

The Important Testimony of David Whitmer

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David Whitmer is an important figure in LDS church history. He has credibility. The fact that he, Oliver Cowdery, and most of the early Twelve separated themselves from Joseph Smith and the church should cause us to ask why? Whitmer left the church in 1838, citing five primary concerns for his decision, as listed farther below. His remarks are notable as he was a man of fine character. The Lord chose him to be one of three special witnesses for the Book of Mormon. He saw the gold plates and the angel who brought them. David Whitmer had a close relationship with the Prophet Joseph Smith. He also had important church leadership positions. He, Joseph, and Oliver also received many revelations from God *together* in the early portions of the 1831 Book of Commandments (which later became the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants).

The following statements by David Whitmer, and other information, is presented that we might see the importance of remaining focused on Christ and what He calls “**my** doctrine, **my** gospel, and **my** church,” rather than the ways of man. They are His **rock**, a sure foundation. Lifting up men and things (which is idolatry, often coming because of pride or dependency on others) is the *first* of five reasons Whitmer gave for his departure from the early church. In looking back in 1887 at his time then, Whitmer suggested that God works by *stumbling blocks*, and that they are used to test us, to see if we will seek out God, rather than lifting up men to be our lights. Rather than continuing to submit to this, Whitmer left the church. There are many stumbling blocks among us today – as men. They include Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Thomas Monson, or others like Avraham Gileadi, Denver Snuffer, or those with special gifts of the Spirit among us. They should never come between us and God. And we must never allow ourselves to become dependent on any man as our spiritual mentor or we will not develop sufficient oil in our own lamps to discern truth from error. Such are led into forbidden paths. Our laser focus must be on Christ the Lord, the fountain of living waters, the light and life of the world, the tree of life at the end of Lehi and Nephi’s visions.

Who is David Whitmer? David Whitmer was one of three witnesses *God chose* for the gold plates of the Book of Mormon, the foundational document of the LDS church. The plates were shown to him by an angel, along with David’s companions Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris. They viewed the plates and the angel on June 28, 1829 (eight more witnesses saw the plates, but not the angel). Two Book of Mormon scriptures prophetically address these “three witnesses” from a future perspective (2 Ne. 27:12-13 & Ether 5:2-5).

Like Joseph Smith, David Whitmer held important leadership positions, including Stake President, Assistant President of the Church, President of the High Council in Zion, and President of the Church in Zion (Missouri). For a time, he was second in command of the new church. Hyrum Andrus (former Dean of the BYU Religion Dept., and Assistant Church Historian, stated, “Joseph Smith ordained David Whitmer to be the President of the church in Missouri *and his own successor* should Smith ‘not live to God.’ This was on July 7 of 1834. Andrus added, “By virtue of his position as President of the High Council in Zion, David Whitmer was sustained as ‘*the president of the church in Zion,*’ not merely as a Stake President. Since the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Quorum of the Seventy had not yet been organized, this meant that there was a short period of time—from July 3, 1834, until February 14, 1835—when the *High Council in Zion stood in an administrative position next to the First Presidency*. It also meant that from July 3, 1834, until December 5, 1834, at which time *Oliver Cowdery was made the Associate President of the Church, David Whitmer, as President of the High Council in Zion, was the Prophet’s rightful successor*” (see Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrines of the Kingdom*, Bookcraft, 1973, p. 195).

David Whitmer has credibility. His words provide understanding and insights available nowhere else. Joseph, Oliver, and David were all baptized in the same month they were shown the gold plates (June, 1829), receiving their fiery baptism and the Holy Ghost as their guides immediately. No official organized “church” had been put in place prior to that time. It came a year later on April 6 of 1830, when Whitmer was baptized a second time, along with Joseph and Oliver, as part of being officially recognized as a church according to the laws of men - in New York State. Whitmer was the third person baptized into the new “official” Church of Christ, now set up according to the laws of men in New York. It was organized to provide legitimacy among men, as the early proselyting “Elders” were accused of having “no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc.,” at that time in New York State.

The new “official” church and Joseph Smith’s increasing power within it, was a significant reason for Whitmer’s separation from it, as presented in his testimony below. It was the beginning of the end in his mind, as Joseph Smith would later become more than a *prophet* to bring forth revelation in scripture (his primary responsibility according to a revelations from God), but a prophet **over** his people. He would become its *Prophet, Seer, and Revelator*, the *President* over the church or, and in a capacity where he was to receive revelation for the people. Just prior to his murder in Nauvoo in 1844, Joseph Smith was running for *President of the United States of America*. Earlier he was anointed *King* over all Israel by the Council of Fifty. He was also a *General* of the Nauvoo Legion, and Nauvoo’s *Mayor*. Joseph also officiated as *Grand*

Chaplain over the Nauvoo Lodge of Freemasons. The early simplicity of the Church of Christ in 1828-29 had transitioned to a new organization after 1830, and the “*official*” status of a church according to the laws of men.

In 1 Nephi 22:23, the Lord lists “power over the flesh” as the second of six corrupting influences for His doctrine, gospel, and church, just behind “getting gain” (fame, standing, position, acclaim, money, etc.). It is followed by seeking “popularity among men” and “the lusts of the flesh” (sex and the materialism of Babylon). It was later in Nauvoo where all of these things became real problems in connection with unlawful polygamy, the secret oaths of Masonry, and Danite enforcers insuring loyalty to the leaders and their teachings. Whitmer saw Joseph Smith’s acceptance of the new title “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator” **to the church**, as the beginning of a steady decline. He blamed Sydney Rigdon for influencing Joseph Smith too much with many outside influences that corrupted the purity of God’s early teachings. Today, David Whitmer is seen as the bad guy, one who left the church in 1838 because of these things. Whitmer is often accused of being jealous of Rigdon today. On the contrary, his witness of Christ in his 1887 testimony of what happened in early church history provides a wealth of understanding to what led to our current “awful situation” in which we are cursed for relying on the arm of flesh rather than God, and being surrounded everywhere by secret combinations that seek gain from us and control over us.

In D&C 18:4, the Lord designated David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery to “search out” men suitable to be “twelve disciples” (not Apostles, see the author’s paper, *A Sent One: The Apostolic Charge*). He told Joseph, Oliver, and David, “Wherefore, if you shall build up *my church, my gospel, and my rock* [Jesus Christ], *the gates of hell shall not prevail against you*” (Joseph later made changes to this and other verses of scripture). Shortly thereafter, Whitmer separated himself from the church (about 1838). Whitmer was never excommunicated from it, nor did he ever deny his witness of Jesus Christ or the gold plates of the Book of Mormon. His serious misgivings were about the direction the church was being taken. Hell *was* rising up against it in his mind (see D&C 93:39). He left it based on the following five concerns.

- (1) The centralization of power in one man – Joseph Smith as prophet, seer, and revelator *over the church*. It remains the cause of many problems today tied in terms of both idolatry and the inability of many to have oil in their own lamps.
- (2) The later rise of unlawful polygamy in Nauvoo (with Masonry and Danite coercion).
- (3) The removal of Christ’s name from the church in 1834 (changed to “The Church of the latter-day Saints”).
- (4) The division caused by the calling of some men as high priests.
- (5) Changes he saw being made in scripture, including those in the original Book of Commandments, later changed in the Doctrine & Covenants to reflect evolving doctrine, and some in the Book of Mormon.

One of these changes in scripture is verse 4 of chapter 15 of the 1831 Book of Commandments. David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery were with Joseph Smith when the revelation from God was given through Joseph’s seer stone. Whitmer reveals in his writings that Joseph Smith later added 22 words to this verse when it became verse 4 of D&C Section 5, that he might justify changes being implemented at the time. Whitmer was not happy with this change. Because the Saints have placed tremendous faith and trust in Joseph Smith, most don’t see this as a problem. The original verse read: “And he (Joseph) has a gift to translate the Book and I have commanded him that he shall **pretend to no other gift**, for I will grant him no other gift.” Joseph’s changes (in italics) read: “And you have a gift to translate the plates, *and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you*, and I have commanded you that you should pretend to no other gift, *until my purpose is fulfilled in this*; for I will grant unto you no other gift *until it is finished*.” Additional changes to the Doctrine and Covenants by Joseph, Willard Richards, Brigham Young, and others to the D&C and other scriptures, and to historical documents (some to support polygamy) are not listed here for brevity sake.

In His Own Words Whitmer stated, “In June, 1829, the Lord called Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and myself as the three witnesses, to behold the vision of the Angel, as recorded in the fore part of the Book of Mormon, and to bear testimony to the world that the Book of Mormon is true. I was not called to bear testimony to the mission of Brother Joseph Smith *any farther than his work of translating the Book of Mormon*, as you can see by reading the testimony of us three witnesses. In this month I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained an Elder in the Church of Christ by Bro. Joseph Smith. Previous to this, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had baptized, confirmed and ordained each other to the office of an Elder in the Church of Christ. I was the third person baptized into the [early] church.

In August, 1829, we began to preach the gospel of Christ. The following six Elders had then been ordained: Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Samuel H. Smith, Hyrum Smith, and myself. The Book of Mormon was still in the hands of the printer, but my brother, Christian Whitmer, had copied from the manuscript the teachings and doctrine of Christ, being the things which we were commanded to preach. We preached, baptized and confirmed members into the Church of Christ, from August, 1829, until April 6th, 1830, being *eight months* in which time we had proceeded rightly; the offices in the church being Elders, Priests and Teachers. Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches

of the 'Church of Christ,' in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, N.Y.; one at Manchester, N.Y., and one at Colesville, Pa.

It is all a mistake about the church being organized on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully organized — spiritually — before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; *the world [of men - Babylon] had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church*, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land [of men in New York State]. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N.Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land; you can see this from Sec. 17 Doctrine and Covenants: the church was organized on April 6th '**agreeable to the laws of our country**'. . . I do not consider that the church [of God] was any more organized or established in the eyes of God on that day than it was previous to that day. I consider that on that day the first error was introduced into the Church of Christ, and that error was Brother Joseph being ordained as 'Prophet Seer and Revelator' to the church [a lone, single, all-powerful leader].

The Holy Ghost was with us in more power during the eight months previous to April 6, 1830, than ever at any time thereafter. Almost everyone who was baptized received the Holy Ghost in power, some prophesying, some speaking in tongues, the heavens were opened to some, and all the signs which Christ promised should follow the believers were with us abundantly. We were a humble happy people, and loved each other as brethren should love. Just before April 6, 1830, some of the brethren began to think that the church should have *a leader*, just like the children of Israel wanting *a king* [rejecting God to be such, 1 Sam. 8:7]. Brother Joseph finally inquired of the Lord about it. He must have had a desire himself to be their leader [see Ezek. 14:3-4], which desire in any form is not of God, for Christ said 'If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.' 'He that would be great, let him be your servant.' 'For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.' A true and humble follower of Christ will never have any desire to lead or be first, or to seek the praise of men or brethren. Desiring any prominence whatever is not humility, but it is *pride*; it is seeking praise of mortals instead of the praise of God. Joseph received a revelation that he should be the leader; that he should be ordained by Oliver Cowdery as 'Prophet, Seer and Revelator' to the church, and that the church should receive his words **as if from God's own mouth**. Satan surely rejoiced on that day, for he then saw that in time he could overthrow them.

Remember, 'Some revelations are of God; some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the devil.' God allowed them to be answered according to their erring desires. They were like the children of Israel wanting a king, and God gave them a king, but it was to their final destruction [1 Sam. 8:7]. He gave the church a leader, but it proved their destruction and final landing of the majority of them in the Salt Lake valley in polygamy, believing that their leader had received a revelation from God to practice this abomination. This was the first error that crept into the church. None of us detected it then. We had all [too much] confidence in Brother Joseph [a man], thinking that as God had given him so great a gift as to translate the Book of Mormon, that everything he would do must be right. That is what I thought about it. You see how **we trusted too much in man instead of going to God in humility, and to his written word**, to see if we were proceeding rightly. It grieves me much to think that I was not more careful, and did not rely upon the teachings of Christ in the written word. But we were then young in years, and all of us were mere babes in Christ. Brother Joseph and myself were only twenty-five years of age.

Although Brother Joseph was in this high office, he was humble most of the time, and he and all of us had the Spirit with us when we were humble, but as I have stated *we did not have the Spirit with us in power as a body after this*, as we did before April 6, 1830. [Note D&C 10 in regard to the lessening Spirit, a revelation from God in 1828. The Lord defines His church via five words. It is all those who "**repent** and **come unto me**." The Lord said that anything more or less than this is "**not my church**," see D&C 10:67-68. This was in 1828, just before Joseph and Oliver baptized each other, *and* before they were given the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist in 1829. These events occurred before the "*official*" church organization date of April 6, 1830.] After Sydney Rigdon came into the church — or in the spring of 1831 — we began to make proselytes faster; but great numbers coming into the church does not always signify great spiritual prosperity. The people made light of the church in Noah's time, there was only eight members in it, but it proved to be the true church.

I want the brethren to understand me concerning this error of ordaining Brother Joseph to that office on April 6, 1830. Not at all do I mean to say that I believe the church was then rejected of God. What occurred on that day was this: One of the elders of the church (Joseph) was led into a grievous error; and the members acquiesced in it. In time it proved to be a most grievous error, being the cause of the trouble which afterwards befell the people of God. *They put their trust in Brother Joseph and received his revelations as if from God's own mouth*. (Jer. 17:5) '*Thus saith the Lord: cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm; and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*' This has been the great curse of the work of God in these last days. Nearly all of the church have continued **to heed the words of men as if from God's own**

mouth — following man into one error in doctrine after another — from year to year — even on down into the doctrine of polygamy” (Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, chap. 3).

Many today use God’s words of D&C 1:38 in vain to justify their words being *equal* with those of God (“whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same”). Only when they quote God’s words exactly, and in His context (should as an angel sent from the throne of God to quote Him exactly), should this scripture be applied to their words, which ARE then – in effect - His words – as quoted perfectly.]

Could Joseph & Can Modern Prophets Fall?

Some say leaders cannot lead their people astray. This is false doctrine. Speaking of the Prophet Joseph Smith, David Whitmer said, “Marvel not that we began to be led in to error so soon; the children of Israel went into gross error in forty days, following Aaron while Moses was in the mount [see D&C 93:39]. I desire to say a few words here concerning *prophets falling into error*. Solomon, David, Saul, Uzziah and many great and gifted prophets in Israel fell into gross error, and some of them into crime. Paul said he kept his body under subjection, lest he should become a castaway, after having preached to others. *Many of the Latter Day Saints believe that it is impossible for Brother Joseph to have fallen*. I will give you some evidence upon this matter which I suppose you will certainly accept, showing that Brother Joseph belonged to the class of men who could fall into error and blindness. From the following you will see that Brother Joseph belonged to the weakest class—the class that were very liable to fall. I quote from a revelation which came through the stone, July, 1828 [D&C 3:3-9]. It is a revelation to Brother Joseph, chastising him for his errors after he had commenced to translate the Book of Mormon, telling him how often he had erred and transgressed the commandments and the laws of God; telling him that if he was not aware, he would fall, and have his gift to translate taken from him. Also telling him, that **although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet, if he boasts in his own strength, etc., he must fall**. ‘Remember, remember, that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men: for although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet, if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, HE MUST FALL and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him. Behold, you have been entrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember, also, the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them, and behold, HOW OFT HAVE YOU TRANSGRESSED THE COMMANDMENTS AND THE LAWS OF GOD, and have GONE ON IN THE PERSUASIONS OF MEN. Behold thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, (was given a gift to translate the Book) but because of transgression, IF THOU ARE NOT AWARE, THOU WILT FALL, but remember God is merciful: thou hast suffered the council of thy Director to be trampled upon from the beginning” (p. 36).

Unlawful Polygamy

Later Whitmer added, “Brother Joseph must have set up his *idol in his heart* [Ezek. 14:3; D&C 46:9; James 4:3] or he would not have prayed to the Lord to know wherein David and Solomon were justified in polygamy, when God says in the Book of Mormon that they were **not** justified in it; that it was **abominable** before Him. David, Solomon, Saul, and many chosen men of God, afterwards drifted into error and lost the spirit of God, and why not Joseph Smith? Will you answer? Was not Joseph Smith a man subject to like passions? Had you been with him as much as I was, and knew him as I knew him, you would also know that he could fall into error and transgression: but with all his weaknesses, I always did love him. No man was ever perfect but Christ. Uzziah fell into the snare of Satan, through pride, after serving God in humility for fifty-two years (2 Chron. 26). ‘I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria’ (Jer. 23:13). ‘I have seen in the prophets a horrible thing’ (Jer. 23:14). ‘The prophets prophesy falsely’ (Jer. 5:31). ‘For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests’ (Lam. 4: 13). ‘Thus saith the Lord, woe unto the foolish prophets’ (Ezek. 13:3). There were many prophets and chosen men of God, who afterwards fell into error, and who lost the Spirit of God, and produced false prophecies and revelations in the name of the Lord. Why should any one refuse to investigate as to the truth of the Book of Mormon, because Joseph Smith went into error after being called of God to translate it? Kind reader, think of this, and beware how you hastily condemn that book which I know to be the word of God; for his own voice and an angel from heaven declared the truth of it unto me, and to two other witnesses who testified on their death-bed that it was true.”

A Single Leader with All Power – Prophet, Seer & Revelator

According to David Whitmer, “Just before April 6, 1830, some of the brethren began to think that the church should have a [single] leader, just like the children of Israel wanting a king [Joseph and Brigham were “king’s” over the people]. Brother Joseph finally inquired of the Lord about it. He must have had a *desire* himself to be their leader, which *desire* in any form is not of God, for Christ said, ‘*If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*’ ‘*He that would be great, let him be your servant.*’ ‘*For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*’ A true and humble follower of Christ will never have any desire to lead or be first, or to seek the praise of men or brethren. Desiring any prominence whatever is not humility, but it is pride; it is seeking praise of mortals instead of the praise of God. Joseph received a revelation that he should be the leader; that he should be ordained by Oliver Cowdery as ‘Prophet Seer and Revelator’ to the church, and that the church should receive his

words as if from God's own mouth. Satan surely rejoiced on that day, for he then saw that in time he could overthrow them. Remember, *'Some revelations are of God; some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the devil.'* God allowed them to be answered according to their erring desires [the same with polygamy]. They were like the children of Israel wanting a king, and God gave them a king, but it was to their final destruction. He gave the church a leader, but it proved their destruction and final landing of the majority of them in the Salt Lake valley in polygamy, believing that their leader had received a revelation from God to practice this abomination. This was the first error that crept into the church. None of us detected it then.

There is nothing in the New Testament part of either the Bible or Book of Mormon concerning a one-man leader or head to the church. Whoever claims that such an office should be in the church today, goes beyond the teachings which Christ has given us. As I have stated, we were strictly commanded in the beginning to rely upon that which was written; and he who goes beyond that which was then written, to the revelations of Joseph Smith to establish any order or doctrine in the church, must come under the head of those whom Christ spoke of when he said, 'Whosoever teaches more or less, etc., is not of me.' This alone should satisfy anyone who is not trusting in an arm of flesh. Who was 'Prophet Seer and Revelator' to the church at Jerusalem? They had none. Who was 'Prophet Seer and Revelator' to the church upon this land? They had none. And we had no such an office in the church in these last days for the first eight months of its existence, until Brother Joseph went into this error on April 6, 1830, and, after unwittingly breaking a command of God by taking upon himself such an office, in a few years *those revelations were changed to admit this high office, which otherwise would have condemned it.* They were changed to mean something entirely different from the way they were first given and printed in the Book of Commandments; as if God had not thought of this great and important office when he gave those revelations. Yet in the face of the written word of God, and in the face of all this evidence, the majority of the Latter Day Saints will still cling to the revelations of Joseph Smith and measure the written word of God by them, instead of measuring Joseph Smith and his revelations by the written word. Speaking after the manner of Paul to the Galatians, so say I to you: O foolish Latter Day Saints ... I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; which is not another, but the same gospel which some have perverted; and though we, or an angel from heaven, or Joseph Smith, preach any other gospel unto you than that which Christ gave us in the beginning, receive it not" (see Gal. 1:6-9). See Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, pps. 46-47.

Whitmer concluded, "When Christ came into the world, the doctrine of a one-man leader to the church was not taught by Him, and we are positively under **Christ** and his teachings in the written word. The Book of Mormon tells us plainly that THE WORDS OF CHRIST ARE TO BE MADE KNOWN IN THE SEALED RECORDS OF THE NEPHITES, AND IN THE RECORD OF THE JEWS: (the Bible) and this excludes the [modified] Book of Doctrine and Covenants (1 Nephi 3:43)."

Cursing or Blessing Imperfect mortal men have agency or choice and can lead us astray. Satan was in a position of high power in heaven and fell. His former name Lucifer means "Light Bearer." He is now Satan, the father of lies and deception. He desires to corrupt all truth, especially in churches where we should be focusing on God (see D&C 93:39). "Follow the prophet" and "follow the brethren" are dangerous statements, leading to cursing, according to the Book of Mormon, the founding document of our faith and other scripture (see 2 Ne. 4:34; 28:31; Jer. 2:13; Psalm 118:8). We are to have oil (the spirit of revelation) in our individual lamps, giving us ability to discern truth from error and receive communication from the Lord directly. It is essential for our salvation.

The five unwise virgins did not have this oil. They relied on others for their oil, and then when it was too late they sought oil from others. They were thus shut out of the Lord's presence when he opened the door to the bridal chamber (see JST Matt. 25:10-11). Each of us are to follow "**the way**" of salvation presented us by Lehi and Nephi of the Book of Mormon in their Tree of Life visions. Though our leaders are often good men, they are also flesh, and not God (Isa. 31:3). Becoming dependent upon any man takes away our responsibility to get through the gate and onto "*the way*" of salvation individually – and receive the promise of eternal life from our Lord. We do so by, (1) Turning (repenting) to Christ, by having **faith in Him** (not man). It is the first principle and ordinance of the gospel of Christ; (2) We must be "*baptized unto repentance*" by water; (3) We must be "*born again*," receiving the baptism of fire and Holy Ghost (where we get the Holy Ghost); And then (4) We must **hold tightly to the rod of iron** – which is **personal revelation from God** (and the Holy Ghost), *in connection with His written word* in scripture - that we might continue on **the way**, until we finally **partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life** personally - the great *glory, presence, and rest* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There is **no other way** to salvation (Mos. 3:17; 7:19; 16:13, 15). Christ "employs **no** servant [man] there" (2 Ne. 9:41). He alone is the Gate, the Door, the "fountain of livings waters" (Jer. 2:13), the "light and life of the world" (3 Ne. 11:11). There is no other way (2 Ne. 25:20; 31:21; Mos. 4:8; 5:8; Alma 21:9; 38:9).

The founding document of the church is the Book of Mormon, and in it we are repeatedly taught that to rely on the arm of flesh is to invite **curse**s (see 2 Ne. 4:34; 28:31; Jer. 2:13; Psalm 118:8). Throughout history, including our own, this is what we have seen, man depending upon other men for their salvation, which brings only trouble, rather than the blessings of eternal life. Let us be “wise virgins” instead and come to know the Lord (JST Matt. 25:10-11).

We must get the Holy Ghost. We are also to support and uphold those that serve us, always testing what they say against the Spirit. Most importantly, we are to heed Christ’s invitation throughout 3rd Nephi and “**repent** and **come unto me**,” rather than relying on leaders like Joseph, Brigham, or Paul, or any man for our salvation. Only those with “*the testimony of Jesus*” (**not about Jesus**) will be saved and exalted in the Celestial Kingdom. Those following men are often deceived and receive lesser glory (see D&C 76:75 and 99-102).

God said that the inhabitants of Zion are to judge the apostles and prophets to see who are liars and hypocrites. “For it shall come to pass that the inhabitants of Zion shall judge all things pertaining to Zion. And liars and hypocrites shall be proved by them, and they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known. And even the bishop, who is a judge, and his counselors, if they are not faithful in their stewardships shall be condemned, and others shall be planted in their stead” (D&C 64:38-40). That this responsibility is borne by normal members is underscored by the instructions the Lord provided for trying the president of the church for transgression (D&C 107:82-84). The Lord put into the hands of normal members the ability to discipline the leadership of the church, a responsibility that necessarily requires the membership of the church to receive the Holy Ghost and then watch over the leaders and evaluate their conduct to ascertain whether it is in line with God’s will and word (in revelation and scripture). Why would God give instructions on how members could remove a sitting church president for transgression, if (1) the president of the church can’t lead members astray, and (2) members are not meant to judge the execution of his office relative to the Holy Ghost?

Brigham Young said, “What a pity it would be if we were led by one man to utter destruction! Are you afraid of this? I am more afraid that this people have **so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him**. I am fearful they settle down in a state of *blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation*, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, *by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not*. This has been my exhortation continually.

For Whitmer’s full, 80-page testimony, see David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, <http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/address1.htm> For more sources revealing that prophets and leaders can and do fail as part of the mortal experience, and thus proving our need to rely upon the Spirit, see Millennial Star 14:38, pps. 593-95; Millennial Star 53, pps. 658-59; Millennial Star v. 54, p. 191; JD 1:312; JD 3:45; JD 4:368; JD 6:100; JD 9:150; JD 20:295; TPJS p. 238; Teaching and Learning by the Spirit, Ensign, Mar. 1997; For scriptures see 1 Ne. 15:24; 2 Ne. 4:34, 28:31; Hel. 13:29; D&C 45:56-57; D&C 64:38-40; D&C 76:98-106; D&C 107:82-84; Psalm 118:8; Jer. 17:5.