

# “The Prophet Joseph Smith”

By  
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**V**ice President Nelson, Vice President Wisner, Matt Tittle, faculty and staff, student council and institute leaders, and students of the LDS Business College:

Congratulations on being part of this outstanding academic enterprise. I understand that yesterday, November 15th, was the 119th anniversary of the founding of your great institution. When my wife and I visited your campus recently, Vice President Nelson graciously gave us a tour. During the tour we were fortunate to hear your choir rehearsing in this room for the anniversary events of this week. They sounded like angels—angels who were happy to be here. You are all to be congratulated for participating in, and helping to build, an academic program that combines the best of educational training with eternal principles of honor and truth.

Today I have been asked to talk about the Prophet Joseph Smith, whose 200th birthday we celebrate next month on December 23rd. This exceptional servant of God was and is and will always be the prophet of the Restoration. To him we owe so much. Even those outside our faith are coming to recognize the importance of this extraordinary man. Professor Robert Remini of the University of Illinois in Chicago wrote in his recent biography of Joseph Smith: “The founder of this Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., is unquestionably the most important reformer and innovator in American religious history” (Joseph Smith, New York: Viking, 2002, p. ix).

Just by being here—whether in this auditorium or in one of the adjacent rooms—each of you is demonstrating a commitment of faith in wanting to cultivate a stronger testimony of the mission of the Prophet Joseph. I pray that I might leave with you a few thoughts and stories that will help you do that. Testimonies are growing things—sometimes as a

seed of belief (just as Alma said in the Book of Mormon), sometimes as a sprouting seedling, sometimes as a young growing sapling, sometime as a fully developed tree of everlasting life. Testimony-building is a process that never ends—because we can always strengthen our faith and receive added spiritual vitality. We all have the same opportunity to study, and learn, as we pray for inspiration from the Almighty on this important matter.

This hour is not so much about Joseph Smith, my brothers and sisters, as it is about you. You are the subject of this talk. Your Father in Heaven loves you and wants you to be happy and live a fulfilling and productive life. And you can do so, in the strength of the Lord.

### The Run-A-Way Coach

Let me begin with a story. Let's go back to Wednesday, November 27th, 1839: This day the Prophet Joseph Smith is traveling in a horse-drawn coach en route to Washington, D.C., to speak with President Martin Van Buren and seek redress for the merciless persecution of the Saints. At a rest stop, the coachman steps away for a drink and, for some reason, the horses bolt away at full speed with the crowded coach. Now picture this, the coach full of passengers is racing down the road at break-neck speed—with no driver in control. What would you do if you were a passenger in that run-a-way coach? Here's what Joseph Smith did (and I quote from his personal journal): "I persuaded my fellow travelers to be quiet and retain their seats, but [I] had to hold one woman to prevent her throwing her infant out of the coach." Imagine! A woman wants to save her baby as they roar down the roadway at full speed, so she is determined to throw the baby out the window! "The passengers were exceedingly agitated," continues the Prophet, "but I used every persuasion to calm their feelings; and opening the door, I secured my hold on the side of the coach the best way I could, and succeeded in placing myself in the coachman's seat, and reining up the horses, after they had run some two or three miles, and neither coach, horses, or passengers received any injury. My course was spoken of in the highest terms of commendation, as being one of the most daring and heroic deeds, and no language could express the gratitude of the passengers, when they found themselves safe, and the horses quiet. There were some members of Congress with us, who proposed naming the incident to that body, believing they would reward such conduct by some public act" (History of the Church 4:23-24). However, when they learn who Joseph is—the "Mormon Prophet"—they promptly forget their gratitude. Nevertheless, the Prophet Joseph was skillful in securing the safety of his colleagues—not only physically, but, of greater consequence, spiritually. Through his mission of the Restoration he saved the faithful everywhere from a run-a-way culture heading for disaster—the disaster of being lost forever in the dark alleys and back streets of an unrighteous world perishing without the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So think of yourself as being on that run-a-way coach. Think of yourself as taking charge and getting things under control. Think of yourself as blessing lives as you strengthen your testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith. May I suggest four strategies for doing so? First, listen to the Spirit of the Lord. Second, see the big picture.

Third, accept Joseph Smith as your friend.

And fourth, follow his footprints and see where they lead. You may be surprised and delighted.

### Strategy One

Let's start with the most important strategy of all for strengthening our testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And that is: Listen to the Spirit. Study and ponder and then ask the Lord for a spiritual confirmation. The Book of Mormon was brought forth by Joseph Smith under the inspiration and guidance of the Lord. It was first published in 1830. Well over 100 million copies have been distributed throughout the world since then. Each year some five million more copies are published. Each copy contains that miraculous promise recorded by Moroni at the end of the volume as he sealed up the plates and committed them to the earth around 421 AD. There they remained hidden until September 22, 1827, when Moroni himself, now as a resurrected being, delivered them to Joseph Smith, then 21 years of age, with the charge to translate them as another testament of Jesus Christ. Moroni wrote, under inspiration: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4-5).

If you will study the Book of Mormon and then kneel before the Lord and ask for a confirmation that it is the word of God, He will bless you with a confirming answer. And if that book is true, then Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. That is the only reasonable explanation. Ask the Lord, and He will tell you so.

### Strategy Two

Now strategy number two: See the big picture. Let the Spirit lift your sights to a higher perspective. Joseph Smith was no accident. The restoration was not simply the result a young boy's religious curiosity. Joseph Smith was called of God from before the foundations of the earth—in the pre-mortal existence. He was prepared as a prophet from before time began—just like Moses or Abraham or Isaiah.

Look around you. Do you see Joseph Smith sitting here among you—maybe in this corner or that? No! But there was a meeting or meetings where you were present with the Prophet Joseph Smith. It happened long ago as part of the great council in heaven before we came to this earth.

Listen to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council. It is the testimony that I want that I am God's Servant, and this people his

people” (Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 Vols. 6:364) (Joseph Smith, Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings, edited by Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997]).

Brigham Young confirmed that truth:

You will be thankful, every one of you, that Joseph Smith, junior, was ordained to this great calling before the worlds were. . . . It was decreed in the counsels of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eye upon him, . . . . He was foreordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation, as much so as . . . Jesus to be the Saviour of the world. (Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 7: 290.)

But it wasn't just Brigham Young who was able to place Joseph Smith into the big picture. The prophets down through the ages saw in vision the mission and triumph of this modern prophet.

For example, the Prophet Isaiah foresaw a time of great spiritual darkness in the latter days where a special book would be brought from the dust by the hand of God to enlighten the people. Isaiah gives us the words of the Lord: “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (Isaiah 29:14, see also verse 4).

What was the miraculous event? It was the Restoration of the gospel and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon! Who brought forth that book? Joseph Smith, who was chosen and ordained before any of us came to this earth.

The Prophet Lehi, who lived over a century after Isaiah, also knew about the mission of Joseph Smith. Remember when as an old man he gathered his children around him to give them a final blessing? And what did he say to Joseph, his youngest son, at the time only a child? Lehi read to him from the brass plates about Joseph of Egypt, his namesake. Joseph of Egypt (the son of Jacob or Israel) saw in vision a choice latter-day seer, like unto Moses, whom the Lord would raise up to restore His word of truth and peace unto the people. And what would the name of that modern seer be—Joseph! And his father would also be named Joseph. So there are four Josephs being described by Lehi! Joseph of Egypt, Joseph the son of Lehi, Joseph the modern seer, and Joseph's father. (See 2 Nephi 3:3-16.)

Who was that modern seer named Joseph whom Lehi referred to some 2,400 years before the man was to be born? It was Joseph Smith. Can you imagine what the young Joseph would be thinking as he translated those very words of Lehi in the Book of Mormon—realizing that he was the very one whom Joseph of Egypt had seen in a vision, some 3,700 years earlier, acting as the indispensable future prophet of the Restoration.

Seeing the big picture and knowing that it is true is refreshing and exciting.

### The Bookmark

If we had time, we would also turn to Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Peter to observe how each of these prophets knew of Joseph Smith and his coming mission as the Prophet of the Restoration. You can find these and all other references relating to my talk on this little bookmark, copies of which I will leave for you on the podium. (See Ezekiel 37:15-17, Daniel 2:44-45, Acts 3:19-21.)

The mission of the Prophet Joseph was not an accident—but a heavenly design that was prepared from before the foundation of the earth. You can strengthen your testimony of Joseph Smith by seeing him through the eyes of heaven—foreordained for this very purpose. Not a confused, unschooled, wandering lad who stumbled into a grove of trees to pray, but rather an individual of magnificence, schooled at the hands of the Master already in the pre-mortal world as he prepared to experience the First Vision and accept the awesome task of spending his life in the service of God.

### Strategy Three

The third strategy for strengthening your testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith is to accept him as your friend.

Now here is something that is hard for some people to understand: a prophet is a man. You can get close to the Prophet Joseph Smith because he is an individual—just like you are an individual. Start with him as a man—just like a neighbor next door—just like President Woodhouse or Craig Nelson or Matt Tittle. The Prophet is our friend in the same sense that the Savior identified us as His “friends” (see D&C 84:77; 93:45; 94:1; 98:1; 100:1; 104:1).

Let’s go back to Friday, November 6, 1835: In the morning of this day in Kirtland, Joseph Smith is introduced to a man from the eastern part of the country, who expresses surprise upon meeting the Prophet. The Prophet reports: “After hearing my name, he remarked that I was nothing but a man, indicating by this expression, that he had supposed that a person to whom the Lord should see fit to reveal His will, must be something more than a man. He seemed to have forgotten the saying that fell from the lips of St. James, that Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet he had such power with God, that He, in answer to his prayers, shut the heavens that they gave no rain for the space of three years and six months; and again, in answer to his prayer, the heavens gave forth rain, and the earth gave forth fruit [James 5:17-18]. Indeed, such is the darkness and ignorance of this generation, that they look upon it as incredible that a man should have any intercourse [or communion] with his Maker” (HC 2:302).

Imagine that you were brought into the office of Joseph Smith and introduced to him. Would you be surprised that he was just an ordinary man—cordial and kind, friendly and accommodating—with a twinkle in the eye?

Let us remember that Joseph Smith was a humble man called as a prophet. He had human weaknesses, as he willingly confessed, but he overcame them and stayed faithful to his covenants. We can relate to him because of that. We can take hope in our own ability to rise above our own personal weaknesses—because he showed us the example.

Yes, Joseph was just a man—a farmer, a wrestling champion, a city-builder, a general, a scholar, a husband, a father—but he was, in addition, a prophet commissioned of God. Countless witnesses who knew him confirmed his prophetic mission.

Here's what Parley P. Pratt—a close associate of Joseph—said about this man:

He possessed a noble boldness and independence of character; his manner was easy and familiar; his rebuke terrible as the lion; his benevolence unbounded as the ocean; his intelligence universal, and his language abounding in original eloquence peculiar to himself—not polished—not studied—not smoothed and softened by education and refined by art; but flowing forth in its own native simplicity, and profusely abounding in variety of subject and manner. He interested and edified, while, at the same time, he amused and entertained his audience; and none listened to him that were ever weary with his discourse. . . . Even his most bitter enemies were generally overcome, if he could once get their ears. . . . [H]is works will live to endless ages, and unnumbered millions yet unborn will mention his name with honor, as a noble instrument in the hands of God, who, during his short and youthful career, laid the foundation of that kingdom spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever. (Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, edited by his son, Parley P. Pratt [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], 32.)

Brothers and sisters, Joseph Smith is your friend. You can relate to him as a friend, a man of God. He was and is a prophet of God. Can you see yourself as a friend of the Prophet Joseph? Consider him as your friend who sacrificed everything he had to lay the foundation of the Church and Kingdom of God so that you and I can have hope for the future.

#### Strategy Four

Now the fourth and final way to strengthen your testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith is to follow his footprints and see where they lead. What can you learn? You may be surprised. I have singled out for you today just seven special kinds of footprints he left behind. Let me tell you a quick short story to illustrate each of them.

#### Story One: Charity

Each story has a keyword. The keyword of this first story is charity, represented by this letter C. [At this point, the speaker revealed a display card showing “C” for charity.]

Let’s go back to Sunday, March 25, 1832: At this time the Prophet Joseph Smith and his family are staying at the home of John Johnson in Hiram, Ohio. On Sunday morning, March 25, Joseph delivers a sermon on forgiveness, baptizing three individuals that afternoon. Is it unusual that Joseph should preach a sermon on forgiveness? Not until you understand what happened on the day previous to this. On the day previous, Saturday, a mob of some two dozen drunken men had torn Joseph from the side of his ailing son, 11-month-old Joseph Murdock Smith (one of two adopted twins), dragged Joseph from the house, stripped him of his clothes, beat him brutally, and tarred and feathered him. All during the night friends and family removed the skin-searing tar, taking up large areas of skin in the process. Sidney Rigdon had been dragged feet-first from his home, sustaining a concussion as his head thumped down the steps and along the frozen ground. He was beaten and left comatose in the snow. Young Joseph Murdock Smith, already suffering with measles, contracted pneumonia from the exposure that night, and died a few days later. Three of the mobbers were present at the Prophet’s sermon the day after the beating and heard the Prophet talk about—forgiveness. (HC 1:261-65; compare Matt. 5:43-45.)

Brothers and sisters, do we have anyone we should forgive? Let us do so according to the pattern of forgiveness taught us by the Lord. In keeping with this doctrine, the Prophet Joseph Smith left behind the footprint of charity—“the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47)—just as every prophet will do.

### Story Two: Home

Now for the second footprint of the Prophet. The keyword this time is home. [At this point, the speaker revealed a second display card showing H for home.]

Let’s go back to Friday, November 30, 1838. On that day Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and several other Church leaders, having been through a sham trial for treason against the state of Missouri, are consigned to Liberty Jail to await further legal consequences (HC 3:215). The Prophet suffered intensely from the abuse he experienced while in prison, but he was far more pained because of the separation from his beloved Emma and their children. His letters from prison reflect his deep concern about home and family.

Let’s listen to him in his letter of March 21, 1839:

... my Dear Emma I very well know your toils and sympathize with you if God will spare my life once more to have the privilege of taking care of you I will ease your care and endeavor to comfort your heart [p.1] I want you to take the best care of the family you can [and] I believe you will do all you can. I was sorry to learn that Frederick was sick but I trust he is well again and that you are all well. I want you to try to gain time and write to me a long letter and tell me all you can and even if old Major [his dog] is alive yet and what those little prattlers say that cling around your neck. Do ... tell them I am in

prison that that their lives might be saved. (Joseph Smith, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, compiled and edited by Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], 408 [spelling and punctuation modernized].)

Then later, in a letter to Emma in April, 1839, just before Joseph was allowed to escape from his prison cell:

My Dear Emma I think of you and the children continually. If I could tell you my tale, I think you would say it was altogether enough for once, to gratify the malice of hell that I have suffered. I want altogether to see little Frederick, Joseph, Julia, and Alexander, Joana, and Old Major. And as to yourself—if you want to know how much I want to see you, examine your feelings, how much you want to see me, and judge for yourself, I would gladly go walking from here to you barefoot, and bareheaded, and half naked, to see you and think it great pleasure, and never count it toil, but do not think I am babyish, for I do not feel so: I bare with fortitude all my oppression, so do those that are with me, not one of us have flinched yet, I want [that] you should not let those little fellows forget me. Tell them Father loves them with a perfect love, and he is doing all he can to get away from the mob to come to them. Do teach them all you can, that they may have good minds. Be tender and kind to them. . . . Tell them Father says they must be good children and mind their mother. My Dear Emma, there is great responsibility resting upon you, in persevering yourself in honor, and sobriety, before them, and teaching them right things, to form their young and tender minds, that they begin in right paths, . . . (Joseph Smith, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, compiled and edited by Dean C. Jessee [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984], 425 [spelling and punctuation modernized].)

Brother and sisters, don't you love this man with such devotion to his family and home at a time of intense adversity? Joseph wrote a magnificent epistle from prison in two parts, containing what is now Doctrine and Covenants Sections 121, 122, and 123. Do you want to guess which person he first sent this material to? It was to wife, Emma. He wanted her to be the first to read this inspired message, and then after that his parents, before it was placed in the hands of the Church to be sent on to you and to me. Next time you read Sections 121, 122, or 123, remember that Joseph sent them first to Emma, whom he loved so dearly.

Here is a prophet who leaves us enduring lessons about the home—just as every prophet will do.

### Story Three: Reverence

Now for the third footprint of the Prophet. The key word here is reverence. [At this point, the speaker revealed a third display card with the letter R for reverence.]

It was Monday, May 26, 1834: Zion's Camp is en route from Kirtland to Missouri to help the embattled Saints. The brethren who are pitching Joseph Smith's tent come across three rattlesnakes. When they want to kill the snakes, the Prophet stops them with the words: "Let them alone—don't hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose his venom,

while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war upon it? Men must become harmless, before the brute creation; and when men lose their vicious dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the suckling child can play with the serpent in safety” (HC 2:71). His listeners then carefully remove the snakes on sticks to a place of safety, after which the Prophet exhorts the brethren to kill wildlife only for needful food. Later the Prophet tests the brethren by shooting a squirrel down from a tree. He is pleased to hear Orson Hyde say, “We will cook this, that nothing may be lost” (p. 72). A few days later, Solomon Humphreys, one of the oldest men in the Camp, wakes up from a nap to find himself eye-to-eye with a coiled rattlesnake. When his colleagues want to kill it, he exclaims, “No, I’ll protect him; you shan’t hurt him for he and I had a good nap together” (p. 74). Some days later Martin Harris is not so fortunate. He is bitten by a black snake that he has boastfully and recklessly provoked. The Prophet likens this to willfully drinking poison in anticipation of receiving the Lord’s protection. Said the Prophet: “In that case no man has any claim on the promises of God to be healed” (p. 96). (Compare D&C 59:20.)

Because Joseph had reverence for all life, we know that he had a special and abiding reverence for the Giver of all life—even the Creator. That’s the way prophets are. That’s the way we should all be. (See HC 2:71-72, 74, 95-96.)

#### Story Four: Integrity

Now for the fourth footprint of the Prophet. The key word here is integrity. [At this point, the speaker revealed a fourth display card with the letter I for integrity.]

It was on Sunday, November 4, 1838: On this day, the Prophet Joseph Smith preaches an unusual sermon in fulfillment of prophesy. While he, Parley P. Pratt, and other Church leaders are being marched toward Independence by an army acting under extermination orders of the governor of Missouri, a number of local citizens come up to satisfy their curiosity. As the Prophet later records in his journal, one of the women in the group asks the troops “which of the prisoners was the Lord whom the ‘Mormons’ worshipped? One of the guard[s] pointed to me with a significant smile, and said, ‘This is he.’ The woman then turning to me inquired whether I professed to be the Lord and Savior? I replied, that I professed to be nothing but a man, and a minister of salvation, sent by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel. This answer so surprised the woman that she began to inquire into our doctrine, and I preached a discourse, both to her and her companions, and to the wondering soldiers, who listened with almost breathless attention while I set forth the doctrine of faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance, and baptism for remission of sins, with the promise of the Holy Ghost, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The woman was satisfied, and praised God in the hearing of the soldiers, and went away, praying that God would protect and deliver us. Thus was fulfilled a prophesy which had been spoken publicly by me, a few months previous – that a sermon should be preached in Jackson County by one of our Elders, before the close of 1838” (HC 3:200-201).

No matter what his circumstances—even being marched off to prison—the Prophet never forgot his mission. He had a focus of steel. His integrity as a minister of the gospel was without reproach.

#### Story Five: Safety

Now for the fifth footprint of the Prophet. The keyword here is safety. [At this point, the speaker revealed a fifth display card with the letter S for safety.]

It was Tuesday, October 30, 1838. At around 4 p.m. on this day of infamy, a mob of some 240 armed men assaulted the 30 or so families residing at, or passing through, the village of Haun’s Mill, some 12 miles east of Far West, Missouri, killing at least 17 (including two young boys) and wounding 13 (HC 3:182-188). As reported later by eye-witness Amanda Smith: “I came down to view the awful sight. Oh horrible! My husband, and one son ten years old, lay lifeless upon the ground, and one son seven years old, wounded very badly. The ground was covered with the dead . . . Realize for a moment the scene! It was sunset; nothing but horror and distress; the dogs filled with rage, howling over their dead masters; the cattle caught the scent of the innocent blood, and bellowed; a dozen helpless widows, thirty or forty fatherless children, crying and moaning for the loss of their fathers and husbands; the groans of the wounded and dying were enough to have melted the heart of anything but a Missouri mob” (HC 3:324). The mob commanded the survivors to leave the state in ten days or be killed. The grieving Joseph Smith had warned all the Saints to gather to Adam-ondi-Ahman or Far West for safety, but Jacob Haun and others had decided to remain with their property. Said the Prophet Joseph: “Up to this day God had given me wisdom to save the people who took counsel. None had ever been killed who abode my counsel. At Haun’s Mill the brethren went contrary to my counsel; if they had not, their lives would have been spared” (HC 5:137).

Brothers and Sisters, there is safety in the counsel of the Lord’s prophets, including our current prophet, President Hinckley. “. . . safety is of the Lord” it says in Proverbs 21:31. Prophets always teach us how to be safe and secure in a dangerous world.

Safety is another footprint of the Prophet Joseph.

#### Story Six: Temple

Now for the sixth footprint of the Prophet. The keyword here is temple. [At this point, the speaker revealed a sixth display card with the letter T for temple.]

We are told to gather and stand in holy places—including our homes, our wards and stakes, and—the holiest places of all—the temples of the Lord. I give you a test for the prophet. Did the Prophet Joseph Smith build temples? If he did not, he was not a prophet of God, for temples are built during any dispensation of the Lord where prophets are sent and where the Kingdom begins to grow. This is particularly true of the dispensation of the fullness of times when temple work blossoms in its spiritual resplendence. If there are

no temples around us—then this is not the church and Kingdom of God and Joseph Smith is not a prophet. But there are temples, and Joseph was called to open temple work in our days. He built the earliest ones in this dispensation under the direction of the Almighty. He received the priesthood of God and the keys to administer in all things for the salvation of men, including the temple.

Let us participate in a sacred event that took place on April 3, 1836, in the newly completed Kirtland Temple. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery are present on the stand.

Let's follow along in Doctrine and Covenants 110:1-7:

1 The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

2 We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

3 His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:

4 I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.

5 Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice.

6 Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.

7 For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.

That happened in a temple of God. Because Joseph was a prophet, we have temples today. Temples are at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for they represent our beacon of hope and our authorization to return to the presence of the Father and the Son, keeping us on course toward our eternal home.

### Summary to This Point

Well, then, we have traced six footprints of the prophet—charity, home, reverence, integrity, safety, and temples. You have observed the pattern we have been following: All of these six factors are consummated in one person: CHRIST. [At this point the speaker referred again to the display cards, which form the name CHRIST as an acronym.]

Until his dying day, the Prophet Joseph Smith was committed to doing nothing but the will of the Lord. He was a faithful and devoted servant of the Savior. He set for us a magnificent example of one willing to sacrifice everything for the Lord.

### Seventh Story: CHRIST

So here is the seventh and final story about the Prophet Joseph. You have heard many times already the testimony he bore as part of the experience that he and Sidney Rigdon

had on February 16, 1832, when the heavens were opened up to them and they witnessed the vision of the degrees of glory prepared by the Father for His children, now preserved as Section 76 of the Doctrine & Covenants. Let us read verses 22 through 24:

22 And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (D&C 76:22-24.)

The Prophet followed His Master, even Jesus Christ, to the day of his martyrdom. He still follows Christ. He is a prophet of God.

As you continue to strengthen your own testimony of the Prophet Joseph, remember that he was a devoted and valiant servant of Jesus Christ. That is your goal, too, to become more like the Savior and do what He would have you do for happiness and salvation, because you are, as the Savior said, “the children of the prophets” and the “children of the Covenant” (3 Nephi 20:25-26).

## Conclusion

Now let us conclude. And I remind you that we will leave a few of these bookmarks on the podium for those who might be interested in a summary of the key points and references.

Brothers and Sisters, we have discussed four ways to strengthen your testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

First, listen to the Spirit: Ask the Lord for a spiritual confirmation ([Moroni 10:4-5). Ask in faith, and you shall know by the Spirit that these things are true.

Second, see the big picture—that Joseph was called of God from before the foundations of the earth as part of a divine design to usher in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Third, accept him as your friend—your prophet friend—someone you can understand and honor.

Fourth, follow his footprints and see where they lead—through charity and home and reverence and integrity and safety and temples—even to Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone of the Kingdom of God.

Of the Prophet Joseph, the Savior bore this solemn testimony: “...God ministered unto him . . . And gave unto him commandments which inspired him; And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of

Mormon; Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ . . . .” (D&C 20:6-99).

Brothers and sisters, how can we savor the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and come to please our Father in Heaven? By following the prophets and keeping the Lord’s commandments. Yes, the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith is about us, each of us. Will we believe it and make it a part of our lives—moving onward to eternal life and the glories of heaven. Or will we fall short and lose the reward? That is the question.

My hope and prayer is that we may all do the right thing and grow spiritually according to our potential as sons and daughters of God.

Let us accept the truth in full faith. This world in which we live is out of control. Values are eroding. By and large, people love the world more than God. Let us help bring that run-a-way coach under control. Let us swing ourselves boldly up into the driver’s seat and move forward in safety and security by keeping our covenants. Let us accept the challenge that we are all on a mission to bear our testimonies sincerely and fervently to our families, to our friends, and to all those who are seeking the truth.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said of the Prophet Joseph:

I give you my testimony of him. He was the ordained servant of God, this Joseph, raised up to become the mighty prophet of this dispensation—‘a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ’ (D&C 21:1). (“What Hath God Wrought through His Servant Joseph!” Ensign, Jan. 1997, 2.)

To this I add my own testimony that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, that he prepared the Book of Mormon under divine direction, that he received the keys of the priesthood and restored the church and kingdom of God to the earth in all of its fullness. This I know through the witness of the Holy Spirit. Jesus lives. The Church is true. There is hope; there is joy; there is salvation; there is exaltation. This I know.

May the Lord bless you, my brothers and sisters, to take the seed of faith within you and nurture it. Let it sprout and grow, bit by bit, into a tree of everlasting life, I humbly pray, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, Amen.