
John Whitmer & Peter Whitmer

D&C 15:4 and D&C 16:4

The revelations intended for John Whitmer and his brother Peter Whitmer Jr. are similar to the revelation addressed to Oliver Cowdery. The Lord had said in the earlier revelation to Oliver, “There is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart” (D&C 6:16). In the revelation directed to John and Peter Whitmer, they were told essentially the same thing: “I will tell you that which no man knoweth save me and thee alone” (D&C 15:3). In the case of John and Peter Whitmer, they desired “to know that which would be of the most worth” unto the Lord (D&C 15:4). The answer given to the Whitmer brothers was to “declare repentance unto this people” (D&C 15:6). In other words, to be missionaries.

The same missionary message is echoed again and again in the Doctrine and Covenants. As new converts like Peter and John Whitmer took their journeys and shared the Restoration message of Jesus Christ with those they met, the Church took root in western New York “like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field . . . when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs” (Matthew 13:31–32).

“Many opened their houses to us,” penned the Prophet Joseph Smith. “Our meetings were well attended, and many began to pray fervently to Almighty God, that He would give them wisdom to understand the truth.”¹ Young and old, learned and illiterate listened and embraced the teachings of the Restoration and the Book of Mormon. The gospel soon spread from person to person and from village to village in western New York.

¹ “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons* (September 1, 1842): 897; Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:81.

Much the same could be said today but on a worldwide stage. Young and old accept mission calls to serve the Lord and give of their time, means, and talents to spread news of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Of those who have served missions, one of the most often-told mission stories is of Gordon B. Hinckley in England:

I was not well when I arrived. Those first few weeks, because of illness and the opposition which we felt, I was discouraged. I wrote a letter home to my good father and said that I felt I was wasting my time and his money. He was my father and my stake president, and he was a wise and inspired man. He wrote a very short letter to me which said, "Dear Gordon, I have your recent letter. I have only one suggestion: forget yourself and go to work." Earlier that morning in our scripture class my companion and I had read these words of the Lord: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35).

Those words of the Master, followed by my father's letter with his counsel to forget myself and go to work, went into my very being. With my father's letter in hand, I went into our bedroom in the house at 15 Wadham Road, where we lived, and got on my knees and made a pledge with the Lord. I covenanted that I would try to forget myself and lose myself in His service.

That July day in 1933 was my day of decision. A new light came into my life and a new joy into my heart. The fog of England seemed to lift, and I saw the sunlight. I had a rich and wonderful mission experience, for which I shall ever be grateful.²

² Gordon B. Hinckley, "Taking the Gospel to Britain: A Declaration of Vision, Faith, Courage, and Truth," *Ensign*, July 1987.