

## ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

# Joseph Smith—Prophet and Revelator

By Elder Randy D. Funk

First Counselor in the Asia Area Presidency



Elder Funk

On June 27, 1844, Naomi Holman was on her bed with her nine-day-old baby son, who would become my great-great-grandfather, when she saw a group of men with painted faces and abusive language pass by their home on the way to Carthage. At about 5:00 p.m., that mob burst into Carthage jail and killed the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum.

Elder John Taylor, of the Council of the Twelve and future President of the Church, was shot four times but survived. He recorded the events of that fateful day in what is now the 135th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

“To seal the testimony of this book and the Book of Mormon, we announce the martyrdom of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith the Patriarch. They were shot in Carthage jail, on the 27th of June, 1844, about five o’clock p.m., by an armed mob—painted black—of from 150 to 200 persons. . . .

“Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:1, 3).

John Taylor continued with a summary of the impressive work the Prophet Joseph accomplished during his life:

“In the short space of twenty years, he:

- has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents;
- has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth;
- has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men;
- gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain.



Joseph Smith

“He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people” (D&C 135:3).

Recently, the *Smithsonian* magazine, a prominent magazine in the United States, published a collector’s edition of “The 100 Most Significant Americans of All Time.” Joseph Smith was listed first in the category of “Religious Figures.”<sup>1</sup> When Joseph was only 17 years old, the angel Moroni told him, “that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all the nations, kindreds, and tongues” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). Nearly 200 years later we see the continuing fulfillment of that statement.

Joseph Smith was the Prophet of the Restoration. I marvel at what he endured and all he accomplished under difficult circumstances and during such a brief time. He could not have done that and would not have done that without clear and direct guidance from our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

### Joseph Was a Prophet

The primary role of prophets throughout the history of the world has been to testify of Jesus Christ and His Atonement and to teach His doctrine.

On the night before Christ was born, the premortal Messiah announced to Nephi that “on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets” (3 Nephi 1:13). When He appeared to the Nephites following His glorious Resurrection, the first words He spoke were, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world” (3 Nephi 11:10). The Savior loves and honors His prophets—valiant men who at great personal cost, often their lives, bear witness of Christ. Therefore, Jesus affirmed to the Nephites that His prophets of old spoke the truth and that He had come, as the prophets said He would.

Similarly, from the time of his First Vision at age 14 until his martyrdom 24 years later, Joseph steadfastly taught and testified of Jesus Christ, His Atonement, and His doctrine. Foremost among his many accomplishments, Joseph was a prophet of God.

### Joseph Was a Revelator

Revelation means to make known or uncover.<sup>2</sup> A revelator is one through whom God makes known or uncovers truth which may have been lost or hidden. Among all of the other remarkable things Joseph Smith accomplished, of fundamental importance is that through him the true nature and character of God the Father and His

Son, Jesus Christ, was revealed.<sup>3</sup> During a time of great confusion, when many were contending about such matters, God revealed through Joseph Smith a correct understanding of the Godhead.

In my travels among members of the Church in Asia, I have heard many members testify of their knowledge of God the Father, His Son, and the Holy Ghost and of the distinct nature and attributes of each of Them. I have noticed a genuine feeling of gratitude among Latter-day Saints for that knowledge.

These testimonies remind me of the statement in *Lectures on Faith*, where we read:

“. . . that three things are necessary, in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

“First, The idea that he actually exists.

“Secondly, A *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.

“Thirdly, An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will.—For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding, it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

I have observed the great joy faithful members of the Church feel in knowing they are children of a loving

Heavenly Father, created in His image. They feel love and gratitude for the Savior and strive to follow Him so they may enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost in their lives. They have deep appreciation for the Prophet Joseph Smith who, as God’s prophet and revelator, made known eternal truths regarding the Godhead.

Like them, I feel profoundly grateful for the Prophet Joseph Smith. I have walked in the Sacred Grove where he saw God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I have been to Carthage jail where he was martyred. I have ancestors who knew Brother Joseph. But my testimony of his role as a prophet of God has come in the same way as those who have not had those experiences—from the confirming witness of the Holy Ghost. I am grateful for that witness and for the fact that through the Prophet Joseph—a prophet and a revelator—the true nature and character of God has been revealed, the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and that each of us can know of these things for ourselves.

It gives us the faith we need to act in accordance with the principles and ordinances of the gospel that we might find joy and peace now and throughout eternity. ■

#### NOTES

1. See “Religious Figures,” *Smithsonian*, Spring 2015 Collector’s Edition, 66.
2. See Bible Dictionary, “Revelation.”
3. See Doctrine & Covenants 76:19-24; Joseph Smith—History 1:17, 25.
4. Joseph Smith Jr., *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38.

# Converse with Your Father in Heaven Often

By Elder and Sister Valentine

“Choose to converse with your Father in Heaven often,” said Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. “Make time every day to share your thoughts and feelings with Him. Tell Him everything that concerns you. He is interested in the most important as well as the most mundane facets of your life. Share with Him your full range of feelings and experiences.”<sup>1</sup>

I have prayed all my life. While we were raising our family, prayer became more important, and we added prayers to our daily habits. I have complete faith that all of our prayers are heard and answered. I have been taught well to use heavenly language like “Thee” and “Thy.” Speaking with Heavenly Father is sacred to me, so I have tried not to make my prayers a list of “wants” nor routine. I have always tried to avoid mentioning the day-to-day earthly frustrations in my prayers, because I should be able to deal with those without help. However, when I heard Elder Scott speak, the thought “tell Him everything” stood out to me.

Now fast forward to a frustrating week here in our Latter-day Saints Charities office. We live in Nepal, and most everything we do involves the internet. All of our communication

with the mission president, the Hong Kong LDSC office, project development, and our family depends on having the internet. Simply, if there is no internet, we can’t get our work done, and I get anxious when I can’t communicate with our family and our leaders.

It is common for the internet in Nepal to be sluggish or off and on, but this week it was just off. We did the usual and called the internet provider over and over and received no assistance. We went to the office for more direct contact with our provider. They promised to send someone out in an hour. That didn’t happen either. Days went by and our work began to pile up. We went to the zoo on our preparation day, which we rarely do to fill in the time. We continued contacting the internet provider with no change. We took our sweet Nepali friend with us to the internet office and returned home with a promise that there would be a technician sent right away. He came hours later but said there was a bigger problem and left. He told us someone would come the next day. Late in the evening as my husband and I were going to say family prayer, I wondered if I dare tell Heavenly Father everything, as Elder Scott had counseled. I wondered



*The Valentines*

if it was silly to tell Him about the internet, but as I knelt and offered our family prayer, I decided to tell Heavenly Father “everything.” I asked Him to help us get the internet fixed so we could do our work and talk to our family.

After the prayer, my husband and I were just talking before we went to bed. Perhaps 10 minutes passed, and to our surprise, our internet began to work. A few minutes later Heavenly Father intervened again and sent us another tender mercy. I felt that Heavenly

Father wanted me to know for sure that it was He who had heard and was answering my prayers. Heavenly Father turned on our heater that had not worked since a flood at our apartment in August. He knew it was cold in our apartment without the heaters, and He didn't want me to be cold.

Does Heavenly Father want to hear everything? Yes, He does—everything! He is our Heavenly Father, and we are His children. He cares about everything that happens

in our lives, including the daily frustrations. He wants to help us. He wants a close relationship with all of His children. You can tell the Lord everything. There might not be an immediate answer as we experienced, but I testify He wants to hear “everything.” Heavenly Father hears and answers prayers. ■

*Elder and Sister Valentine serve in Nepal*

#### NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, p. 92.

The tickets were issued to us and the papers for visas got ready. All the arrangements were done. One week before our temple trip, my wife found out she was pregnant again. Her doctor advised her not to travel long distances because she was in her early period of pregnancy.

We flew to Hong Kong. My wife's health deteriorated during our stay in the patron house. Temple workers were there to help us and comfort us. They assured us that if there was any concern or an emergency then we could call them for any hospitalization depending upon the gravity of her illness. We retired to bed feeling tired and troubled. But our hearts were filled with prayers, seeking for God's tender mercies.

The next day (the day that we were to be sealed), we got up, and to my surprise, my wife said that she felt better and that she was ready to go to the temple.

Since going to the temple, we have come closer to God.

Vidhya and I have come closer to each other in love and understanding.

Our disagreements came down. We understand each other very well. We truly love each other.

My testimony in the living God has increased day by day. I can feel His protection and tender compassion in our lives.

I share this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

## God's Tender Mercies

By Sureshkumar Balan, Coimbatore District, India

I am Sureshkumar Balan. I was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in February 2006. I married Vidhya in November 2008. She was a non-member. After my marriage, my wife learned about the gospel and expressed her willingness to join the Church. I was filled with happiness and baptized her on March 29, 2009. My wife, Vidya, my son, Bevan, and I traveled to the Hong Kong China Temple in November 2014 to be sealed as a family. We faced a lot of challenges as we planned for our temple trip. At the same time, we received lots of blessings.

Earlier, we had planned our temple trip for May 2014, since that

was a holiday season in our country. My wife had conceived our second baby during this time. But sadly, the baby did not survive due to health complications.

After three months, when her health improved, we planned again to go to the temple in November 2014. This time my wife was not granted leave from her school where she was working. The school management had planned a review program which made things more difficult for us to plan our temple trip.

We never gave up, and we prayed daily and continuously to our Heavenly Father. Finally we decided to go to the temple whatever maybe the situation.

## Coming to India— Fasting and Prayer

By **Cliff Keeler**

Branch president of Mumbai Branch, India

**W**hen faced with challenging decisions, I am grateful for the principles of fasting and prayer.

In 2013, my wife and I were faced with such a challenging decision. I had several employment opportunities and did not know which path to take since the consequences of each were very different.

My mentor and boss was retiring, and I was in line to take his place as vice president of Gasification Technology, a position I had wanted for a long time. However, over the years, my wife and I had discussed taking an overseas assignment. We had just become empty nesters and felt now might be the right time.

Reliance Industries had been inquiring after me for some time and offered me a very challenging but rewarding position in their organization in India. I was loyal to my staff and boss at my current company and had worked with many of them for 25 years.

My wife and I “studied out” these options in our mind (see D&C 9:8) by listing the pros and cons of each option.

On a visit to India in September 2013, I fasted and prayed to know



*Cliff Keeler*

which path I should take. At the conclusion of the sacrament meeting in the humble meetinghouse in Vashi, Navi Mumbai, the congregation sang “Hark All Ye Nations” (*Hymns*, no. 264). The Spirit overwhelmed me, and I knew that the Lord wanted us in Mumbai.

Since moving to India, my wife and I have been blessed to meet and work with the wonderful Saints and missionaries here in Mumbai. Although I do not know all the reasons the Lord wants us here nor to what path another choice would have led, the answer to my prayers and fasting give me confidence to move forward with faith in my church and professional work here in India. ■

## My 200 KM Brevet

By **Naveen Kumar Kommukuri**,  
Hyderabad Stake

**O**n February 21, 2015, I participated in my first 124 mile (200 km) cycling ride. This ride taught me two great principles.

I prepared everything that is required on this long ride on Friday, a day before the race. My preparation included gathering food (soaked almonds), hydration, proper clothing, and tuning my bicycle to be in good condition.

I left home by 4:30 a.m. after having a family prayer to have safe journey and reached Saroor Nagar stadium by 5:15 a.m. At the starting point 44 cyclists had already gathered and were having their cycles checked by the organizers. I took my cycle and joined all the riders and got all the necessary checkups done.

After checkup, we were given a bib number, route map so we would be on the correct path, and a cue sheet to get stamped at check points.

At 5:30 a.m. sharp, the ride flagged-off. I was still setting up few things. Almost all the riders left, and I was the last person to leave the stadium gate. I soon joined the last batch of riders and got to know the initial route details from experts.

I had only one goal in mind: I wanted to complete the ride and

consistently maintain an average speed. A flash of thought came into my mind that made me smile: “the first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (see Matthew 19:30).

After riding 15 miles (25 km), I was able to meet the larger group who left on time. I soon left them on my way and after riding for another 10 miles (16 km), I met a rider (Sanjay Sharma) with whom I rode around 74 miles (120 km), changing positions from one and two. At check point 2 we got some juice and bananas and found out that there were two more riders



**Naveen on his ride**

ahead of us. We had completed 52 miles (85 km) by now, so we took a five-minutes break and then got back. The next check point was around 34 miles (55 km) away. This route from Chityala to Bohngiri Fort was deserted, as it is thinly populated. The ride through this area was very boring. We passed another rider after six miles (10 km), who had stopped for water, and then after three miles (5 km), we saw the first rider, who had stopped to get refreshed. We also took a break along with him. I washed all the salt from my face while they drank some Chai. After five minutes we got back on road.

Around 11:00 a.m. I started to feel the heat and was continuously getting thirsty because of the biscuits that I had at checkpoint 2. On top of that, I filled my two water bottles with electrolytes, which was not satisfying my thirst as my body was craving pure water.

Sanjay took first position. I followed him and when we reached Bohngiri town, I told him that I was very thirsty. He gave me a hint that you always carry one bottle of water and another for electrolytes, and then we planned to stop at a store to have a cool drink or coconut water. I suggested we continue, as were close to Bohngiri Railway station, which was check point 3, where we could stop for some drinks. We reached check point 3, and we were the odd folks

at the railway station in different outfits, so this attracted the locals who were excited to see us and our gear cycles. One youth wanted to have a ride on my bike to which I had to say no as I had more kilometers to ride. I refilled my bottle with only water and then started from check point 3. Sanjay and I were like good friends after riding this long together. We realized Bohngiri town was past, and our dreams of having a cool drink there remained a dream. When we were just 34 miles (55 km) away from our destination, Sanjay gave me the shocking news that he got a flat tire. He asked me to continue without him. I had to leave him with an unwilling heart, as I was leaving good company.

As I moved, two other riders joined me. I kept my pace and left them behind. It was one long stretch on Hyderabad highway, I was riding alone, no cyclist was ahead of me, and my destination was not even in sight. My music got turned off, and I did not want to stop to fix it. It was also getting tedious as I had been cycling for more than seven hours. It was very hot, and my body was pulling the plug, asking me to stop, but then I remembered Sanjay and his flat tire, and I became scared thinking what would happen if I got a flat tire. I did not have equipment to fix a flat tire. After cycling 93-odd miles (150 kilometers), I did not want to be stopped due to a flat tire. I became more cautious

and kept my eyes wide open to avoid anything on the road that could puncture my tires. My heart sank in prayer to my God to help me avoid getting a flat tire. More than fear, my body became weak and mind was unwilling to encourage it. Then I was inspired to remember and hum a hymn:

“Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed,

For I am thy God and will still give thee aid.

I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,

Upheld by my righteous . . . , omnipotent hand” (“How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85).

As I was reciting this hymn, a new current passed into my body. I sensed goosebumps all over me and heard one command: “Don’t look back.” I became free from fear and felt light and not alone. As I was pedaling in my strength, my thoughts lingered around these lines of hymn and never had it made such difference and promise as it did on this ride. Each and every word of this hymn had been fulfilled.

I learned a great and first principle on this ride, that at times of distress, discouragement, disdain, or loneliness in life, if we turn to our Lord with true intent, He will aid us, strengthen us, and cause us to stand whatever the situations might be.

I completed my ride safely in nine hours and eight minutes and without



**Kommukuri Naveen after riding 200 km**

much fatigue. Above all, I was first.

After 15 minutes, the second rider joined, then the third, and soon my friend Sanjay completed. I was happy to see him. We congratulated each other, I called my family to share the good news, and we took a few pictures. I packed my cycle in the car and was ready to leave.

At this instant, a scene flashed from the New Testament of ten lepers who were healed on Jesus’s word and only one returned to thank Him. My inner sense shouted at me, “You are same as those nine lepers who did not return to thank Jesus.”

I then made up my mind to thank my Lord, but by then I came out of the stadium and was on the highway. I decided to pull over to pray. Somehow I was diverted toward a coconut seller, and I stopped to drink some coconut water. I gave him money, and as he went to another shop to get my change, instead of waiting for him, I drove toward him and collected my change. It was short by one rupee, and I felt sorry for him. I was not able to pay in full. Thinking about him, I started on my way.

Suddenly the ten lepers scene from the New Testament flashed in my mind again, but this time I pulled my car over and immersed myself in prayer to thank my Lord for all the protection and strength throughout the ride. As I was praying, my eyes filled with tears and I was crying. Never had I felt such a strong, overwhelming presence of the Spirit in my life. It was wonderful. I felt the love and warmth of Lord and the presence of holy angels. It was one wonderful moment of life.

I learned the greatest second lesson on this ride, that is to be grateful and thankful for Lord for His tender mercies and respond to Him immediately in prayer and He will express His love back to us in a unique way that we may never forget. When we pray with real intent to thank God, He will be very happy and will express that to us in a unique way. I felt it and will never forget it. ■

# Every Day Is New

By Srilekha Velumani, Indiranagar Branch, Bangalore District

I was born to wonderful parents. I have one elder brother. I love them so much. They taught me how to love, to learn, and to respect others. I grew up in a different sect of religion. I was pursuing engineering and got selected for a multi-national company during



*Srilekha Velumani with her mother*

my final year. Days passed, but I did not get the offer letter and it was getting postponed. Meanwhile, I started playing badminton in the evenings.

One of my friends started inviting me to church, but I kept rejecting. One day in our game we had a bet that if I lost the game, I would attend church. Fortunately, I lost! So to keep the promise I made, I attended church on Sunday. When I visited for the

first time, I felt great love and respect shown by the brothers and sisters in the Church. In the Gospel Principles class I really felt some kind of good feeling in my heart and afterwards I met two missionaries who started teaching me. I had never read the Bible; the first book I started reading was the Book of Mormon, which articulated everything plainly so I was able to understand everything. Two months later, I decided to be baptized, but circumstances were not good and my parents also did not support my decision. The elders suggested that I fast, so I did. One scripture that inspired me was from 1 Nephi 3:7. We read: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them to accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.” Moreover, I received a confirmation in my prayer too, so I began planning for my baptism. I was baptized on December 10, 2011. I realized that some things get postponed for some other good purposes in God’s plan.

I am so much grateful for this restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Since my baptism, every day is a new day for me. I started engaging myself in reading scriptures. I was so blessed to know about the truth, especially the plan of salvation, which taught me the purpose of my life and the importance of attaining Christlike attributes,

which are precious gifts that should be learned and applied in our lives.

I have learned that we become worthy to enter the presence of Heavenly Father through applying the Savior’s Atonement and living the gospel. Life is a perfect laboratory to develop Christlike attributes, and that in turn will improve our relationships, help us to serve willingly, and fit us for eternal life. If we move forward with faith, the Lord will make much more out of our life than we can by ourselves. He will line up resources, increase opportunities, strengthen us, expand our vision, and help us to meet our trials and challenges successfully.

I am forever grateful for Heavenly Father’s love and for the Atonement of Christ and I believe the Holy Spirit is present with us. We can know the truth of all the things if we seek it through humble prayer and study. I never felt alone in my life after joining the Church. I truly know that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are with me and ready to help in every circumstance.

I testify that God lives and loves each of us equally and that the Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ, is our Redeemer. I know that the Church has been restored with fulness of gospel once again on earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I am so happy that God made known unto me these things which are true, in the name of my Savior, Jesus Christ, amen. ■