

You Shall Have My Word: The Personal Ministry of Jesus Christ in the Restoration

Elder Gary J. Coleman

In each of the three books of scripture in the collection often referred to as the triple combination, we find a page of introduction. We will briefly examine references from the introductions specifically in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. The introduction to the Book of Mormon says that “the crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after his resurrection.” The Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants says, “In the revelations one hears the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times; and the work that is initiated herein is preparatory to his second coming, in fulfillment of and in concert with the words of all the holy prophets since the world began.”

The Doctrine and Covenants is another witness of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ to the children of God in these latter days. The multitude of personal pronoun phrases from the first nineteen sections of the Doctrine and Covenants will clearly illustrate the Savior’s loving ministry to the Prophet

Elder Gary J. Coleman is an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Joseph Smith and his colleagues prior to the organization of the Church in April 1830. Through these verses, we learn that the work of the Restoration of the gospel is truly the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 18, given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer in June 1829 in Fayette, New York, gives us a clear example of how personal that ministry can be for each individual Saint. Jesus speaks of His words, His voice, His Spirit, and His power to be revealed in the restoration of all things. He declares in verse 34, “These words are . . . of *me*,” and in verses 35 and 36, “For it is *my* voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by *my* Spirit unto you, and by *my* power you can read them one to another; and save it were by *my* power you could not have them; wherefore, you can testify that you have heard *my* voice, and know *my* words” (emphasis added to first-person pronouns in this chapter).

This powerful declaration was stated similarly three years later in Doctrine and Covenants 84:60 when the Lord said, “Verily, verily, *I* say unto you who now hear *my* words, which are *my* voice, blessed are ye inasmuch as you receive these things.”

These powerful declarations from the Lord Himself are no doubt the reason the Explanatory Introduction concludes with the following: “Finally, the testimony that is given of Jesus Christ—his divinity, his majesty, his perfection, his love, and his redeeming power—makes this book of great value to the human family and of more worth than the riches of the whole earth.”

In the four verses noted above, there are two references to *me* and eight references to *my*. We will find dozens of other personal pronoun references to the Savior as we explore the pronouns *I*, *my*, *me*, and *mine* in the personal ministry of Jesus Christ leading up to the Restoration of the gospel and the organization of the Church in 1830. I have learned over the years of pondering and teaching the scriptures that we may apply the words of the Lord on an individual level where appropriate. For instance, in following the pattern available in Doctrine and Covenants 18:34–36, one could personalize the words as follows: I testify that these words are of Jesus Christ and not of man. His voice speaks them to me. They are given to me by His Spirit. By His power I can read them for myself and to others. I could not have the words except by His power. I can testify that I have heard His voice and that I know His words.

I have taught missionaries to read the scriptures so that they personalize and internalize the holy words for themselves, and it strengthens their own

faith and confidence in the words of the Lord. In this application of the scripture to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23), we can truly feel the love of the Savior for each of us. We can know He will visit us and manifest to us His will through a voice of love, of invitation, and of expectation. We can then respond and follow Him as He reveals to us the path we must walk to return to Him and His Father. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “Revelation from God to man comes for different purposes and in different ways. It should be a reality for every Latter-day Saint, because each has the gift of the Holy Ghost.”¹

The Doctrine and Covenants is a latter-day testament of the ministry of Jesus Christ to the children of God through prophets and servants of God, and it illustrates the divine pattern of revelation that guides the Church and its members today. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints truly is the Lord’s Church. Through the revelations of the Restoration and the continuing spread of the gospel over the whole earth, we may come to a personal knowledge of His divine influence. It may not come quickly and easily, but I testify that it will come! President Dieter F. Uchtdorf spoke of this quest as follows:

The truth is, those who diligently seek to learn of Christ eventually will come to know Him. They will personally receive a divine portrait of the Master, although it most often comes in the form of a puzzle—one piece at a time. Each individual piece may not be easily recognizable by itself; it may not be clear how it relates to the whole. Each piece helps us to see the big picture a little more clearly. Eventually, after enough pieces have been put together, we recognize the grand beauty of it all. Then, looking back on our experience, we see that the Savior had indeed come to be with us—not all at once but quietly, gently, almost unnoticed.²

The Doctrine and Covenants is a grand illustration of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ to all who would seek to know Him and come unto Him. My own journey of conversion is filled with the grand process of putting pieces of the divine tapestry of the restored gospel together and coming to know over and over again of the sacred steps to my personal knowledge of the Savior and His magnificent work for each of us.

The essence of my message is focused on the first nineteen sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. These sections about the preorganization of the Church give ample testimony to the Lord’s use of personal pronouns such

as *I*, *my*, *me*, and *mine*, and they suggest a close personal relationship to the reader. For the most part, these sections were given in chronological order from September 1823 to March 1830. Section 1 was given in November 1831 and serves as a preface to the book. Section 10 was given in the summer of 1828. In the first five sections, we note the following significant personal pronouns referring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 1:

My church (v. 1)	I am God and have spoken it (v. 24)
Mine authority (v. 6)	I, the Lord, am well pleased (v. 30)
My servants (v. 6)	My Spirit (v. 33)
I the Lord have decreed (v. 7)	I am no respecter of persons (v. 35)
I the Lord, knowing the calamity (v. 17)	What I the Lord have spoken, I have
My servant Joseph Smith, Jun. (v. 17)	spoken (v. 38)
Mine everlasting covenant (v. 22)	Mine own voice (v. 38)
My gospel (v. 23)	

Section 2:

I will reveal (v. 1)

Section 3:

My work (v. 19)

Section 5:

I have caused (v. 3)	I grant unto you eternal life (v. 22)
I have commanded that you should (v. 4)	I speak unto you (v. 23)
My words (v. 5)	I foresee the lying in wait to destroy
I have committed unto you (v. 7)	thee (v. 32)
I will show (v. 11)	For this cause I have said (v. 34)
I will give them power (v. 12)	Stop, and stand still until I command
I tell you these things (v. 20)	thee (v. 34)
I command you (v. 21)	I will provide means (v. 34)

Let me illustrate further the importance of personalizing and internalizing holy words with this scripture: “Stop, and stand still until I command thee, and I will provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing which I have commanded thee” (D&C 5:34). This sentence entered my mind in a hallway of the Covina California Stake Center, where our mission was to have a fireside for members and nonmembers. I noticed a young father standing ill at ease near the back of the cultural hall, holding a small child. The Spirit

prompted me to speak to him. His name was Eddie, and he was there with his wife, Beatrice, and their baby son, Daniel. He was a less-active member, and his wife was not a member. After greeting them and assuring them they were most welcome, my wife and I escorted them to the chapel for the viewing of the video *Together Forever*. As the video began in the darkened room, I heard the cry of a small child. I quickly moved to the mother. It was Beatrice with Daniel. I asked if I could hold him in the adjacent foyer while the video was shown. She felt Daniel would not come to me, as he had not let others hold him previously. “You need to hear the message of the video with your husband,” I assured her. “Daniel and I will be just fine.” I held the little fellow for the next half hour, and we conversed in the celestial language of a tiny spirit less than a year from his heavenly home. The mother walked into the foyer immediately following the video and rejoiced that Daniel and I were doing just fine.

At her baptism three weeks later, administered by her husband, Beatrice thanked us again for the opportunity to feel the Spirit of the Lord on that previous occasion with her husband in the chapel. She said, “I can’t believe you helped me with my baby.” I thanked the Lord for His prompting, “Stop and stand still, and I will provide means for you to accomplish my work.” Truly this was a powerful example to me about having His word and His voice to help me bring about His purpose.

In sections 6–9 we find additional evidences of the personal instruction and counsel of Jesus Christ. Remember, in these sections, it was still a year before the Church would be organized. The young Prophet must have been truly amazed at the truths he was being taught.

Section 6:

Give heed unto <i>my</i> word (v. 2)	If they reject <i>my</i> words, and this part of
If you will ask of <i>me</i> (v. 5)	<i>my</i> gospel and ministry (v. 29)
I will encircle thee in the arms of <i>my</i>	As I said unto <i>my</i> disciples, where two
love (v. 20)	or three are gathered together in <i>my</i>
I am Jesus Christ (v. 21)	name (v. 32)
I am the same that came unto <i>mine</i>	Built upon <i>my</i> rock (v. 34)
own, and <i>mine</i> own received <i>me</i> not	Look unto <i>me</i> in every thought (v. 36)
(v. 21)	The wounds which pierced <i>my</i> side (v. 37)
I am the light (v. 21)	Prints of the nails in <i>my</i> hands and feet
Did I not speak peace (v. 23)	(v. 37)
	Keep <i>my</i> commandments (v. 37)

There are many personal pearls of great price to Joseph in this section. One that has struck me as comforting and inviting to the members of the Church and new converts is verse 13, which reads, “If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.” I hear the Savior saying, “I will save you in *my* kingdom!” Can the human mind fully comprehend this proclamation of promise to all future members of the Church? Oh, what gifts God has in store for His covenant people!

Section 7:

Until <i>I</i> come in <i>my</i> glory (v. 3)	<i>I</i> will make him as flaming fire (v. 6)
Bring souls unto <i>me</i> (v. 4)	<i>I</i> will give this power and the keys of
Come unto <i>me</i> in <i>my</i> kingdom (v. 4)	this ministry until <i>I</i> come (v. 7)

Section 8:

I will tell you in your mind and in your heart (v. 2)

Section 9:

<i>I</i> have entrusted unto him (v. 1)	No thought save it was to ask <i>me</i> (v. 7)
<i>I</i> will give unto you power (v. 2)	Then you must ask <i>me</i> if it be right (v. 8)
It is wisdom in <i>me</i> (v. 3)	<i>I</i> will cause that your bosom shall burn
<i>I</i> have dealt with you (v. 6)	(v. 8)
Supposed that <i>I</i> would give it unto you	Neither of you have <i>I</i> condemned (v. 12)
(v. 7)	Work wherewith <i>I</i> have called you (v. 14)

These simple references to *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine* stir my soul with devotion for Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, who is willing to fill us with His love and grace if we will but seek to find Him and follow Him throughout our lives. We are already seeing fulfilled in these opening sections of the Doctrine and Covenants the promise made in the aforementioned lines from the Explanatory Introduction as to the evidence of the “tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He is unfolding the glorious work of the plan of God for all of His children to the young Prophet Joseph. This is a time of wondrous anticipation for the human family.

Section 10 gives us a clear and precise look into the value the Savior places upon the work underway to prepare the publication of the sacred Book of Mormon. The Lord seeks to assure Joseph that the coming forth of another testament of Jesus Christ is a work that will test and try the Prophet's very being because Satan will viciously oppose this key to the Restoration of the gospel. Section 10 continues with personal pronouns used by the Lord to impress upon Joseph the majesty of the work he will undertake to bring forth the Church of Jesus Christ and the plan of God in the latter days.

Section 10:

<i>I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design (v. 14)</i>	<i>I say this to build up my church (v. 54)</i>
<i>I will confound (v. 42)</i>	<i>I am Jesus Christ (v. 57)</i>
<i>I gave unto them [my gospel] (v. 48)</i>	<i>I am he who said (v. 59)</i>
<i>I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people (v. 52)</i>	<i>Other sheep have I (v. 59)</i>
<i>I do not bring it to destroy (v. 52)</i>	<i>I will show unto this people (v. 60)</i>
<i>I will establish my church among them (v. 53)</i>	<i>I will bring to light (v. 61)</i>
	<i>This I do that I may establish my gospel (v. 63)</i>
	<i>Him will I establish upon my rock (v. 69)</i>

One senses the flow of spiritual power to Joseph as the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is opened to the Prophet. Could he, or we, even comprehend the seventeen words of verse 55? Remember, this was given nearly two years before the organization of the Church: "Therefore, whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven." To me, the Lord seems to be saying: "Brother Coleman, I have prepared a place for you in my kingdom."

Hundreds of years prior to these instructions and revelations to the Prophet Joseph in the Doctrine and Covenants, Jesus had accomplished His personal ministry among the Nephites soon after His resurrection. He had used the pronouns *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine* profusely among His people in the Americas. This pattern was used during His ministry to the Nephites in 3 Nephi of the Book of Mormon. Between 3 Nephi 9 and 3 Nephi 28:12, there are 531 verses, and these verses contain over 700 personal references to Jesus. Some of these references are given here.

Third Nephi:

<i>I will declare unto you my doctrine</i> (11:31)	How oft will <i>I</i> gather (10:6)
<i>I am Jesus Christ</i> (9:15)	<i>I have suffered</i> (11:11)
<i>I was with the Father</i> (9:15)	<i>I bear record</i> (11:32)
<i>I am the light and life</i> (9:18)	<i>I speak</i> (16:2)
<i>I have come unto the world</i> (9:21)	<i>I fulfil the covenant</i> (16:5)
<i>I have laid down my life</i> (9:22)	<i>I will remember</i> (16:12)
	<i>I have prayed</i> (18:16)

Section 10 is very similar to the Book of Mormon account of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ to the people of the covenant in the use of the pronouns *my* and *me*. We know that the Lord personally visited, taught, ministered, prayed, and wept with the people. Can we not feel His intimate concern for us in these personal expressions to His people in all generations? He is using the same loving and compassionate phrases for the children of God in the latter days as He did in former days. I feel His love for me and for my family.

As we continue searching through 3 Nephi, we continue to find instances of personal pronouns that collectively characterize the Savior.

Third Nephi:

<i>My face</i> (9:5)	<i>My sheep</i> (15:24)
The Father [is] in <i>me</i> (9:15)	<i>My gospel</i> (16:10)
<i>My own</i> received <i>me</i> not (9:16)	<i>My covenant</i> (16:12)
By <i>me</i> redemption cometh (9:17)	<i>My joy is full</i> (17:20)
Their faith in <i>me</i> (9:20)	<i>My Spirit</i> (18:7)
Laid down <i>my life</i> (9:22)	<i>My commandments</i> (18:14)
Taking upon <i>me</i> the sins of the world (11:11)	<i>My wisdom</i> (21:10)
Come forth unto <i>me</i> (11:14)	<i>My flesh and blood</i> (18:28)
<i>My side</i> (11:14)	<i>My church</i> (27:8)
<i>My hands</i> (11:14)	<i>My people</i> (18:31)
<i>My feet</i> (11:14)	Points of <i>my doctrine</i> (21:6)
Baptized in <i>my name</i> (11:23)	Do it in <i>my name</i> (27:7)
<i>My rock</i> (11:39)	Call the church in <i>my name</i> (27:7)

Section 10 prepared the followers of Christ for the reason that the keystone of our religion, the Book of Mormon, had to be published before the Church was reestablished on the earth to welcome the coming Restoration of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon contains words, phrases, doctrine, and plain and precious parts of the gospel that are always clear to the understanding of all mankind. The Book of Mormon teaches the divine harmony between the true gospel of Jesus Christ in former days and the Doctrine and Covenants of the latter days. How blessed we are to have these eternal principles repeated generation after generation, from former days to latter days through all eternity.

Section 10:

My gospel (v. 45)	Points of <i>my</i> doctrine (3 Nephi 21:6)
My holy prophets (v. 46)	This is <i>my</i> doctrine (v. 67)
My disciples (v. 46)	The same is <i>my</i> church (v. 67)
Build up <i>my</i> church (v. 54)	He is not of <i>my</i> church (v. 68)
Whosoever belongeth to <i>my</i> church need not fear (v. 55)	Whosoever is of <i>my</i> church (v. 69)
Bring to light the true points of <i>my</i> doctrine (v. 62)	And endureth of <i>my</i> church (v. 69)
Establish <i>my</i> gospel (v. 63)	Establish upon <i>my</i> rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them (v. 69)

The first reference to “rock” had been mentioned in section 6, verse 34. Section 10 often quotes the Lord as referring to “*my* rock.” I am a witness of this sure foundation, the rock of our Redeemer. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, upon whom we should establish our foundation.

Some years ago, I was asked to find a building large enough to house six hundred single adults during a three-day conference. I sought the St. Michael’s facility, just north of Spokane, Washington, which was quite large and had once housed three hundred seminarians who were preparing themselves for the ministry. In 1974 the building was virtually empty, quiet, and cold. Where were those young men who had once filled its halls?

I inquired of an old priest who took care of this great facility if our Church could use it. It took me a while to convince him of the great atmosphere that could be there once again, but he finally accepted. The event was

such a success that our Church used this building during several years, filling the rooms on each floor during youth and single adult conferences.

One day I went alone to the unoccupied basement, lighting my way with a flashlight into a hallway several hundred feet long. In the middle of the hall I saw a great basalt rock that protruded from the middle of the cement floor. On the rock there was a bronze plaque. I read the words on the plaque, which said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

This caught my attention. Their church had been empty, silent, and cold for several years. It no longer housed young seminarians; it was abandoned. The facility had been built upon the wrong rock! The Latter-day Saint youth were the ones to fill the church that day. The Church of the Restoration, the Church built upon His holy and continuous word, prevailed there that happy day. These youth filled those walls with their songs, testimonies, laughter, happiness, and joy. Why? Because we are built on the true rock, upon "a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall" (Helaman 5:12). The youth were feasting upon His word and living by it. They had His gospel, His Church, His rock, His power, and His doctrine among them. It was a time and place of rejoicing for all.

The prophet Helaman was right in his day of 30 BC. The Lord declared who He was during His mortal ministry in northern Israel on the mount, and the Prophet Joseph learned of the Rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, in the glorious latter days. I add my witness to these former-day witnesses.

We have only begun to tap the vast reserves of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ to the Prophet Joseph and the Restoration of the true Church upon the earth. Section 11 is truly a marvelous work. It was given by revelation through Joseph Smith to his brother Hyrum Smith in May 1829. The Book of Mormon was soon to be ready for publication, the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were coming forth, and it was less than a year before the Church was to be organized. Nuggets of great import are to be gleaned from this section.

Section 11:

I am God (v. 2)	By <i>my</i> power I give these words unto
Give heed to <i>my</i> word (v. 2)	thee (v. 11)
I say unto you (v. 2)	This is <i>my</i> Spirit (v. 12)
Keep <i>my</i> commandments (v. 6)	I will impart unto you of <i>my</i> Spirit (v. 13)
Believing . . . in <i>my</i> power which speaketh unto thee (v. 10)	I command you (v. 15)
It is I that speak (v. 11)	Wait a little longer, until you shall have <i>my</i> word, <i>my</i> rock, <i>my</i> church, and <i>my</i> gospel, . . . <i>my</i> doctrine (v. 16)
I am the light (v. 11)	

Wait a little longer! Glorious days are ahead! The restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood was only days away. I sense excitement and anticipation of coming events. For hundreds of years following His own sacred ministry in Israel and the pure gospel being taught for 200 years following His visit to the Nephites, the Savior had waited nearly 1,600 years for the Restoration of His gospel. Verse 16 suggests that the long-awaited time of restoration was due to overthrow the foolishness and vainness of man in usurping His power and authority through apostate priestcrafts, in preaching doctrines that were not purely His, and in perverting His holy ordinances with ungodly and unauthorized practices. Verse 21 speaks of “seek first to obtain *my* word, and then . . . you shall have *my* Spirit and *my* word.” Further, “study *my* word which shall come forth” (v. 22) and “build upon *my* rock, which is *my* gospel” (v. 24) and “I [will] give power to become the sons of God” (v. 30). Joseph and his associates must have been thrilled with the anticipation of coming days of revelation. Oh, how grateful we ought to be for the intimate counsel and guidance the Lord provides for His servants. The dawning of the long-foretold day of restoration of all things was imminent.

Sections 12–14 provide similar phrases and pronoun use as noted in previous sections, such as “I am God,” “*my* word” (D&C 12:3), “I am the light and the life of the world” (D&C 12:9), “*my* commandments” (D&C 14:7), “*my* name” (D&C 14:8), “I am Jesus Christ” (D&C 14:9), and “I must bring forth the fulness of *my* gospel” (D&C 14:10). Joseph was just a few years away from the wondrous First Vision of the glorious personage of God the Father, who spoke to him and said, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). There he learned that the work of the Father is the

work of the Son. The doctrines of men that he had experienced as a youth were being replaced by true doctrine. The creeds that were an abomination in the sight of the Lord were fast fleeing from his mind. The manmade doctrines having a form of godliness were toppling into the pit of error with every passing revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ. The powerful doctrine of eternal life was again spoken of in section 14, still ten months before the Restoration of the Church. Would Joseph have heard and pondered upon these words in awe? “And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). Listen, Latter-day Saints! This is the tender but firm voice of Jesus to all of us. As Elder Quentin L. Cook recently expressed, “Thankfully, ‘the key of knowledge’ has been restored and the doctrine of the Father is upon the earth again!”³

In sections 15 and 16 we are introduced to a profound truth regarding the doctrine of the Godhead. The Savior refers to “the kingdom of *my* Father” in each of these sections. I testify that this is a most precious doctrine of the Restoration. A knowledge of the Father is the key to all other gospel knowledge. This was a major doctrine He taught to the people in 3 Nephi during His ministry in the land of Bountiful.

These excerpts from 3 Nephi provide further examples of personal pronoun use:

I . . . have glorified the Father (11:11)

I have suffered the will of the Father (11:11)

It is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto *me* (11:32)

The Father beareth record of *me* (11:32)

Whoso believeth in *me* believeth in the Father also (11:35)

He that doeth the will of *my* Father who is in heaven (14:21)

The Father hath commanded *me* (18:14)

Ask of the Father in *my* name (18:20)

Pray in your families unto the Father, always in *my* name (18:21)

Father, *I* thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these (19:20).

Following are three of the dozens of references in the Book of Mormon concerning the Godhead:

My doctrine, . . . the doctrine the Father hath given unto *me*, . . . the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and *me* (3 Nephi 11:32)

Baptized in *my* name, . . . that ye may witness unto Father, . . . ye shall have *my* Spirit to be with you (3 Nephi 18:11)

The Father hath given *me* fulness of joy; . . . and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and *me* (3 Nephi 28:10–11)

Additionally noted are several other references as to personal counsel the Lord gives to individuals.

Section 15:

I speak unto you with sharpness and with power (v. 2)

I will tell you that which no man knoweth save *me* (v. 3)

My words which *I* have given unto you (v. 5)

I say unto you, that the thing which will be of most worth (v. 6)

Section 16:

Same uses of *I* and *me* and *my* as in section 15

There are occasions when the Lord chooses to bless His servants in like manner in our day. While I was serving as a mission president in California, Elder Thane Ottley asked me to assist his companionship with the teaching of Patoch, a minister of the Hungarian Reformed Church. Upon leaving for the appointment, I began praying about my role in the discussion. I was impressed that he would ask me two questions: why he should submit himself to being taught by these two young men who were not schooled or trained in religion as he had been, and how he would manage his affairs if he joined the Church and lost his income as a minister. I pondered these impressions and thought about scriptures that might help resolve these concerns.

Upon arriving at the minister's home in Covina, California, the elders and I were graciously received. After the prayer, the elders began to teach the fourth discussion, and I listened. Suddenly, Mr. Patoch turned to me and stated, "I am a trained and ordained minister. Why should I submit myself to being taught by these two young men who are not trained in theology as I have been?" I marveled at the question and proceeded to review several scriptures that had been on my mind earlier during the drive to the appointment. He seemed satisfied with the explanation, and the elders proceeded with the discussion. In a few moments, he again turned to me and asked, "If I join this

Church, how will I manage my life and obtain an income? I will be forced to give up my ministry.” Again I thought of the prompting received earlier and reviewed a few scriptures with him that related to the problem. Satisfied, he asked the elders to proceed, and they concluded the discussion.

Several days later, Elder Ottley called me and asked if I was available on Saturday morning at eleven. “Brother Patoch would like you to attend his baptism.” Yes, I know from my own experiences that the Lord will tell His servants “that which no man knoweth.”

Section 17 introduces us to the uses of *I* and *my* as follows: “And *I*, Jesus Christ, your Lord and your God, have spoken it unto you, that *I* might bring about *my* righteous purposes unto the children of men” (v. 9). Surely we are eternally grateful for His kind and loving guidance that helps us to partake of all the blessings He has promised us.

As we review section 18, a revelation given to Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer in June 1829, we find some three dozen references to *my*, over a dozen references to *I*, and continued use of *me* and *mine*. Necessary priesthood had been restored. The Book of Mormon had been translated and the printing of the book was under way. The priesthood and the Book of Mormon were to be the foundational reference points for “*my* church, *my* gospel, and *my* rock” (D&C 18:4).

Section 18 begins with “*I* give unto you these words,” with a steady litany of personal references to Jesus Christ to follow.

Section 18:

<i>I</i> give unto you a commandment (v. 3)	Ask the Father in <i>my</i> name, in faith (v. 18)
<i>My</i> church, <i>my</i> gospel, <i>my</i> rock (v. 4)	
<i>I</i> command all men everywhere to repent (v. 9)	As many as repent and are baptized in <i>my</i> name (v. 22)
Great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of <i>my</i> Father (v. 15)	Called to declare <i>my</i> gospel (v. 26)
One soul that you have brought unto <i>me</i> into the kingdom of <i>my</i> Father (v. 16)	Ordained of <i>me</i> to baptize in <i>my</i> name (v. 29)
How great shall be your joy if you should bring many souls unto <i>me</i> (v. 16)	<i>I</i> speak unto you, the Twelve (v. 31)
You have <i>my</i> gospel before you, and <i>my</i> rock, and <i>my</i> salvation (v. 17)	<i>My</i> grace is sufficient for you (v. 31)
	You are they who are ordained of <i>me</i> (v. 32)

I would like to return to the special witness given by the Lord in verses 34–36. They have had a powerful effect upon my ministry over the past several decades:

These words are not of men nor of man, but of *me*; wherefore, you shall testify they are of *me* and not of man;

For it is *my* voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by *my* Spirit unto you, and by *my* power you can read them one to another; and save it were by *my* power you could not have them;

Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard *my* voice, and know *my* words. (D&C 18:34–36)

We rejoice in the Lord's simple ways and express our deepest gratitude when He gives us words of comfort or guidance in our assignments in His holy work.

I served as the president of the California Arcadia Mission from July 1987 to July 1990, and I met Lee McElhaney my first week there. I found a way to visit him monthly over the next thirty-six months. His wife and children were members of the Church, and his oldest son entered the Provo Missionary Training Center in June of 1990. Our backgrounds were similar, and his Catholic resolve was evident. Every set of missionaries assigned to his ward had taught him and his family year after year. One Sunday, June 3, 1990, just four weeks before my release, I was impressed one more time while praying about Lee, with the simple words of the Spirit: "Invite him to the meeting to-night." It was an institute graduation, and I was the speaker. I did invite him, and he responded courageously that he would attend. My remarks were directed toward him, though there were several hundred persons in attendance. Still following the impression to be bold with him, after the meeting I challenged him to be baptized on Father's Day, just two weeks away. Many persons, including priesthood leaders, spoke words of faith and assurance to him in the coming days. There was doubt and opposition, but loving leaders were there to help. On Father's Day, June 17, 1990, in the presence of five former bishops and over one hundred friends and family members, Lee was baptized. I called the Provo MTC and informed the president that Elder McElhaney had his first baptism, though performed by others, and it was his father. Lee asked me to ordain him a priest the next Sunday. We left the mission the next week. Now he serves as a bishop in a ward close to where the family had lived

for so many years. It was such a small act of faith that prompted that prayer on that June morning, but such a tender voice that was gratefully heard to accomplish the will of the Lord for that good man.

As we continue with section 18, we find the following.

Section 18:

- Worship the Father in *my* name (v. 40)
- And by your hands, *I* will work a marvelous work (v. 44)
- That they may come unto the kingdom of *my* Father (v. 44)
- The blessings which *I* gave unto you are above all things (v. 45)

Section 18 gives profound testimony from the Savior about His Father. Over and over again, we understand the divine relationship between the Only Begotten Son and His Eternal Father. There is never an attempt to draw attention away from the Father. There is never a hint of self-serving interest. He gives the Father all honor and glory and respect for the work of salvation in the kingdom of the Father.

Finally, the spring of 1830 had arrived. Section 19 was given to Joseph Smith in March of that most significant year. We are taught yet again of the majestic Atonement and the promise of Christ to overcome all the works of Satan and provide the great judgment of all men. How is this to be done? “*I*, having accomplished and finished the will of him whose *I* am, even the Father, concerning *me*—having done this that *I* might subdue all things unto *myself*” (v. 2).

Section 19:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I</i> shall pass [judgment] upon the inhabitants (v. 3) <i>I</i> will explain unto you this mystery (v. 8) <i>I</i> speak unto you that are chosen in this thing (v. 9) That you may enter into <i>my</i> rest (v. 9) Endless is <i>my</i> name (v. 10) Keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of <i>my</i> servant Joseph (v. 13) It is by <i>my</i> almighty power that you have received them (v. 14) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I</i>, God, have suffered these things for all (v. 16) Would that <i>I</i> might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink (v. 18) Glory be to the Father, and <i>I</i> partook and finished <i>my</i> preparations (v. 19) <i>I</i> command you that you preach naught but repentance (v. 21) <i>I</i> am Jesus Christ (v. 24) <i>I</i> came by the will of the Father (v. 24) Pray always, and <i>I</i> will pour out <i>my</i> Spirit upon you (v. 38) |
|--|---|

It is impossible to capture the magnitude of the teachings of the Savior in this section without a review of these few thoughts and phrases from His words. Suffice it to say, His ministry is exceedingly personal and powerful as depicted in these sections of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Joseph was assured by the Lord on the same day that the Church was organized that “Him have *I* inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good, and his diligence *I* know, and his prayers *I* have heard” (D&C 21:7). Over two hundred pages of sacred text would yet be received by the Prophet before his mortal ministry would conclude in 1844.

With this transition in the record, I will close my review of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ in the early sections of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Savior said to Joseph Smith in March 1829, “But this generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10). The theme of this symposium is likewise “You Shall Have My Word.” I bear my testimony that the Lord Jesus Christ has indeed spoken to His servants in recent generations. I have heard His voice and know His words as His servant and as a member of His Church.

Some forty years ago, I was a young and new member of the stake presidency. At the conclusion of a Saturday evening session of stake conference, I was pondering upon subjects that I could speak about the next morning in the concluding session. As another member of the stake presidency announced the name and number of the closing hymn for the evening session, I heard, “‘I Stand All Amazed,’ hymn number 193.” Imagine my surprise as the congregation began singing another hymn! I realized when driving home that evening that the Spirit had given me the topic and a three-verse outline of my talk for the Sunday conference session. I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me and thank Him with all my heart for the words He has shared with me through His power and His Spirit. I agree with Elder Oaks: “Revelation . . . should be a reality for every Latter-day Saint, because each has the gift of the Holy Ghost.”⁴

I am one who can claim with Joseph Smith that the Book of Mormon is the keystone of my religion. I am one who can testify that a man can get closer to God by abiding by the precepts of that book than by any other book. But in addition, I testify that a man can get close to God by abiding by the additional words and personal witness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Doctrine and Covenants. I bear testimony of these things as one of those who is a witness, ordained and sent forth to testify that God lives, that Jesus is the

Christ. The Holy Ghost will help us through this life. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church on the earth today. We have a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, who follows in the footsteps of the first prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith. This Church holds the keys to salvation in the next life through authorized servants of God who walk the earth today. Many of you have taught the things Jesus has taught us in the Doctrine and Covenants as you have invited people to repent, and you have invited them to come unto Christ through the waters of baptism. You have bestowed upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost that they might walk with that consummate guide in their lives also. I thank God for sending His Holy Son to the earth in these latter days to teach as He taught: “my word, my rock, my church, and my gospel, that you [we] may know of a surety my doctrine” (D&C 11:16).

Notes

1. Dallin H. Oaks, *Life's Lessons Learned* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 115.
2. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Waiting on the Road to Damascus,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 70.
3. Quentin L. Cook, “The Doctrine of the Father,” *Ensign*, February 2012, 36.
4. Oaks, *Life's Lessons Learned*, 115.