowledge of God – which is life eternal (John 17:3)

The Pure in Heart shall See God

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

Elder McConkie adds this emphasis:

The pure in heart shall see God. This we have already seen, but we restate it again because the process of becoming pure in heart is the process that prepares us to see the face of Deity. (McConkie TPM p580)

Being pure in heart is further defined here:

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. (D&C 93:36.)

45 For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (D&C 84:45)

These terms are spiritually synonyms, and in this context, interchangeable. More importantly, they reveal what we are to make our eyes single to – the light and truth which flows from the Spirit of the Lord – which light and truth is literally the Glory of God. Making our eye single to all truth as it flows from the Spirit also makes our eye single to His glory and in time fills us with all truth. Since truth and Light are spiritually synonymous, being filled with truth is to be filled with light.

And when our bodies are filled with light:

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

68 Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. (D&C 88:67-68)

Elder McConkie said much the same thing in this beautiful proclamation:

After the true saints receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost; after they know how to attune themselves to the voice of the Spirit; after they mature spiritually so that they see visions, work miracles, and entertain angels; after they make their calling and election sure and prove themselves worthy of every trust—after all this and more—it becomes their right and privilege to see the Lord and commune with him face to face. Revelations,

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visions, angelic visitations, the rending of the heavens, and appearances among men of the Lord himself—all these things are for all of the faithful. They are not reserved for apostles and prophets only. God is no respecter of persons. They are not reserved for one age only, or for a select lineage or people. We are all our Father's children. All men are welcome. "And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile." (2 Ne. 26:33.) (McConkie TPM p575)

Why should we seek the Lord in this life?

Perhaps the looming question we must ask ourselves when contemplating seeking such a lofty blessing is: Why do it at all? The obvious obstacle in seeking such great blessings is the requirement for great obedience, and apparently, even great trials. Is the personal visitation a requirement to receive the blessings we desire in the eternities? Or, is it more like divine extra credit? Good questions all.

Disciples contemplating whether to seek this blessing must eventually cross this bridge, and fear may be the keeper of the toll booth, and the coin required may appear far too dear to contemplate – especially if the whole journey is eternally optional.

It may also be that anyone truly contemplating this journey should take off their jacket, sit back down and relax. In my opinion, this is not a decision one can actually make, but one that was forged in the spiritual genetics that followed us into this world. It seems to me that if one must contemplate, either the timing is wrong, or the journey is wrong. When the timing is right, the journey will be right, and the spiritual power will arise, the cost will seem trivial, and the end goal more desirable than breath.

Add to this the unassailable truth that this journey is *not* optional. At some point in our pursuit of the Kingdom, we will of necessity qualify for a personal interview with Jesus Christ. That God is no respecter of persons, and the eternal Justice of the Father, precludes the process being harder, or easier for any individual. The price we pay to obtain this privilege now will be equal to any other who obtains it, no matter if it is in this mortal sphere, or some future world.

Additionally, there are fantastic blessings to be enjoyed for experiencing this blessed moment in this life. Most of the prophets who left records urged us to seek the face of God. Why, because they knew first hand of the glory and majesty that had entered their lives. Why, because obtaining these supernal privileges in this life gives us the unparalleled opportunity to bequeath them to our children. Why, because this is the greater gift, the very object of temple worship, the very purpose of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Beyond these reasons born of logic, far beyond, is the astonishing fact that *this* is the zenith of human accomplishment. Nothing that can happen in mortality compares to the outpouring of glory, joy and blessings in mortality and in eternity of this singular event. Nothing. It may be, it must be, that once received, nothing in all of eternity will have a more profound effect upon our eternal future.

Much of secular literature records in fictional form man's yearning for a magical component to his life. The concept of magic is pervasive throughout the world. The concept is not only fascinating, it is generally conceptually comfortable, as if somewhere

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in our psyche there is a deeply submerged memory of “magic” as being not only commonplace, but good. The recent phenomenal success of the Harry Potter series is an example of our general comfort with the idea of magical forces, as are stories of magic lamps and magic rings and the like.

Imagine for just one moment that most of those stories are very loosely grounded in historical fact! If they are grounded in actual happenings that could not be understood or duplicated by the uninitiated, they would have quickly evolved into myth and legend.

Consider the fact that in the early history of mankind men of pure faith walked the earth – Adam, Seth, Enoch and a hundred-thousand others. Consider how incredible healings, raising the dead, ascents in fiery chariots, walking on water, moving mountains, defeating vast armies, or creating wealth, food, homes, or cities by a single word must have jolted the secular mind. Such people and such events would begin a superstition and a legend of such power that it would never die, but would persist throughout all the living memory of mankind in one form or another. I think Harry Potter is just a modern-day recycling of that legend.

Such is the enormity of the blessings received by uncommon man in the personal visitation of the Lord. The blessings are so vast as to eclipse human understanding, and to literally appear like magic.

When the “Perfect Day” finally comes when we at last are so blessed that we may enter into His presence and into His glory, the pattern exists that He asks if there is something that we desire.

1 And it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, saying unto them: What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father? (3 Nephi 28:1)

This is the pattern of all visitations. This pattern has repeated itself in every visitation recorded in scripture. Adam, and his generations obviously asked to live long upon the earth. Enoch asked for translation. Noah asked that his family be saved from the floods. Melchizedek (who was probably Noah’s son, Seth) asked for two things, to be translated, and to have the privilege of bestowing the priesthood outside of his family line. Thus, the priesthood became “Melchizedek” rather than patriarchal. Abraham asked for blessings upon his posterity. Moses asked for translation. Samson asked for strength. Solomon asked for wisdom. The Brother of Jared among other things asked for sixteen stones to be lighted. Lehi asked for deliverance for his family. Nephi asked to see the same things his father had seen, and that the record he wrote would be the means of salvation to his distant posterity. The nine Nephite Disciples asked to skip the spirit world and go speedily into Heaven. The Nephite three asked for the greater blessing of translation.

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed.

13 And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. (3 Nephi 28:12-13)

Such a promise is held out to those of this dispensation.

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8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man. (D&C 76:8-10)

D&C section 76 contains part of the “vision of all” Joseph received and was allowed to record. Observe the tenses of the promises. Notice how glorious are the blessings listed as “*are*”. These blessings occur in *this* life. Once these present-day blessings come to pass, the “*shall*” blessings are promised for the next life.

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Now, the promises pertaining to the eternities:

60 And they shall overcome all things.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

64 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

Now, back to the present day:

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical. (D&C 76:52-70)

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The only way such blessings, such astonishingly, unspeakably glorious things could come upon modern man is if the blessed individual were changed, caught up and translated. Then, all of these “*are*” verses become understandable. Without the principle of Translation, these “*are*” verses become heart-warming platitudes without specific meaning since most of us suspect deep in our hearts that all but a very few mortal men can climb to such glorious climbs as to be considered a “god” (v58) in this life.

Yet, the promises are published for all! All are invited to partake. And, when understood in the light that literally hundreds of thousands have been translated, it makes the above promises present and possible. They *are* priests and kings, and have received of his fullness, they *are* priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, and the order of Enoch, and members of that general assembly (which order is that of the Translated Zion). They *are* gods, they *are* just men made perfect, they *are* celestial, and have all power delivered into their hands.

The Prophet Joseph added this understanding to the long list of magnificent blessings.

. . . until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother. (Teachings 338)

And thus it is today, even as in days of old.