

BOOK *of* BOOKS



By Elder Marcus B. Nash

Of the Seventy

Reading the Book of Mormon is like planting a seed. If you do not cast it out in unbelief, it will begin to be delicious to you, and there is no better or more important time to do so than in your youth.

When I was in my teenage years, I decided I would read the Book of Mormon on my own. It was a decision made quietly, privately. I simply wanted to know for myself whether it was what Joseph Smith proclaimed it to be. I grew up in Seattle, Washington, where there were not many members of the Church, so we had seminary early in the mornings before school. I did not know that our upcoming course of study that year was to be the Book of Mormon, but by the time seminary started, I was well into my reading of the book. While some may say it was a happy coincidence, I believe it was more than that. I would read one chapter a night before I went to bed.

As I read the Book of Mormon day by day, I felt goodness, substance, and light grow within me—and it was a good feeling, even delicious. I felt more complete. Despite being a very busy teenager involved in many and varied activities (which means I was pretty tired at night), I looked forward to those quiet minutes before going to bed when I would read a chapter. In fact, there were a few times when,

after reading the book and praying, I would hold it to me as I fell asleep—I loved what I was feeling from reading the book.

Early one gray, drizzly Seattle morning, our seminary teacher led us in a discussion based on Alma 32. Sister Kopeinig (a wonderful teacher who left an indelible mark on my soul) may not remember the discussion that morning and may even have felt it had little effect (some of us were a bit bleary-eyed at that hour), but I remember well the realization that came to me as we read:

“Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me”
(Alma 32:28).

As we read this passage in class, I leaned back and thought, “This is





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the perfect description of what I'm experiencing with the Book of Mormon itself!"

As that year went on, I completed my personal reading of the Book of Mormon. I was changed for the better because I had read, pondered, and allowed it to influence how I lived. As I knelt by my bedside the night that I finished the book, I already knew it was true. The response to my prayerful inquiry was as quiet, still, gentle—and real—as had been my experience as I had read the Book of Mormon. Again, I felt the swelling motion within that was delicious to my soul. I realized that the book had enlarged and enlightened my very being. I felt a quiet, settling confirmation: "Yes, as you know, it's true." Ever since then, hardly a day has gone by that I have not read from the Book of Mormon. I love the book with a passion. It is a part of my daily life.

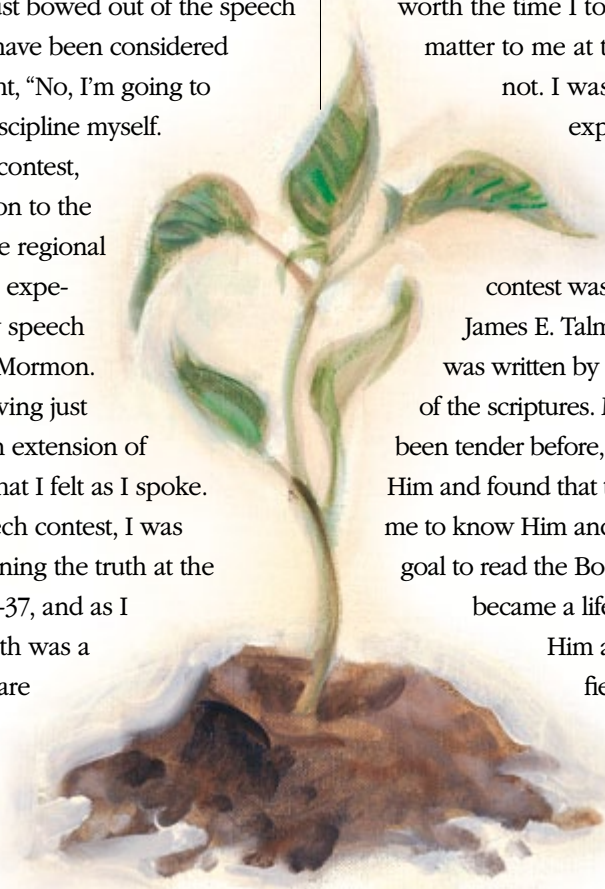
Toward the end of that year of seminary, we had a final seminary activity—a stake scripture chase coupled with a stake speech competition. I was involved in a lot of things in our high school—sports, drama, student leadership, and such. In the past, I would have just bowed out of the speech competition because it may not have been considered "cool" to participate. But I thought, "No, I'm going to do this." Maybe I did so just to discipline myself.

I didn't win the stake speech contest, but I placed high enough to go on to the regional competition. Then in the regional competition, I had an interesting experience. I stood up and began my speech based on a truth in the Book of Mormon. All of sudden I was no longer giving just my memorized speech; it was an extension of my soul. It is hard to describe what I felt as I spoke. Instead of participating in a speech contest, I was bearing witness to truth and learning the truth at the same time. I quoted Alma 37:35–37, and as I did I knew and testified that youth was a season to learn wisdom, to prepare for the later season of performance of our lives. Citing Elder

Richard L. Evans (1906–71) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I taught that youth was like springtime: a time to plant the seed of the word of God such that when summer comes, the seed can be cultivated. Then, as we enter the fall season of life, the fruits of the seed can be harvested, so that, upon the arrival of the winter of our lives, we have laid up in store all we need to be able to bless others around us.¹ I realized as I spoke that reading and pondering the Book of Mormon was precisely what one should do in one's youth, because it brings the Holy Ghost in such abundance that our lives will become fruitful inasmuch as we cultivate the words of the book by reading, pondering, living, and sharing them. I knew as I spoke that a life so lived is lived in season. The Spirit flowed through me strongly, and I knew—again—of the power of the Book of Mormon.

When I sat down, I thought, "That wasn't about the competition at all; it was about the Spirit." It was a unique experience for me. I have had it many times since. But that was the first time for me to feel that witness *to me* as well as *through* me as I spoke. The experience was worth the time I took to prepare the talk! It did not matter to me at that moment whether I won or not. I was simply grateful for what I had just experienced.

I was named the winner of the speech contest, and the gift I received for winning the speech contest was a copy of *Jesus the Christ* by James E. Talmage. I took it home and read it. It was written by an Apostle and was full of the words of the scriptures. My feelings for the Savior, which had been tender before, became profound. I was drawn to Him and found that the words of the scriptures helped me to know Him and taste of His love. What began as a goal to read the Book of Mormon to know of its truth became a lifelong hunger and thirst to know Him and His word—a thirst that is satisfied fully and deliciously by reading, pondering, living, and sharing the truths of the Book of Mormon.





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Thus it is that I discovered in my teenage years that the words in the scriptures—especially the Book of Mormon—bring the Holy Ghost and thereby connect us to heaven and to the Lord. Since that time I have held to the scriptures as a veritable rod of iron and source of joy and light, and they have never failed me. It is to our advantage and blessing to discover this for ourselves while we are young, since so much depends upon the decisions we make in our youth.

I relate to the following quote by Parley P. Pratt about the first time he read the Book of Mormon (he did not take nearly so much time as I did to read it for his first time!):

“For the first time, my eyes beheld the ‘BOOK OF MORMON’—that book of books. . . .

“. . . I opened it with eagerness, and read its title page. I then read the testimony of several witnesses in relation to the manner of its being found and translated. After this I commenced its contents by course. I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when the night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

“As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he exists” (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. [1938], 37).

I echo that feeling. It is the “book of books” because of its unique ability to bring us to the King of kings. Reading and abiding by the truth and precepts it contains will draw us closer to God than any other book, just as the Prophet Joseph Smith testified. I too know it is true as I know I exist—as you will know as well. Such is the promise to each who reads, ponders, asks God sincerely, and lives the truths it contains. **NE**

NOTE

1. See Richard L. Evans Jr., *Richard L. Evans—The Man and the Message* (1973), 231.