

# God Shall Give unto You Knowledge by His Holy Spirit

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

**M**y beloved brethren and sisters, it's a pleasure to be with you. I am complimented by your presence this stormy morning. I am grateful for Brother Wheelwright's prayer. It's about 2:20 in the morning in Australia where I have just been, and if I fall asleep while I give this talk you will know the reason why, and you may have the same privilege.

I know that you have come to hear something that will help you, and to that end I seek the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit. I think I know something of the frustrations of college life. It is a long time since I was there, but I have never forgotten the anxieties of those days. And I think I know something of the frustrations of life in general. I have had my head bumped and my shins barked. On some of these occasions when I have needed a laugh I have turned to a letter which I think is something of a classic, which was first published in the Manchester, England, *Guardian* and later reprinted in the *Deseret News*.

A hurricane had hit the West Indies, and a bricklayer was sent to repair the damage. He wrote to the home office as follows, and I hope you can get this delightful picture:

*Respected Sirs:*

*When I got to the building I found that the hurricane had knocked some bricks off the top. So I rigged up a beam with a pulley at the top of the building and hoisted up a couple of barrels full of bricks. When I had fixed the building, there was a lot of bricks left over. I hoisted the barrel back up again and secured the line at the bottom, and then went up and filled the barrel with the extra bricks. Then I went to the bottom and cast off the line. Unfortunately the barrel of bricks was heavier than I was, and before I knew what was happening the barrel started down, jerking me off the ground. I decided to hang on, and halfway up I met the barrel coming down and received a severe blow on the shoulder. I then continued to the top, banging my head against the beam and getting my finger jammed in the pulley. When the barrel hit the ground it bursted its bottom, allowing all the bricks to spill out. I was now heavier than the barrel and*

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*so started down again at high speed. Halfway down, I met the barrel coming up and received severe injuries to my shins. When I hit the ground I landed on the bricks, getting several painful cuts from the sharp edges. At this point I must have lost my presence of mind because I let go of the line. The barrel then came down, giving me another heavy blow on the head and putting me in the hospital. I respectfully request sick leave.*

Life is like that—ups and downs, a bump on the head, and a crack on the shins. It was ever thus. Hamlet went about crying, “To be or not to be,” but that didn’t solve any of his problems. There is something of a tendency among us to think that everything must be lovely and rosy and beautiful without realizing that even adversity has some sweet uses. One of my favorite newspaper columnists is Jenkin Lloyd Jones. In a recent article published in the *News*, he commented:

*There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands and smooch in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks, to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and ravishing wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear, the divorce courts are jammed.*

*Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he’s been robbed. The fact is that most putts don’t drop. Most beef is tough. Most children grow up to be just ordinary people. Most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration. Most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. . . .*

*Life is like an old-time rail journey—delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride.*

I’d like to leave that thought with you this morning.

### **Miracles Wrought by Faith**

It was my great privilege to attend the Munich area general conference held last month in Germany. It was a tremendous experience to sit in that great Olympic sports hall and look into the faces of 14,000 Latter-day Saints who had gathered from across Europe. Two days before, I had met with the missionaries of the Germany South Mission and had felt something of their discouragement as they labored to find those they might teach. Out of all their efforts there have come only a convert here and another there, and these seem so few. But when I saw that great body of Saints in Munich I saw the fruits of their faith and of the faith of those who had preceded them. I saw a thousand doors knocked on for every man and woman and child present. I saw 999 doors rudely slammed for everyone opened. I heard the prayers, the pleadings of missionaries to be led to someone who would accept the truth. I saw those missionaries going up one street and down another in bitter winter weather and the scorching heat of summer. And I witnessed in my mind’s eye the lonely struggles of those few who opened their doors—their fasting, their pleadings, their doubts, their faith, weak at first and then strengthening. When I looked over that vast congregation I knew that faith had been rewarded and that, while it had happened ever so slowly, a miracle had come to pass.

A week ago we stood at the foot of the steps leading to the door of a great Boeing 747 aircraft. Always in the past I had boarded these planes at level loading, and it had been like walking from one building to another. But a new loading area was under construction and we had to go down to the pavement and then up the steps. I stood beneath that plane in awe. How could that kind of a bird ever fly? I wondered. With its vast wings reaching 231 feet and its tail rising to the height of a six-story building, it weighed more than 320 tons loaded, and carried nearly 400 people. “It can

never get off the ground," I said to myself. But we climbed aboard and seated ourselves comfortably, and soon it was bumping down the runway. The ride on the pavement was rough and noisy, and I said again, "I knew it. This thing can't get off the ground." But then it began to lift—smoothly, quietly, swiftly. We climbed to 38,000 feet, above the clouds and toward the stars. The giant bird had found its element, and through the night it cruised while we ate and slept for more than 7,000 miles.

We left San Francisco and arrived in Sydney. We left one hemisphere and landed in another. We left by direction of the North Star and came down by direction of the Southern Cross. It was a miracle, so commonplace that we scarcely think of it. But it was a miracle wrought in faith, and behind it lay a thousand feeble beginnings made in faith, shattered now and again by scores of tragedies as men walking in faith have learned to build and fly that giant.

### **Have Faith in Yourself and Call upon the Lord**

While on that journey, I read for diversion two books—I should have been working on this speech—each of which lifted my sights and strengthened my own faith. The first was *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, a delightful fantasy wherein I came to know that "that gull sees farthest who flies highest" and that only one in a million sees beyond its wingtips, that the remainder stand on the ground, "squawking and fighting among themselves for food, their eyes tightly shut to the joys of flight." Many of you, I am sure, have read that little book, and I hope you received a lift as did I.

The other was a volume first published in Liverpool in 1848 under the title *Spencer's Letters*. Orson Spencer was a highly educated Baptist clergyman, widely respected and greatly loved in Boston. There he heard the message of the restored gospel, as did many others. But with a courage not often seen, he

faced up to his convictions, left his ministry, his friends, and the comforts of his high station, and moved to Nauvoo, only to be driven therefrom on the long and miserable journey that led to these mountain valleys, here to live the struggling life of a pioneer. As I read the words of that gifted, sensitive, courageous man, added resolution came into my own heart. And out of the feelings that came from those two books, I would like for a few minutes longer to speak with you about that simple but most marvelous principle spelled with two vowels and three consonants: F-A-I-T-H.

I hope you won't turn me off, because if there is any one thing you and I need in this world it is faith, that dynamic, powerful, marvelous element by which, as Paul declared, the very worlds were framed (Hebrews 11:3). We need it in our studies. We all know that university work, as it is structured, is a grind. Our academic pursuits are spoken of as disciplines, and so they are. But somewhere out there for you seniors and away out there for you freshmen is a field to be cultivated, and you are here today to learn to use the necessary tools. This is one university where students can be told that faith—the kind of faith that moves one to get on his knees and plead with the Lord and then get on his feet and go to work—is an asset beyond compare, even in the acquisition of secular knowledge. I do not minimize the need for study and labor. I would add to these faith and prayer, with the sacred promise that "God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost." There are hundreds of you here this morning who can testify that you have witnessed this in your own experiences. It is so easy to get discouraged while you're here. It seems so natural a thing to drop out or to give in. The way seems so long, the road so steep, that we are prone to think it not worth the candle. The story is told of the Irish peddler who wished to go to Dublin, which was so far

away and he had no money. But he got there by placing one foot in front of the other.

My dear young friends, never lose faith in yourselves or in your capacity to do worthwhile things. And call upon the Lord for help that your minds may be enlightened and your understanding quickened. Then go to work with that assurance inside of you that somehow you can do it.

I remember a missionary in Japan who bore his testimony in one of our meetings. It was before the days of the language training missions. Japanese had been extremely difficult for him, so much so that his mission president thought he should be transferred to an English-speaking mission. The elder said, as he stood on his feet, "The Lord had called me to Japan, and I knew I had to have the language to do the work. I fasted all of one day and prayed through the night. I fasted the second day and again pleaded with the Lord for help because I knew that somehow with his help I could do it. The next day, something seemed to break. The shadows of my mind lifted. I could understand as I had never understood before. And now it seems that Japanese is a language I learned a long time ago that is coming back to me."

#### **Faith Leads to Direction by the Spirit**

In Australia just this past Sunday we were told of a doctor, a member of the Church, who had taken seriously the counsel that every member should be a missionary. He didn't know how, but he was willing to try. He pleaded with the Lord for help. He told his patients, as opportunity presented itself, of the Church. Then he received a call one day from a patient who said that he and his family wished to know more of Mormonism. The doctor sent the missionaries. After being taught, the family asked for baptism and requested that the doctor perform the baptisms. The doctor asked them how their interest had been aroused. They said that they had gone camping. The first day they just enjoyed themselves.

The second day they felt a little bored. They walked around the campgrounds and found a copy of a Church magazine. They read it. Their interest had been aroused. Tears came into the eyes of the doctor. He said, "My family and I had been at the same campground a few days before. I had taken that magazine with me to read. I felt impressed to leave it on the table. That was the magazine which led you in the direction of the Church."

My brethren and sisters, the faith to try leads to direction by the Spirit, and the fruits that flow therefrom are marvelous to behold and experience. A little over a year ago a young woman convert to the Church was called to serve a mission in her homeland, one of the countries of the Far East. Her folks, who were Buddhists, repeatedly insisted that she forsake her mission and her religion and return home. Their demands were so insistent that the mission president last month authorized her to go back and see her family. There she was met by her family, the entire clan, who used every possible means to persuade her to forsake her newly found religion and return to the religion of her forebears. She replied quietly but firmly that she could not deny her faith, that she must heed the call of the Lord rather than follow the counsel of men, even the counsel of her father.

The family, presided over by her uncle, denounced her and expelled her and told her that she could no longer associate with any of them. Then, after further deliberation, the family leaders determined that a mark should be put upon her to remind her of her infidelity to her traditional religion. While the men of the family held her, her father's older brother branded her with three burns in the arm. He told her that this would be a sign to the gods that she had forsaken Buddhism.

With ugly and painful wounds, with a broken heart but a resolute spirit, she returned to her mission. The scars in her flesh will remain to her a sign not of the forsaking of her father's religion but of her unconquerable faith in the

gospel of Jesus Christ. Her faith so touched the heart of the father who had denounced her that he came to the mission home and put his arms around her and kissed her and told her that they would never desert her, and there was awakened in him also something of an understanding, faint but real, of the true meaning of the gospel of the Lord.

It is that kind of faith that sustained the Prophet Joseph when, as a boy, he was ridiculed and persecuted. It was that kind of faith that sustained him and his followers when they were driven from state to state, when they were tarred and feathered, when their homes were burned and they sickened unto death from exposure to the elements. It was that kind of faith which took him to Carthage, though he knew he was going as a lamb to the slaughter. It was that kind of faith that sustained our forebears in the long

marches from the Mississippi to these mountain valleys when death walked beside them. It was that kind of faith that has sustained a hundred thousand missionaries and a million converts who have walked through the lonely valley of conversion, and it is that kind of faith that will sustain you and me in difficult and trying situations.

God help us to cultivate it, for "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20). Such is the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. This, my brethren and sisters, is what our presence on this campus is all about: that faith might increase and be manifest and reflected in our lives and through us in the lives of others. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.