Chapter 10

The True Order Of Gaining Knowledge

At the April 1844 General Conference of the Church, the Prophet Joseph said that it was "... the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one converses with another... " (6 Apr. 1844). Joseph Smith learned the reality of this principle early in his life, when still a boy of fourteen. He learned that the Father and Son do actually exist, and that he could see them, and speak to them, and have his prayers answered. This concept that one may converse with God has been a true principle form the days of Adam down to the present time.

But apparently there is more to praying than just praying. According to the Prophet Joseph, a person must learn how to approach God in the proper manner if he ever expects a reply:

"Having a knowledge of God, we begin to know how to approach him and how to ask so as to receive an answer. When we understand the character of God, and know how to come to him, he begins to unfold the heavens to us, and to tell us all about it. When we are ready to come to him, he is ready to come to us." (Joseph Smith 6 April 1844; Words of Joseph Smith.)

Apparently it is only when we learn how to approach God in the proper manner that we are able to have the heavens unfolded to us. On another occasion when Joseph was addressing a group of Relief Society sisters:

"He spoke of delivering the Keys of the Priesthood to the Church, and said that the faithful members of the Relief Society should receive them with their husbands, and the Saints whose integrity has been tried and proved faithful, might know how to ask the Lord and receive an answer." (TPJS, p.226.)

This statement by the Prophet clearly points out that the saints of his day did not know how to pray so as to receive an answer from God, or at least not a full and complete answer. And how did they pray? They prayed just as we do now: they addressed their prayers to the Father, expressed thanks for their blessings, petitioned the Father's assistance in their lives, and closed in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet Joseph believed and openly taught that these steps were not sufficient.

Bathsheba W. Smith, wife of Apostle George A. Smith reemphasized this same point. She states that Joseph told her:
"... that we did not know how to pray and have our prayers answered. But when I and my husband had our endowments. ... Joseph Smith presiding, he taught us the order of prayer."

(Words of Joseph Smith, p. 54.)

Thus as Sister Smith points out, prayers other than those offered in the true order, as Joseph taught her, lack power - they fall short and do not constitute a complete pattern of the proper way to pray. Obviously, anything less than the proper order, or the "true order" of addressing Deity, is by its very nature an improper or incomplete order of prayer.

The true order of prayer is the most proper way to pray. It is the ideal way in which prayer should be offered. Unfortunately our circumstances and surroundings do not always lend themselves to the proper mode of prayer and so the Lord has made provisions for prayers in other than the true order - the optimum manner - to ascend to him. Nevertheless, we should not become complacent, being content to allow the lower orders of prayer to suffice but should always approach as nearly as possible the proper, complete, true order of prayer.

Baptism for the dead is performed in the temples of the Lord and is carried out in a specifically prescribed manner. However, when circumstances in the early days of the Church would not permit these baptisms to be done "properly" the Lord allowed and accepted them when performed in the Mississippi river. He then suspended this practice when it became possible to perform them in the "proper" manner. And so it is with prayer - form and format are important, but when circumstances prevent full implementation then the Lord will accept prayers offered according to the circumstances and knowledge of the person offering them. The material presented in this chapter is done so in an attempt to better understand how the true order of prayer should be applied in our daily lives.

The reader is cautioned to accept this material only as a guide to historical events in Church history and as general information on this subject. This is an extremely sensitive and sacred subject and must be approached with the sacredness and reverence which it deserves. Personal instruction by the Spirit must be received on this matter for this sacred order is not something with which to trifle.

The author does not teach, encourage, endorse, advocate, advise, counsel, or recommend that others engage in the practice of this sacred principle except as you are expressly authorized by God. Obedience to personal revelation is the key to a successful relationship with God and it is through personal revelation that you should weigh the material contained herein.
10.1 The True Order Of Prayer Restored

There is some evidence to indicate that Joseph Smith discovered the true order of prayer even before he had the first vision. In an 1835 account of the first vision, in which Joseph related his experience in the grove to a man by the name of Matthias, he states:

"Being thus perplexed in mind I retired to the silent grove and there bowed down before the Lord, under a realizing sense (if the Bible be true), ask and you shall receive, Knock and it shall be opened, seek and you shall find, and again, if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." (Joseph Smith, 9 Nov 1835.)

The formula of asking, seeking, and knocking is, in parable form, the summation of what a person must do to open the heavens and is encompassed in the true order of prayer. More information on this topic will be presented later in this chapter.

In January of 1833, the Prophet taught the brethren of the School of the Prophets how to pray so as to receive revelation. They would gather together in the morning about sunrise and engage "...in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence, no one whispered above his breath." and on this occasion the Father and the Son appeared to them. (see report of Zeebadee Coltrin, 3 Oct. 1883 - Minutes of the School of the Prophets).

Inasmuch as this was done almost twelve years prior to the saints receiving their endowments it is a clear example of the fact that though this order of prayer is taught in the endowment it is not dependent upon the endowment nor upon the temple for implementation.

In 1835 Joseph Smith taught the father of Lorenzo Dow Young how to get the power to heal his son. "Join in prayer," the Prophet said, "one by mouth and the others repeat after him in unison. After prayer... anoint with oil; then lay hands on him, one being mouth and the other two repeating in unison after him... continuing the administration in this way until you receive a testimony that he will be restored." (1835 - Words of Joseph Smith.)

In October of 1840, the Prophet Joseph commented that the "keys of this priesthood (Melchizedek) consisted in obtaining the voice of Jehovah." (Words of Joseph Smith, p.42) In January of 1841 the lord revealed to Joseph that He would restore the "...fulness of the Priesthood..." in a temple built to His name. In this revelation Joseph was also commanded to teach both Hyrum Smith and William Law how to pray, thereby giving them "...the keys whereby (they) may ask and receive blessings." (See D&C
In the 1879 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Orson Pratt, in the heading to the section, indicated that these keys were "the order of God for receiving revelations."

In January of 1842 Wilford Woodruff records how Joseph Smith as the Editor of the Times & Seasons with John Taylor assisting, were setting the type for printing the first piece of the Book of Abraham, which contains facsimile no. 1, depicting Abraham upon the altar about to be sacrificed. "But by using the keys of prayer, Abraham is able to call down an angel from heaven and thereby save himself." (19 Feb. 1842) This same principle is very prominent in religious art as well. Many of the prophets of old are depicted as praying with their arms raised heavenward. Many of the paintings of Joseph Smith's first vision depict him praying in the same manner.

On March 30, 1842, Joseph Smith addressed the Relief Society sisters in Nauvoo and, basing his remarks around Mark 16:15-18, states that women could anoint with oil and administer to the sick (this he indicated would be better understood in the temple), and that the keys to detect evil spirits would be given in the endowment. (30 Mar. 1842.)

Nearly a month later, the Prophet again addressed the sisters of the Relief Society:

"He spoke of delivering the keys of the Priesthood to the Church, and said that the faithful members of the Relief Society should receive them in connection with their husbands, that the Saints whose integrity has been tried and proved faithful, might know how to ask the Lord and receive an answer.

"He exhorted the sisters ... to ... arm and sustain (their husbands)... for the keys of the kingdom are about to be given to them, that they may be able to detect everything false; as well as to all the Elders who shall prove their integrity in due season." (CH 28 April 1842.)

The keys of how to ask and receive an answer also contain the knowledge of how to detect false from true messengers from the unseen world. The Prophet was vitally concerned about this aspect of the true order, for he knew that once the brethren were able to commune with heaven, that they would also experience appearances and revelations from evil sources. On May 1, 1842, Joseph preached in the grove and said:

"...the keys are certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true, which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed." (Joseph Smith, 1 May 1842.)
These signs and words which would be revealed in the Temple were necessary to detect true and false messengers. Apparently the Prophet knew that the keys used to call upon the Throne of Grace in the proper manner would unlock the heavens to all classes of messengers. For this purpose additional keys - signs and words - were necessary to authenticate the messages delivered by the "angelic" ministrants. It is for this cause that great caution must be exercised before consideration is given to implementation of this sacred order, and then only when prompted to do so by the Spirit.

On May 4, 1842, the keys of which Joseph had been speaking were finally delivered to nine of the brethren who had assembled in the upper room of the store in Nauvoo (not a temple). He instructed:

"...them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds."

The Prophet also said that all these things would be revealed to all the saints as soon as there was a temple built in which the keys could be given. These keys were given to Judge James Adams on this date (4 May 1842). Said Joseph:

"I anointed him to the patriarchal power...to receive the keys of knowledge and power, by revelation to himself. He has had revelations concerning his departure, and has (now) gone to a more important word (world?)."

On the 27th of August, 1843, Brigham Young commented that "...any person can ask the Lord for a witness concerning himself and get an answer, but not to lead the Church." In February of 1844 Joseph Smith met with the Twelve and discussed the Oregon and California Exploring Expedition, and stated that he wanted "every man that goes to be a king and a priest. When he gets on the mountains he may want to talk with his God." (23 Feb 1844) When a person is anointed and ordained a king and priest he receives the sealing power which enables him to open the heavens through the use of the keys of prayer, and to "stand in the presence of God." (Gen. 14:31 JST.)

In June of 1844 William Clayton, personal secretary to Joseph Smith,
recorded in his journal that:

"The g(rand) key word was the first word Adam spoke and is a word of supplication. He (Joseph) found the word by the Urim & Thummim - it is that key word to which the heavens is (sic) opened."

In August of 1844 Brigham Young stated that he has "the keys and therefore the means of obtaining the mind of God upon (any) subject." (7 aug. 1844.) In the journal of Heber C. Kimball, he records that the "key word" is given in the Terrestrial Kingdom which is the five points of fellowship. (11 Dec 1845.) In the journal of John Lee Jones, November 1879, he records that "the Grand Key..is given to the Citizens of the Kingdom of God, which Key will give man power to gaze upon the Celestial Heavens, and the inhabitants thereof..This Grand Key gives us the privlege (sic) of vesting these far distant planets of exchanging our views & relationship to each other."

The keys whereby an individual may "ask and receive an answer" were incorporated into, and made a part of, the endowment ceremony. All who receive their endowments also receive the keys of how to ask and receive an answer, however, these keys can be used only on a conditional basis. All those who receive the Fullness of the Priesthood (going beyond the preliminary preparatory anointing and actually becoming a King and a Priest by having calling and election made sure coupled with the higher temple ordinances associated therewith), have the conditional basis removed. To understand what these "keys" are and how they are used is the next topic of discussion. Even though they can be referred to in only vague generalities it is assumed that the reader will understand sufficiently to comprehend the message contained in this important section. The prerequisite is to know the endowment.

10.2 The Meaning & Use Of The Signs

During general conference on April 6, 1853, President Brigham Young made the following comments about the endowment after the First Presidency and the Patriarch had laid the South East corner stone of the Salt Lake Temple:

"Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell." (JD 2:31; also see JD 12:163; 2:315; 10:172;
In a discourse given in the Nauvoo Temple, December 28, 1845, President Brigham Young explained concerning the signs and tokens:

"After his fall, another name was given to Adam, and being full of integrity, and not disposed to follow the woman nor listen to her, was permitted to receive the tokens of the Priesthood..the name that was given to Adam was more ancient than he was - The name Adam was given him because he was the first man - but his New Name pertained to the Holy Priesthood and as I before stated is more ancient than he was - there are 4 Penal Signs & 4 Penal Tokens and should I want to address the Thorone (sic) to enquire after ancient things which transpired on Plannets (sic) that roled (sic) away before this Plannet (sic) came into existence, I should use my New Name which is Ancient and refers to Ancient things - Should I wish to Enquire for Present things I should use my own Name which refers to present things & should I want to Enquire for Future things I would use the 3rd Name which refers to the first token of the Melchizedek Priesthood - or is the 3rd token that is given - & refers to the son - the 2nd Token of the M. Priesthood is to be given only in one place and nowhere else - but these signs & tokens that pertain to the Priesthood should never be given any where only in such places as belong to the order of the Priesthood." (Brigham Young 28 Dec. 1845; record of the Seventies, Book B, 28 Dec. 1845; N. B. Lundwall Mss. Microfilm Roll no. 1; Heber C. Kimball "Journal" Book 93; Woman's Exponent Vol. 12, No. 6 p.42; William Clayton's Minutes, Church Historical Dept. 28 Dec. 1845; John Doyle Lee "Journal", 14d, p.56-57; Minutes of the Nauvoo Temple Record Sunday, Dec. 28, 1845.)

The use of the fourth sign and token was never mentioned by President Young in this particular discourse as far as we have record. However, from other LDS sources we are able to piece together that the 4th sign is used specifically to open the heavens, to see and not just to communicate, and to have messengers appear so that the person praying might be taught from on high by them face to face.

Let it be remembered that we should consider ourselves as if we were respectively "Adam" or "Eve." After being cast into the lone and dreary world (this one) they began to seek for further light and knowledge which would contain instructions to guide them back into the presence of their Father. They sought for messengers to teach them face to face. They built an altar and offered prayer. After offering up the signs of the Priesthood, Adam uses the last sign to open the heavens, and he receives a visitor -
Satan. Then one of Satan's ministers appears to instruct Adam in false doctrine hoping to convince him to pursue the false path. Finally three angelic ministers from the Father appear whom Adam tests in a sacred manner to verify their authenticity. Finding him to be true and faithful in all things, they give him the additional light and knowledge he was seeking. There are those who may question the propriety of reviewing the drama just related, however this story comes from several ancient documents which have been translated and commented upon by scholars who are not LDS. Dr. Hugh Nibley has gathered together some of these texts and published them in his books "Nibley On The Timely and Timeless", and "The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri" from which I quote in part as follows:

(Quoted from the Combat of Adam)

297-8. Leaving the glorious garden, they (Adam and Eve) were seized with fear and "they fell down upon the earth and remained as if dead."

299. While Adam was still in that condition, Eve, stretching high her hands, prayed: "O Lord... Thy servant has fallen from the Garden" and is banished to a desert place. (p. 15)

307-8. The next morning as Adam prayed with upraised hands, Satan appeared to him saying, "Adam, I am an angel of the great God. The Lord has sent me to you." It was his plan to kill Adam and thus "remain sole master and possessor of the earth." But God sent three heavenly messengers to Adam bringing him the signs of the Priesthood and Kingship.

309. And Adam wept because they reminded him of his departed glory, but God said they were signs of the atonement to come, whereupon Adam rejoiced.

323-4. After a forty-day fast Adam and Eve were very weak, stretched out upon the floor of the cave as if dead, but still praying. Satan then came, clothed in light, speaking sweet words to deceive them saying: "I am the first created of God...now God has commanded me to lead you to my habitation...to be restored to your former glory."

325. But God knew that he (Satan) planned to lead them (Adam & Eve) to far-away places and destroy them. Adam said, Who was this glorious old man who came to us? Answer: He is Satan in human form come to deceive you by giving you signs to prove his bona fides but I have cast him out. (p.17)

326. Adam and Eve, still weak from fasting and still praying, are again confronted by Satan...

329. Again Adam and Eve were sacrificing with upraised arms in prayer, Asking God to accept their sacrifice and forgive their sins. At this Adam and Eve rejoiced. God said: When the terms of my covenant are fulfilled, I will again receive you
into my Garden and my Grace. So Adam continued to make this sacrifice for the rest of his days.

330. On the fiftieth day, Adam offering sacrifice as was his custom, Satan appeared in the form of a man and smote him in the side with a sharp stone even as Adam raised his arms in prayer. (p.19)

(Hugh Nibley; Nibley On The Timely and Timeless, pp. 11, 15, 17, 19)

"In Judeo-Christian tradition the first representative of the arrested sacrifice is Adam, who, as he was sacrificing on an altar, calling upon God with upraised hands, was accosted by Satan, who tried to sacrifice him, smiting him on the right side with a sharp stone. Adam fell upon the altar and Satan fled. While Eve attempted to raise up her husband, and just as he was at the point of death, God accepted his blood flowing upon the altar as a sacrifice, "and thus sent down his word and healed Adam." Thus, as in the cases of Abraham and Isaac, the sacrifice, though arrested, was no mere empty form, since it was clearly in the process of being carried out to the end in good faith." (Hugh Nibley; The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, p.217.)

There are several principles revealed here which could be treated in another chapter. 1) The fact that when dealing with such sacred subjects one should be prepared to combat the forces of evil in a direct manner because the protective shield referred to in chapter eight will be removed in direct proportion to the degree of further light and knowledge understood by an individual, even to the point of personal face to face confrontation with Satan himself; 2) Once a person has made his calling and election sure, receiving the temple ordinances which accompany that blessing, being made a King and Priest, and having parted the heavens to commune with Deity, the blood of Christ spilt in the atonement will no longer atone for his sins, thereby requiring his personal sacrifice or atonement to be made as Adam was here depicted as in the process of doing.

(The following are remarks made concerning the drawing of the ka-sign and a worshipper): "Candidate petitioning for admission, (usually at sunrise); with upraised hands of praise and supplication." Ibid. p.117.

It's most impressive symbol (of the celestial embrace) is the Ka-sign itself, whose upraised arms signify the act of calling upon God, of praising him in the rising Sun, of receiving his protection, and of fusing with his being. Ibid. p.244.

This same sign was apparently used by Abraham to free himself from
the altar as he was about to be slain by the idolatrous priest. As previously stated the facsimile itself shows Abraham with his arms raised with an angel of the Lord appearing to free him. Solomon also prayed in this sacred manner and was visited by the Lord.

"And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven. And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. And it came to pass that the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon." (I Kings 8:22; 9:2.)

At the early meetings of the school of the Prophets in 1833, Zeebadee Coltrin describes what happened on several instances while praying with uplifted hands:

"Once Joseph gave notice to the school for all to get up before sunrise, then wash themselves and put on clean clothing and be at the school by sunrise, as it would be a day of revelation and vision. They opened with prayer. Joseph then gave instruction to prepare their minds. He told them to kneel and pray with uplifted hands. Brother Coltrin then gave an account of the appearance of the Father and Son as given in the Minutes of the 3rd inst. Jesus was clothed in modern clothing, apparently of grey cloth." (Minutes of the Salt Lake School of the Prophets; Oct. 11, 1883, p.69.)

"At one of these meetings after the organization of the school, the school being organized on the 23rd of January, 1833, when we were all together, Joseph having given instructions, and while engaged in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence, no one whispered above his breath, a personage walked through the room from East to West, and Joseph asked if we saw him. I saw him and suppose the others did, and Joseph answered that is Jesus, the Son of God, our elder brother. Afterward Joseph told us to resume our former position in prayer, which we did. Another person came through; He was surrounded as with a flame of fire. He (Brother Coltrin) experienced a sensation that it might destroy the tabernacle as it was of consuming fire of great brightness. The Prophet Joseph said this was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I saw him." (Ibid. pp.58-60.)
"About the time the school was first organized some wished to see an angel, and a number joined in the circle, and prayed. When the vision came, two of the brethren shrank and called for the vision to close or they would perish, these were Bros. Hancock and Humphries. When the Prophet came in they told him what they had done and he said the angel was no further off then the roof of the house, and a moment more he would have been in their midst." (Ibid. p.69.)

From the context of the above quotes it is very evident that the Prophet Joseph had instructed the members of the School of the Prophets in 1833, eleven years prior to the building of the Nauvoo Temple or the bestowal of the endowment upon anyone, that there was a specific format which must be adhered to if they wanted to commune with heavenly beings face to face. Without following that format they may receive answers to their prayers through the medium of inspiration or impressions, dream, visions, etc., but if they wanted specific answers to their prayers delivered by a heavenly messenger face to face then they must follow the prescribed pattern.

Joseph knew full well that once he had instructed these men in the method of prayer that they would apply his teachings and was therefore not surprised when they prayed for an angel. He seemed only concerned that they had feared and closed the glorious vision they could have received. In an effort to help them gain greater confidence in the understanding of the true order of prayer he then subsequently knelt with them and prayed with them in that sacred pattern and upon doing so the record states that the group was visited by both the Father and the Son.

On another occasion the Prophet instructed a sister, Mary Elizabeth Rawlins Lightner, in the order of prayer. This sister too was frightened by the appearance of an angel in answer to her prayers. She hid her face in fear and the angel departed. She later asked Joseph to help her pray to receive the angel again. Joseph's reply was that she had offended the angel by her actions and that he would not return again. He, also, said she might receive another one and, "... if you are faithful you shall see greater things than that." (Mary E. Lightner's Testimony, delivered at B.Y.U., Original in Lundwall Rare Manuscript Collection Item no. 743 Microfilm Roll no. 3.)

Obviously there is much more to praying in this sacred manner than merely stretching one's arms and hands heavenward while offering prayer. Further instructions can be received through the Spirit as one attends the Temple and puts forth real intent to understand the concepts and principles taught there.