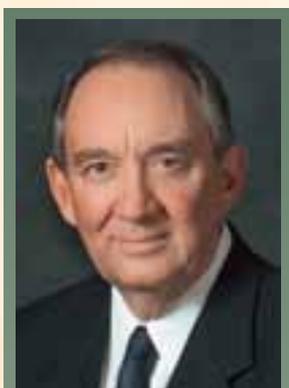




Fruits of the Book of Mormon

BY ELDER RICHARD G. HINCKLEY

Of the Seventy



Contemplating and applying the doctrines of Christ in the Book of Mormon have produced a “mighty change” in my heart.

When I read the Book of Mormon, something inevitably happens to me. My burdens feel lighter. Faith and hope replace my worries, concerns, and doubts. Life appears brighter.

As a young missionary in Germany, just a month or two in the field, I had two similar experiences that affected my testimony of the Book of Mormon in a profound way.

One morning as we were tracting, my companion and I knocked on the door of a minister of a prominent church. He invited us in, asked us to be seated at his table, and then immediately began to attack the Book of Mormon in a highly agitated and animated way. I understood most of what he was saying, and the contentious spirit in which he was saying it was unmistakable, but my lack of proficiency with the German language made it difficult for me to respond. My senior companion, a strong and outstanding missionary, simply bore a powerful testimony of the book, and we excused ourselves and left. My heart was pounding. I believe I was shaking a bit. I felt troubled.

A week or two later we met a man while street contacting who agreed to an appointment. We set a time, and he gave us his address in Bückeberg, a picturesque little

town several miles from our assigned city of Minden but still in our area.

It was winter, and on the Sunday morning of our appointment, we mounted our bicycles and pedaled the entire distance, bucking a strong, cold headwind. Cold and panting, we pressed the doorbell on the man’s apartment building, and he buzzed the door open. We climbed the stairs to his apartment, and he let us in. Immediately we recognized a contentious spirit in the room—the same spirit we had felt a few weeks earlier in the home of the minister.

Our host did not invite us to sit down. Instead, he left the room for a moment. He returned carrying several editions of the Bible, dropped them on the table, and said in a very loud and defiant voice, “So you want to talk [religion], do you?” Then, pointing to the window, he bellowed, “Good, but first throw your Book of Mormon in the Weser [River]!”

A couple of weeks had passed since our experience with the minister, and I was now able to say a sentence or two in German. I attempted to do so. Once again, my senior companion simply bore a strong, quiet testimony of the Book of Mormon and politely thanked the man for his time. Then we excused ourselves and rode back to Minden,

this time with the wind at our backs.

I had a testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, or so I thought at the time. But it became painfully clear after those two experiences, so close together in time, that my testimony was neither deep nor strong. I was unsure of myself and of my ability to truthfully bear witness of the Book of Mormon in a powerful and convincing way.

I made up my mind that if I were to have a successful mission, I had better make sure my testimony of the Book of Mormon was true and strong. I went to work on it. I read and prayed and thought and contemplated. Ultimately, the Lord blessed my efforts. A testimony came to me and has never left; rather, it has grown stronger through the years.

I have thought often of those two experiences. I am grateful to a wise and steady companion, and in a way I am thankful for an unwitting minister and a rather fanatical man, who figuratively took hold of my shoulders and shook me. To this day, well beyond 40 years later, I remember their names and the details of our meetings. When I think of them, the great passage from 3 Nephi comes to mind:

“And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as

I read and prayed
and thought and
contemplated.

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there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.

“For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

“Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Nephi 11:28–30).

I think too of the great words of Paul to the Galatians: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23).

These are the fruits I experience when I read the Book of Mormon. Reading its pages, contemplating the transcendent doctrines of Christ it contains, attempting to apply these in my life—all this settles in my mind and in my soul as a “mighty change” (Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14) in my heart, one that gives me resolve to do better; to be a little kinder, less critical, more generous; and to share with others the great blessings the Lord has given me.

These are the fruits of the Spirit of God. These are the fruits of the Book of Mormon. ■

