

## Visions & Why we Have Them

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Relying on the arm of flesh for information and guidance (academics, leaders, etc.) is less enlightening than seeking God and using the gifts of the Spirit to receive revelation, including visions. When tough times come, we will all need personal guidance through *revelation*. It is the “*oil in our lamps*” providing light for the five **wise virgins** in Matthew 25. Visions are a special type of *revelation* involving “*the eye of faith*” or “*the third eye*” along with the will of God. Visions are one important way in which God educates the faithful in a form of “*divine teaching*.” And unknown to many, ascending into the presence of our Lord – *in vision* – is the way in which we receive our Savior as “the Heavenly Gift” (Ether 12:8), also known as having our Second Comforter experience.

In addressing learning and truth, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is *not* to ask it from books, but to go to God *in prayer*, and obtain *divine teaching*” (TPJS p. 191). A young Joseph Smith trusted God and sought wisdom from Him in prayer. The Lord opened up a vision to him after he read James 1:5. Later Joseph Smith said, “If we have any claim on our Heavenly Father for anything, it is for *knowledge*...Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God...**Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject**” (TPJS p. 324). Visions are one of the very best ways to learn the things of God. We should be seeking knowledge of God directly - through them.

Though some clearly have the gift of seeing visions, or have instructive dreams, those who love the Lord and are dedicated can improve their ability to have visionary experiences. In Numbers 12, God said to Miriam and Aaron, “If there be a *prophet* among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a *vision*, and will speak unto him in a *dream*” (Num. 12:6). In the preceding chapter the *Prophet* Moses stated that it would be a good thing if - “*all the Lord's people were prophets*, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon *them*” (Num. 11:29). We can be prophets and prophetesses. We only need to believe, ask, and practice. One of the biggest sins of our day is *unbelief* (Morm. 1:14, 9:6). We must develop greater **faith in God** and **trust Him**, rather than in man, “*the arm of flesh*” (2 Ne. 4:34; Psalm 118:8). Note the following events in scripture or history involving educational visions, when God pours out His Spirit upon one or many.

The First Vision of Joseph Smith (JS History)

The appearance of Christ to except the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110)

The vision of the three degrees of Glory (D&C 76)

The Revelation of John

The visions of Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, etc.

The 3 & 8 Witness of the Gold Plates

The ascent-vision experiences of: Jesus Christ, Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John the Beloved, Paul, Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Joseph Smith, and Iohani Wolfgramm (seeing God on His throne, etc.)

God-inspired *visions* or *open visions* occur when one is fully awake in daylight hours, whereas *dreams* sent of God occur while we are sleeping. Visions are further separated into those God *spontaneously* gives to an individual versus those we initiate ourselves via *imagination*, hoping that the Lord will then control it to enlighten us. This is a form of “*quickening*, where God puts His light or Spirit upon an individual (see D&C 67:10-12, 76:12, 114-118). Visionary experiences often begin via self-directed pondering, meditation, and imagination, after which God honors our faith and effort by intervening for our benefit. It is He who has power to open and shut the heavens. He stated, “**And at my command the heavens are opened and are shut**” (Ether 4:9). He added “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it” (Rev. 3:8).

We ask for God’s involvement via a vision that we might be taught or lift up into His presence. Visions and dreams are not part of the official listings of “*the gifts of the Spirit*” in D&C 46, Moroni 10, or 1 Corinthians 12, perhaps because they are often *the vehicle* God uses to deliver other gifts, like “**knowledge**” to us. Visions *are* mentioned in the 7th Article of Faith, however. It states, “We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, *visions*, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.” Few today demonstrate faith and belief in God sufficient to . part the veil to Him. He will take notice as we do our part. We live in a time of *unbelief*, vanity, and idolatry (Morm. 10:24). Those who love the Lord and come to Him with broken hearts and contrite spirits are blessed with the baptism of fire (2 Ne. 31 and 32) and the gifts of the Spirit (D&C 46). They have one or more spiritual gifts because they have demonstrated faith in God and desire more gifts of the Spirit to better themselves, their families, and others. The Lord stated:

“And again, verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, **the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am**—*not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual*. For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except **quickened by the Spirit of God**. Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God, neither after the carnal mind” (D&C 67:10-12; 76:12; Rom. 8:11).

The purpose of God-inspired *visions* and *dreams* is that He might educate, uplift, and transform us. The first chapters of the Book of Mormon are full of the visionary experiences of Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob. They are examples to us. The 6<sup>th</sup> verse of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of 1 Nephi features the vision of Lehi. Later in chapter 6, Nephi desires to see what his father has seen and prays for the same experience. His faith, belief and effort are rewarded with an ascent vision, where God takes over leading the vision thereafter. In this vision Nephi sees God and much more. It is done while he is “*in the Spirit*” (see 1 Ne. 11:1; D&C 76:12, 116-18). Note the words or phrases used in 1 Nephi 11 to highlight his own visionary experience, and the number of times he uses them in this chapter:

“Desire to know”	1	“Bear record”	3
“Sat pondering in my heart”	1	“Caught away in the Spirit”	5
“Believe” or “Believing”	2	“Saw,” “Seen” or “Seest”	16
“Showed” or “Shown”	2	“Look” or “Looked”	17
“Witness”	2	“Behold” or “Beheld”	31

Looking at the *visionary* experiences of those in the Book of Mormon and others in scripture, we see that they have five primary purposes:

1. To provide **knowledge**, of various things, like the goodness of God (1 Ne. 5:4, Lehi), or to answer questions in a more instructive or dramatic fashion
2. To provide **prophecy** of coming events
3. As a **warning** to motivate us to action for our own safety, such as impending danger (2 Ne. 1:4 - Lehi’s vision of the destruction of Jerusalem)
4. For the purpose of **interpreting the dreams** of others as did Daniel and Joseph sold into Egypt, etc.
5. To become a **witness** of an important event or thing, such as the Lord’s acceptance of the Kirtland Temple as confirmed in His appearance to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in *vision* after the temple’s dedication (D&C 110). The three witnesses and later eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon all saw the gold plates in vision. The most important witness is that where we see our Savior in an ascent-vision experience.

**Developing the Gift of Seeing** To have this gift, one must *seek* it, *pray* for it, and *practice* developing it. In times of great wickedness, scripture tells us that, “*there was no open vision*” (1 Sam. 3:1), and that “there were no gifts from the Lord” (Morm. 1:14). King Solomon stated that, “*where there is no vision, the people perish*” (Prov. 29:18; see also 2 Ne. 32:4). Fortunately, we read in Joel that in the last-days there will be some who *show forth faith*. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will *pour out my spirit* upon all flesh; and *your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*: And also upon the *servants* and upon the *handmaids* in those days will I **pour out my spirit**. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered*: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be *deliverance*, as the Lord hath said, and in the *remnant* whom the Lord shall call” (Joel 2:28-32).

**The Pattern** One example of seeking an vision, then doing what is necessary to have one, is the pattern presented us in the Book of Mormon by Nephi and others. God gave the older, experienced visionary Prophet Lehi a vision of the impending destruction of Jerusalem (1 Ne. 1). He did so to motivate him to remove his family from the city for their safety’s sake, so that they might go to the Promised Land of America. This act also fulfilled covenants God made to Lehi and other prophets, including Joseph sold into Egypt and his posterity. As Nephi got older, he desired to see what his father Lehi did for clarification and testimony purposes, that he might know for himself and have his own sure witness. Desire, faith, permission, and effort on Nephi’s part led to many blessings and visionary experiences. We read in 1 Nephi 11:1, “For it came to pass after I had **desired** to know the things that my father had seen, and **believing** that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat **pondering in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord**, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot.”

In 2 Nephi 4:23-26 we read, “Behold, *he hath heard my cry* by day, and he hath given me **knowledge by visions in the night-time** [dreams?]. And **by day** have I waxed bold in **mighty prayer** before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and *angels came down and ministered unto me*. And upon **the wings of his Spirit** hath my body been carried away upon *exceedingly high mountains*. And **mine eyes** have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them. O then, if I have *seen* so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?” In 2 Nephi 32:4-5 Nephi stated, “Wherefore, now after

I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because **ye ask not, neither do ye knock**; wherefore, ye are not brought **into the light**, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by **the way**, and receive the *Holy Ghost*, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”

In D&C 76:19-22, and speaking of himself and Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith said that, “while we **meditated** upon these things [John’s teaching about the resurrection, in John 5:29], the Lord touched *the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness*; And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, *worshipping God*, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever. 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!*”

Like Joseph Smith, Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and Alma (36:18-22), were all taken to heaven **in spirit or in vision** and saw God on His throne, surrounded by those who were worshipping Him. Alma was born again (Baptism of Fire) in his experience (see chapter 5 and 36). Each man was “**in the Spirit**” when they had their *vision*. The phrase, “whether in the body or out of it” is a common statement by those having this experience, expressing that it is very real to them. We read in Ether 12:17-19, “And it was by *faith* that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death; and they obtained not the promise until after their *faith*. And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God. And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, *who could not be kept from within the veil*, but truly **saw with their eyes** the things which *they had beheld with an eye of faith*, and they were glad” (see also 2 Cor. 5:6; 12:2-4; Rom. 8:9; 1 Ne. 11:19; 3 Ne. 28:15; D&C 46:31). Note the other words used by Alma in chapter 5, verse 14-26. They include “image” (v. 14), “eye of faith” (v. 15), “imagine” (v. 17), “image of God” (v. 19), and then “think” (v. 20), “know” (v. 21), and “feel” (v. 22 & 26). What does “**in the spirit**” mean? How can we get “*in the Spirit*” and then request and receive a vision of God?

**Preparing to Have a Vision** There are a number of key things that helps one experience a vision. We must also be clean to merit any of the gifts of the Spirit (repentance). Don’t forget asking permission, to open the door of a vision and advancing in it. A vision of God must also be part of His will and timing. Practicing using the imagination is also an important, overlooked key. It is similar to personal meditation or pondering, but with a focus on “seeing in your own minds eye” until God does a “divine takeover” of your imaginative seeing. We read in Alma 5:15-18; “Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with **an eye of faith**, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you? Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?”

Alma 32:33 and 40-41 states, “And now, behold, because ye have **tried the experiment**, and planted the seed, and it swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, ye must needs know that the seed is good. And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with **an eye of faith** to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life. But if ye will nourish the word, yea, *nourish the tree* as it beginneth to grow, **by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof**, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life” (see also Ether 12:18-19 & 1 Chron. 28:9).

### **Repent and Come unto Me**

To come to the Lord in the world of glory is to ascend to Him in an “**ascent-vision**” experience. At an early age Joseph Smith had *faith* and *trust* in God and sought wisdom from Him, not man, in prayer. It was rewarded with great blessing – the First Vision, after he read James 1:5. Later Joseph said, “If we have any claim on our Heavenly Father for anything, it is for *knowledge*...Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God...**Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject**” (TPJS p. 324).

Visions are one of the very best ways to learn the things of God. We should be seeking knowledge of God directly - through revelation and vision. Nephi stated that he had *trust* in God five times in 2 Nephi 4:34, adding that to *trust* in man brings *curses*. Note the additional phrases and statements in scripture hereafter tied to visions and ascending into God’s presence in vision.

“awake and arise” (D&C 133:10)

“caught up to God and his throne” (JST Rev. 12:3)

“brought to heaven and sealed His” (Mosiah 5:15)

“he shall mount up **in the imagination of his thoughts** as upon eagles’ wings” (D&C 124:99)

“For it came to pass after I had **desired** to know the things that my father had seen,  
and **believing** that the Lord was able to make them known unto me,  
as **I sat pondering in mine heart** I was **caught away in the Spirit of the Lord**,  
yea, **into an exceedingly high mountain**,  
which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot” (1 Ne. 11:1)

“This is the end of the vision which we saw,  
which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit.  
But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us,  
which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion;  
Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit,  
and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen  
and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those **who love him, and purify themselves  
before him**; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves;  
That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh,  
they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory” (D&C 76:113-18)

“And **at my command the heavens are opened and are shut**” (Ether 4:9)

“**I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it**” (Rev. 3:8)

“...inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears [and unbelief], and humble yourselves before me... **the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am— not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual**. For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except *quickened by the Spirit of God*”  
(D&C 67:10-12; see also 76:12; Rom. 8:11)

eye of faith  
imagination (our “mind’s eye”)  
pondering  
visualization  
vision  
revelation  
divine teaching  
third eye  
in the Spirit  
wings of His Spirit  
on eagles wings  
caught up unto God and his throne  
knowledge

Alma the Younger described his  
“born again” experience with the  
following words:

image (v. 14)  
eye of faith (v. 15)  
imagine (v. 17)  
image of God (v. 19)  
think (v. 20)  
know (v. 21)  
feel (v. 22 & 26)

See also Alma 32:33, 40-41

“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:**  
*for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in*” (Matt. 23:13)

“Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge, *the fulness of the scriptures*; **ye enter not in yourselves into the kingdom**; and those who were entering in, ye hindered” (JST Luke 11:53)

**Seven steps** to ascend the ladder or get “in the Spirit” include:

1. *Seek and pray* for a *vision*, *believe* you can have one. Exercise faith in Christ. Separate yourself in a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed.

2. Consider *fasting* from worldly things, including food, then *feast, ponder, and meditate upon the word of God* or upon *God Himself*
3. Implement the *four-part prayer pattern*, including:
  - a. *Get Clean* - Repent and take the *Sacrament* where appropriate
  - b. *Express Love - Praise and worship God*, attempting to use His *prayer language* (the gift of tongues). Do so with *real love* (your whole heart, might, mind, and strength), expressing *gratitude, singing, dancing, reciting the Psalms*, etc.
  - c. *Help Me* - Ask for the vision, and *ask for God's love and light* (a portal). Then grow it or push it out to protect yourself (shielding)
  - d. *Help Others* – *Pray for and help others*. Be an *intercessor* with God for them
5. *Imagine* as necessary on a particular topic, scene, etc., for insights  
*Imagine*, for example, being caught up to the throne room of God and speaking with Him.  
*Imagination, creativity and faith* and all intertwined and similar...
6. Invite God to divinely takeover or control *your vision*
7. *Pierce the veil of unbelief (Moroni), prevail in the wrestle (mighty prayer) with God (Jacob), overcome the world, the flesh, or the natural man (John and Enos)*
8. Express *gratitude* when one is experienced

### **Five Stumbling Blocks**

1. *Unbelief* – exercise faith in Christ, seek His grace
2. *Negativity*, not believing you can do it, or that you are not good enough
3. *Unable to focus*, focusing instead on other things – needs on your to do list, distractions, etc.
4. *Depression*, selfishness, poor emotional state, etc.
5. *Fear*

### **Summary**

Throughout scripture, faithful individuals have taken the invitation to “*come unto Christ*” literally, doing so via vision or an ascent-vision experience. The 6<sup>th</sup> verse of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Book of Mormon reveals this pattern first in Lehi’s ascent-vision (1 Ne. 1:6-12). Later, all of chapter 11 details Nephi’s visionary experience.

The author has compiled the stories of ten individuals in scripture who have had this experience in the book *Lost Wisdom: Archetypes of the Atonement, Ascension, and At-one-ment*, [www.digitalegends.com](http://www.digitalegends.com) They include Jesus Christ, Enoch, Elijah, Abraham, Moses, John the Beloved, Joseph Smith, Iohanni Wulfgramm, and others. The pattern is the same as those in the Book of Mormon. There is first a desire for a personal vision, which is initiated by the seeker through belief and faith, along with fervent prayer and pondering. This effort is then taken over by the Lord, according to His will and timing. He then teaches us visually “*in the Spirit*” (1 Ne. 11:1; D&C 76:12, 116-18).

Let us love the Lord with all our heart, and seek Him with faith and trust.