

## “Prophets”

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My dear BYU-Pathway Worldwide friends, we are recording today from the Conference Center in downtown Salt Lake City, where I am standing in front of portraits of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Today I'd like to say a few words about the unique privilege of having prophets on the earth.

A number of years ago, while serving on the Relief Society general board, I was assigned to meet with Relief Society leaders in northern California here in the United States. One of the stake Relief Society presidents there told me about an experience she had just had. Each morning she went walking with a group of friends, none of whom were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She called one of these women her “deep-thinking” friend because, inevitably, as they walked, this woman raised complex topics to discuss. They talked about pornography, addiction, racial inequality — you name it, they discussed it.

One morning this stake Relief Society president went to meet her group and found only her “deep-thinking friend” there. So off the two of them went. Within moments her friend said, “Can I ask you a question?”

The Relief Society president nodded yes, and her friend said, “I know that you’re a religious woman. Have you read the Bible?”

“Yes,” the Relief Society president responded.

“Well, I’ve been reading the Bible,” this woman said. “And you may think I’m crazy, but I think we need what they had in Bible times — we need a prophet to help us know how to deal with all of the problems we have!”

The Relief Society president took a deep breath and said, “I hope you don’t think I’m crazy, but we have a prophet, and he speaks to us and helps us know how to handle our challenges. *We have a prophet.*”

The deep-thinking friend began exploring the Church because the idea of a living prophet rang so true to her.

The sobering reality, however, is that throughout history, most of the people, most of the time, have not known about or believed in prophets. The Jaredites in the Book of Mormon illustrate this perfectly. Consider just one of many similar verses from the book of Ether: “And ... there came *many* prophets, and prophesied *again* unto the people.... And it came to pass that the people hardened their hearts, and would not hearken....”<sup>1</sup>

Today is much the same. Relatively few believe that the Lord has *again* sent *many* prophets to the earth. We have fifteen prophets, seers, and revelators — meaning the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles — and many consider their teachings inconvenient and politically incorrect. But prophets are under covenant to teach truth, which is why they seem unbending at times — especially to moral relativists who love to pretend that there is no such thing as truth.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ether 11:12–13](#); emphasis added. See also [Ether 11:20, 22](#): “And in the days of Coriantor there also came *many* prophets, ... and cried repentance unto the people.,... And they did *reject all* the words of the prophets....”

I've been told by plenty of people that they just aren't sure how to feel about the whole idea of prophets. Some point to changed policies in the Church that have modulated over time and ask why procedures would change if prophets were really inspired by God.

But the Restoration is ongoing. Doctrine does not change, but policies and procedures do. And who would you rather trust? A celebrity? A politician? A social media influencer? An "expert"? — each of whom have a vested interest in winning over followers, customers, and fans.

Those who choose pundits over prophets make the tragic choice of choosing "foolish and blind guides"<sup>2</sup> rather than *seers*, whose ordination allows them to see things we don't yet see.<sup>3</sup> Prophets are one of God's greatest gifts to His children. They form an unfailing safety net of truth.

Several months ago, I witnessed the prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, seeing something the rest of us could not see. On September 17, 2020, I was invited to attend a Zoom meeting with President Nelson, Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and Michael Colemere, the managing director of Church Communications.

The pandemic was raging, with no end in sight, and among other things, we discussed the possibility of President Nelson recording a message of hope for members. He told us to "sprinkle a little fertilizer" on that idea and bring it back to him the following week.

But then, the very next day, President Nelson asked to meet with us again. He told us our idea wasn't bad; it just wasn't right. During the night he had had the strong impression that he did indeed need to record a message — but for the world, not just for Church members. The message was to be about expressing gratitude to God, and it needed to include a prayer for the world. He told us the day and time the video should be released and even how long his message should be.

As he spoke, I knew that I was having the rare privilege of witnessing a prophet act on revelation he had received.

We were assigned to assemble a team of videographers, translators, and other communication experts to fulfill President Nelson's instructions. If this talented group had resorted to their own expertise, they would have never recommended a video as long as the one President Nelson specified. Nor would they have suggested releasing it on a Friday.

But we had heard a prophet speak, and everyone went to work. The result was the #GiveThanks video released on November 20, 2020. And the results? Unprecedented. That video's reach through social media and various international television networks dwarfed anything the Church had ever released, especially to those not of our faith. Never before had so many people heard a prophet's voice. And why? Because we heeded the counsel of a seer, who could see things we could not see.

Some people get tangled up in the question: But, are prophets, seers, and revelators infallible? That's the wrong question. A better one is, *Who exactly are prophets?* They are the ordained holders of priesthood keys that authorize the Lord's power to be distributed throughout the earth. They may not be perfect. But they are the most perfectly inspired leaders on earth, and their only motive is perfectly pure — to help us find our way back home by pointing us to Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> [Helaman 13:29](#)

<sup>3</sup> See [Mosiah 8:15–17](#)

Following the prophet is one of the greatest safety nets we have. Lehi's family learned this. They had scarcely arrived in the new world when Nephi was warned to take his family and flee into the wilderness. This is what he recorded: "I, Nephi, did take my family, ... and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me. And all those who would go with me were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God; wherefore, they did hearken unto my words."<sup>4</sup>

We face the same question today. Will we "go with" the prophet? Will we hear his words and follow his counsel? I know that President Russell M. Nelson is a prophet of God and that his counselors in the First Presidency and each member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are also prophets, seers, and revelators. I testify that you can know for yourself that this is true, if you will seek a witness of your own.

Few things are more important for your future. Because there is no greater safety in this life than following the prophet. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>4</sup> [2 Nephi 5:6](#)