

THE ENSIGN OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS • OCTOBER 2011

ENSIGN



THE BOOK OF MORMON:
ANOTHER TESTAMENT OF
JESUS CHRIST



By the Gift and Power of God, by Simon Dewey

The Book of Mormon, brought forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is a translation of ancient plates “written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof— . . .

. . . Which is to show unto the remnant of the house of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST” (title page of the Book of Mormon).



Welcome to This Special Issue

Few topics are worth dedicating a whole issue to, but the Book of Mormon is one of them. In this issue, prophets past and present, as well as members all over the world, testify of this unique book of scripture. Its origins are miraculous. It is tangible evidence of the Restoration. It is the keystone of our religion. And it was written for our day—teaching the doctrine of Christ clearly and simply to build our faith and strengthen our families.

Although you won't find many of the departments you are accustomed to having in the *Ensign*, the First Presidency Message (page 4) and Visiting Teaching Message (page 46) are here. These messages and all the other articles share testimonies and teachings from the Book of Mormon.

We invite you to study this issue prayerfully, take the messages to heart, and share them—and the Book of Mormon—with others.

MESSAGES

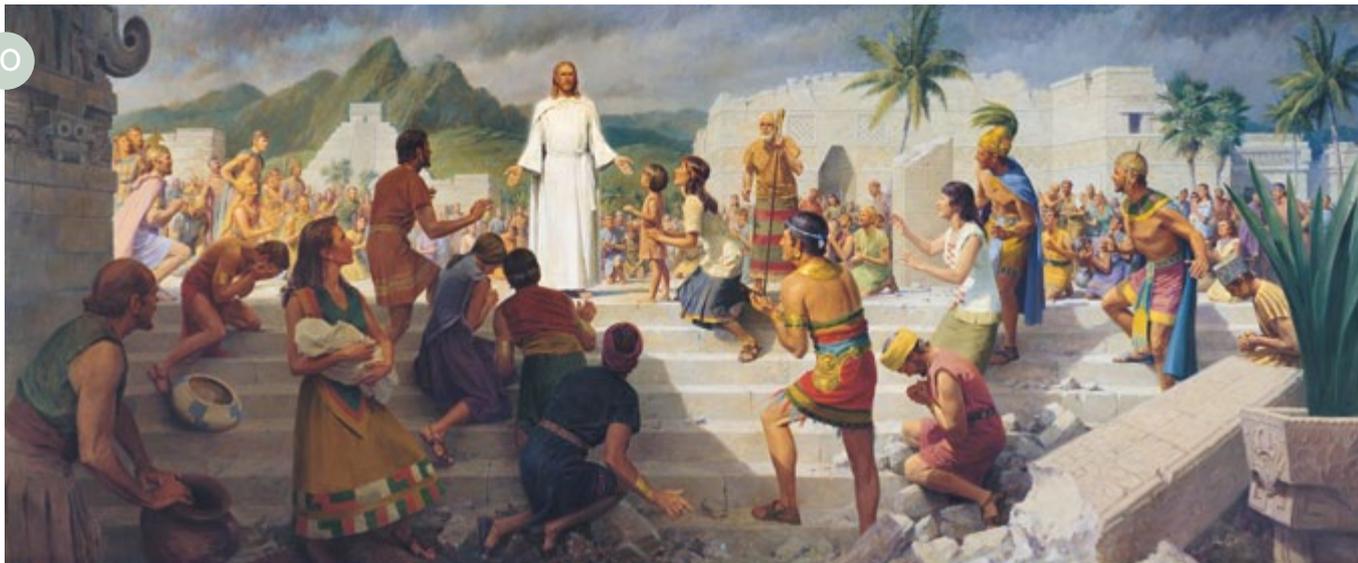
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Front: Photo illustration by John Luke; *That Ye May Know*, by Gary Kapp, courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. David Larsen, may not be copied. Back: *Christ's Image*, by Heinrich Hofmann, courtesy of C. Harrison Conroy Co.



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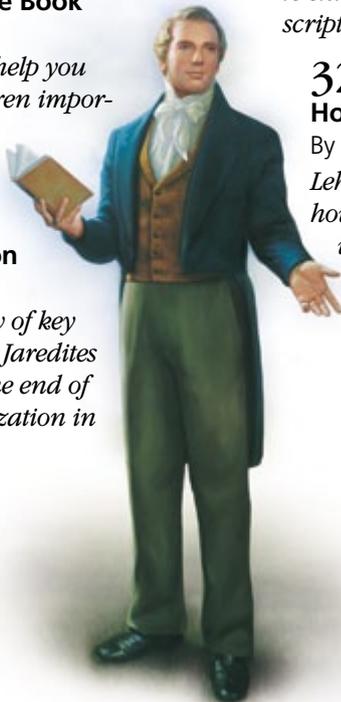
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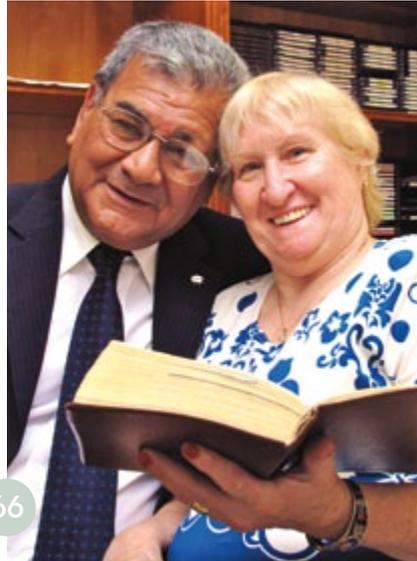
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Many of the paintings in this issue include a depiction of the Liahona that Lehi received. The Liahonas may not look exactly like the one above, but you and your family might enjoy discovering how many Liahonas you can locate throughout this issue.

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By President
Thomas S. Monson



Precious Promises

OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Many years ago I stood at the bedside of a young father as he hovered between life and death. His distraught wife and their two children stood nearby. He took my hand in his and, with a pleading look, said, “Bishop, I know I am about to die. Tell me what happens to my spirit when I do.”

I offered a silent prayer for heavenly guidance and noticed on his bedside table a copy of the triple combination. I reached for the book and fanned the pages. Suddenly I discovered that I had, with no effort on my part, stopped at the 40th chapter of Alma in the Book of Mormon. I read these words to him:

“Behold, it has been made known unto me by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life.

“And . . . the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:11–12).

As I continued to read about the Resurrection, a glow came to the young man’s face and a smile graced his lips. As I concluded my visit, I said good-bye to this sweet family.

I next saw the wife and children at the funeral. I think back to that night when a young man pleaded for truth and, from the Book of Mormon, heard the answer to his question.

From the Book of Mormon come other precious promises, including promises of peace, freedom, and blessings if we “will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ” (Ether 2:12).

From its pages comes the promise of “never-ending happiness” to “those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual” (Mosiah 2:41).

From its pages comes the promise of “incomprehensible joy” to those who become “instrument[s] in the hands of God” in rescuing His precious sons and daughters (Alma 28:8; 29:9).

From its pages comes the promise that scattered Israel will be gathered—a work in which we are engaged through our great worldwide missionary efforts (see 3 Nephi 16; 21–22).

From its pages comes the promise that as we pray unto the Father in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, our families will be blessed (see 3 Nephi 18:21).

From a study of its pages comes the fulfillment of the prophetic promise that “there will come into your lives and into your homes an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.”¹

And from the pages of the Book of Mormon comes Moroni’s promise that through prayer, real intent, and faith



in Christ, we may know the truth of these promises “by the power of the Holy Ghost” (see Moroni 10:4–5).

With other latter-day prophets, I testify of the truthfulness of this “most correct of any book on earth,”² even the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ. Its message spans the earth and brings its readers to a knowledge of the truth. It is my testimony that the Book of Mormon changes lives. May each of us read it and reread it. And may we joyfully share our testimonies of its precious promises with all of God’s children. ■

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.

TEACHING FROM THIS MESSAGE

In the scriptures “we find principles of truth that will resolve every confusion and every problem and every dilemma that will face the human family” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 51). As you share President Monson’s message with the family, invite them to listen for the “precious promises” he identifies in the Book of Mormon. You might share a promise in the Book of Mormon that has been meaningful to you.

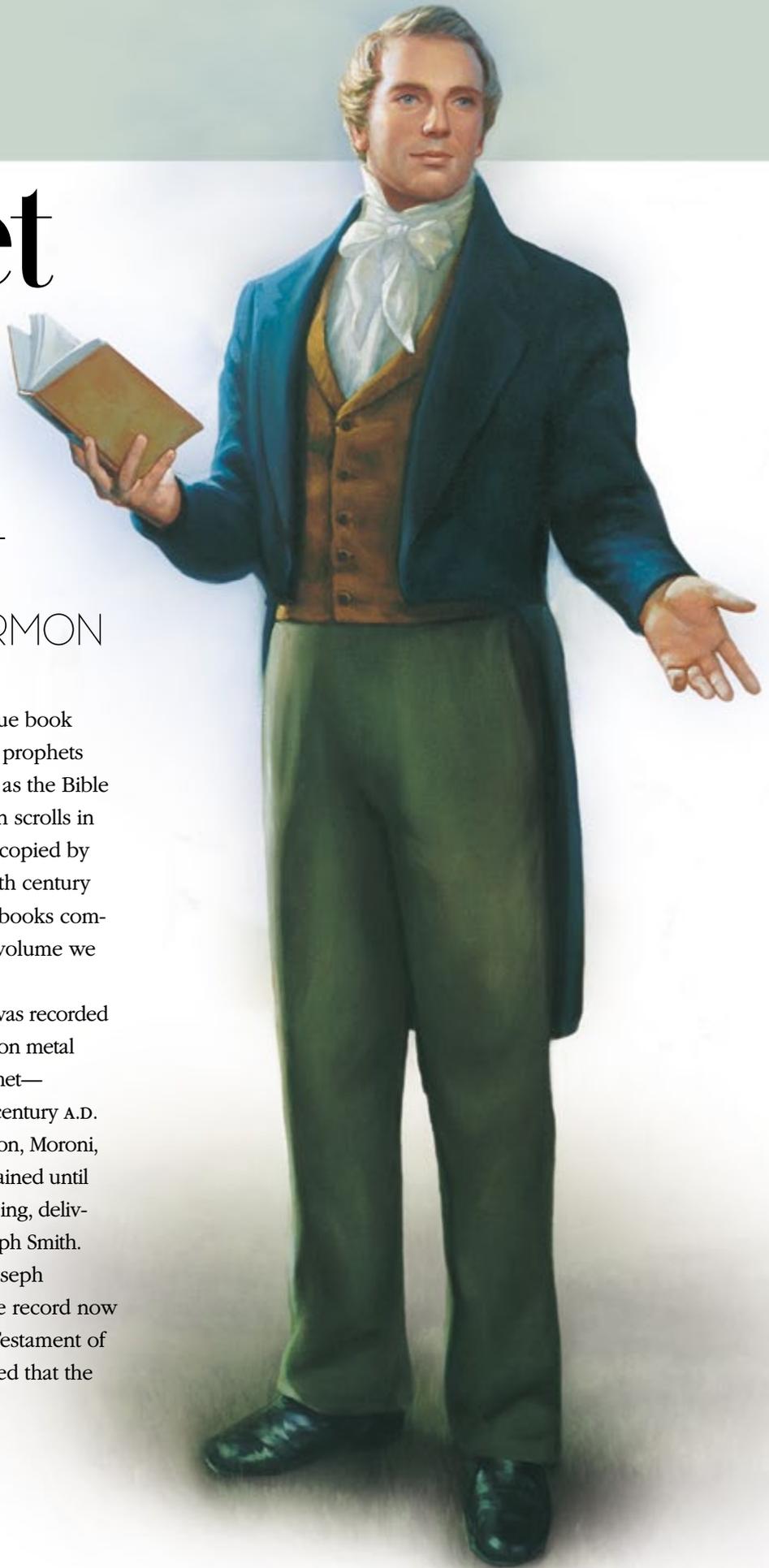
The Prophet Joseph Smith

TRANSLATOR OF
THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon is a unique book of scripture. Although ancient prophets wrote it, it did not come to us as the Bible did. The Bible was recorded largely on scrolls in the Old World as separate books and copied by scribes for centuries. Only by the fourth century after Jesus Christ were these separate books combined and made available as the one volume we refer to as the Holy Bible.

The Book of Mormon, by contrast, was recorded by ancient prophets in the New World on metal plates, abridged primarily by one prophet—Mormon (hence the title)—in the fifth century A.D. into one record on golden plates. His son, Moroni, later buried the plates, where they remained until 1827, when Moroni, as a resurrected being, delivered them to a young man named Joseph Smith.

What follows is the story of how Joseph received, translated, and published the record now titled the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The Savior Himself testified that the book is true (see D&C 17:6).





1. In 1820 a 14-year-old boy named Joseph Smith lived near Palmyra, New York. Though young, he was concerned about his standing before God and confused by the claims of various Christian religions that sought converts by discounting the claims of the others. Motivated by his study of the Bible, Joseph decided to seek wisdom by asking God, who “giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not” (James 1:5). He went into the woods near his home to pray.



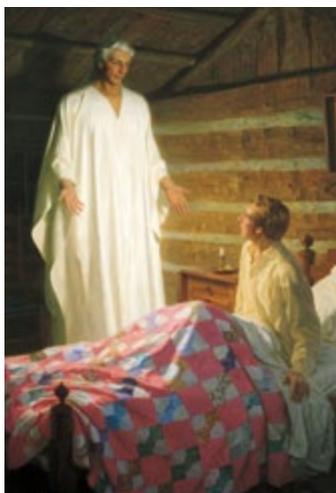
2. As Joseph knelt and prayed, a brilliant pillar of light fell upon him. In it he saw two Personages. Heavenly Father spoke and said, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). The Lord told Joseph not to join any of the churches because none of them were true, but he was promised “that the fullness of the Gospel should at some future time be made known unto [him].”¹



3. Three years passed, during which Joseph Smith shared his experience with others—and was persecuted for it. He reported: “Though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and . . . I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:25).

Since 1830 millions of people have read the Book of Mormon and have joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because of the Book of Mormon's witness

of the Savior. The book is also evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the Savior leads His Church today. Millions of people have tested and found true



4. On September 21, 1823, Joseph was praying when light filled his attic bedroom and an angel named Moroni appeared. Moroni told Joseph about writings by some ancient prophets. The record, engraved on golden plates, was buried in a nearby hill. Joseph was informed he was to translate the record.



5. Finally, on September 22, 1827, Joseph was entrusted with the plates, lifting them from a stone box buried under a large stone on a hill near Palmyra, New York.



6. As was common in rural areas in those days, Joseph Smith was largely uneducated. To assist him with the translation, God provided for him an ancient translation instrument called the Urim and Thummim. He was also blessed by the help of scribes who wrote what he dictated as he translated. Among these scribes were his wife, Emma; Martin Harris, a prosperous farmer; and Oliver Cowdery, a schoolteacher. The bulk of the translation work was finished less than three months after Oliver began serving as scribe.

Emma described what it was like to serve as Joseph's scribe: "No man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for,

Moroni's promise to all honest seekers of truth: "I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask

with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4).



when [I was] acting as his scribe, [Joseph] would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him."²

Joseph explained the significance of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: "By the power of God I translated the Book of Mormon from hieroglyphics, the knowledge of which was lost to the world, in which wonderful event I stood alone, an unlearned youth, to combat the worldly wisdom and multiplied ignorance of eighteen centuries, with a new revelation."³

7. During the 18 months he had the plates, Joseph wasn't the only one to see or handle them. Three men—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—formally testified that the angel Moroni showed them the golden plates and that they knew the plates had "been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us." Eight other men also testified that they had seen and handled the golden plates.⁴

8. By August 1829, Joseph had contracted with publisher Egbert B. Grandin of Palmyra, New York, to print the volume. Martin Harris mortgaged his farm to pay for the book's printing, and on March 26, 1830, the Book of Mormon was available for purchase.

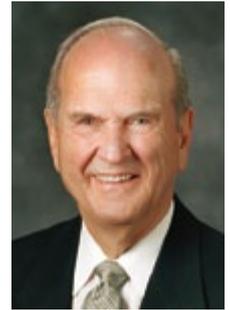
9. On April 6, 1830, about 60 people assembled in a log home in Fayette, New York. There, as directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith formally organized the Savior's Church, restored as it was originally organized and led by apostles and prophets, authorized to speak for God. Later revelation to Joseph Smith gave the Church its name: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:4). ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 4:536.
2. Interview with Emma Smith by Joseph Smith III, Feb. 1879, in *Saints' Herald*, Oct. 1, 1879, 290.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 60.
4. See "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" and "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses," in introduction to the Book of Mormon.



By Elder
Russell M. Nelson
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



WHAT THE BOOK OF MORMON TEACHES ABOUT THE LOVE OF

GOD

*Some of the most sublime examples of the Lord's love
are recorded in the Book of Mormon.*

Most Christians are familiar with the attributes of Jesus Christ as reported in the Bible. They marvel at the love He demonstrated for the poor, the sick, and the downtrodden. Those who consider themselves His disciples also strive to emulate His example and follow His beloved Apostle's exhortation: "Let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. . . . For God is love" (1 John 4:7–8).

This concept is clarified by the Book of Mormon. It describes *how* one is born of God and *how* one gains the power to love as He does. It identifies three core principles that bring the power of God's love into our lives.

First, the Book of Mormon teaches that exercising faith in Christ and entering into a *covenant* with Him to keep His commandments

is the key to being reborn spiritually. To Book of Mormon people who had made such a covenant, King Benjamin remarked, "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7).

Second, the Savior Himself teaches that the power to become more like Him comes through receiving the *ordinances* of the gospel: "Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20).

Third, He exhorts us to *follow His example*: “What manner of men ought ye to be?” He asks rhetorically. His answer: “Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). Truly, He wants us to become more like Him.

Some of the most sublime examples of His love are recorded in the Book of Mormon. These examples can apply in our own lives



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“The Book of Mormon has come forth by the gift and power of God. It speaks as a voice from the dust in testimony of the Son of God. It speaks of His birth, of His ministry, of His Crucifixion and

Resurrection, and of His appearance to the righteous in the land Bountiful on the American continent.

“It is a tangible thing that can be handled, that can be read, that can be tested. It carries within its covers a promise of its divine origin. Millions now have put it to the test and found it to be a true and sacred record.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), “The Great Things Which God Has Revealed,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2005, 81–82.

as we strive to become more like the Lord.

It was His love for Lehi and Lehi’s family—and their love for Him—that brought them to the Americas, their promised land, where they prospered.¹

It was God’s love for us that prompted Him centuries ago to command Nephite prophets to keep a sacred record of their people. Lessons from that record relate to our salvation and exaltation. These teachings are now available in the Book of Mormon. This sacred text stands as tangible evidence of God’s love for all of His children throughout the world.²

It was Christ’s love for His “other sheep” that brought Him to the New World.³ From the Book of Mormon we learn that great natural disasters and three days of darkness occurred in the New World following the death of the Lord in the Old World. Then the glorified and resurrected Lord descended from heaven and ministered among the people of the New World.

TO KNOW IS TO KNOW LOVE

I am a new member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and to me the Book of Mormon is not just a book. It is solid proof that Heavenly Father loves us. It is proof that earlier Saints loved us and wanted us to come home. It is proof that God’s plan of happiness exists and is perfect.

To know that this book is true is to know that Heavenly Father and His Son live. It is to know that life is beautiful and eternal. It is to know that as long as you keep trying to be your best and repent when you fall, then you will always be forgiven. It is to know the true meaning of family. It is to know that you will never lose a loved one, as he or she waits for you. It is to know the blessings of Heavenly Father. It is to know the comfort that whatever storms come your way, you can face them, as they are for your benefit. It is to know the Holy Ghost is your constant companion. In essence, it is to know love in all its expressions.

Emma Adesanya, Ireland



“I am the light and the life of the world,” He told them, “and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:11).

Then He provided one of the most intimate experiences anyone could have with Him. He invited them to feel the wound in His side and the prints of the nails in His hands and feet, that they would know for certain that He is “the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and [had] been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14).

Jesus then gave His disciples the authority to baptize, to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to administer the sacrament. He gave them the power to establish His Church among them, led by twelve disciples.

He delivered to them some of the foundational teachings He had given His disciples in the Old World. He healed their sick. He knelt and prayed to the Father in words so powerful and sacred they could not be recorded. So powerful was His prayer that those who heard Him were overcome with joy. Overcome by His love for them and by their faith in Him, Jesus Himself wept. He prophesied of God’s work in the centuries leading up to the promised advent of His Second Coming.⁴

Then He asked them to bring their children to Him.

“And he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

“And when he had done this he wept again;

The Savior Himself teaches that the power to become more like Him comes through receiving the ordinances of the gospel.

Then He asked them to bring their children to Him. “And he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.”

“And he spake unto The multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

“And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, . . . and the angels did minister unto them” (3 Nephi 17:21–24).

Such is the purity and power of God’s love, as revealed in the Book of Mormon.

In these latter days we who are privileged to have the Book of Mormon, to be members of the Lord’s Church, to have His gospel, and to keep His commandments know something of God’s infinite love. We know how to make His love our own. As we become His true disciples, we gain the power to love as He

does. As we keep His commandments, we become more like Him. We broaden our personal circle of love in reaching out to people of every nation, kindred, and tongue.

With profound gratitude for His exemplary life, we can make this scripture our standard: “Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons [and daughters] of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (Moroni 7:48).⁵ ■

NOTES

1. See 1 Nephi 17:35–44; Mosiah 7:20; Alma 9:9–11; 3 Nephi 5:20–22.
2. See Book of Mormon title page; 1 Nephi 13:35–41; 2 Nephi 33:4; Mosiah 1:2–7; Mormon 8:13–41.
3. See John 10:16; 3 Nephi 15:11–24.
4. See 3 Nephi 11–14; 18–20.
5. Compare 1 John 3:1–3.

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF HIS LOVE

When I joined the Church during my freshman year of college, I felt good about the changes I was making to my lifestyle and saw how much better the gospel made my life. However, I soon felt that my past was hindering any progress I could make. How could Heavenly Father use me to help build His kingdom when I had made such poor choices?

Then one day I opened my Book of Mormon to the very last page. I read Moroni’s parting words: “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, . . . and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God” (Moroni 10:32). I stared at those words. I felt the Spirit tell me they were true. I realized that I had been limiting the power of God by assuming He could not use me in any way He saw fit.

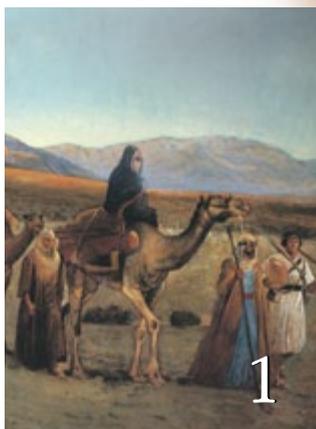
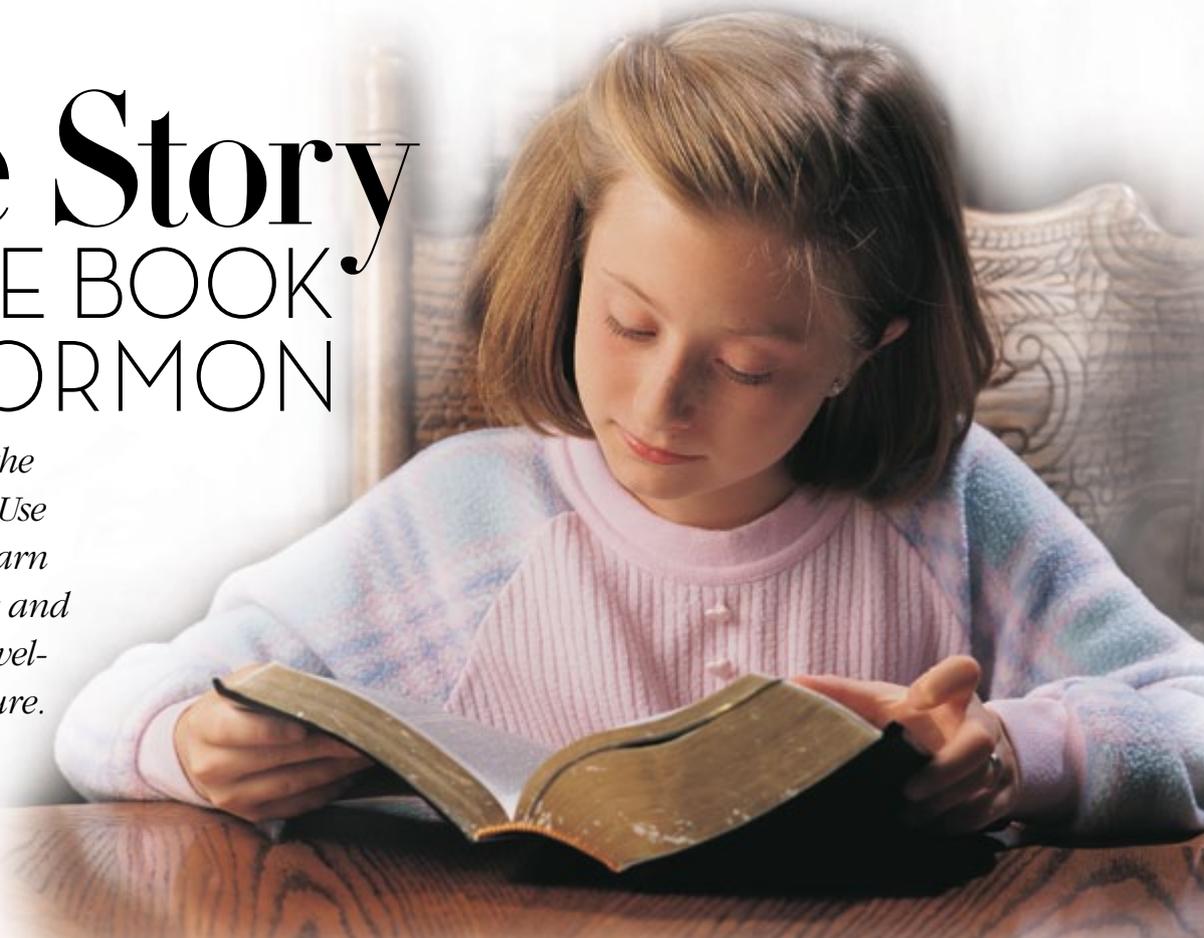
I decided that from then on I would not “deny the power of God” but would accept my past and look forward to my future. The more I focused on my future instead of my past and trusted in the sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ, the more I felt my Savior’s love for me and the happier I was with myself.

Christy Pettey, Washington, USA

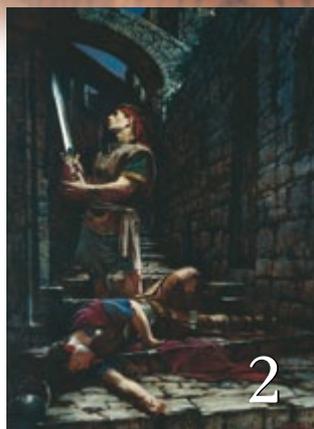


The Story OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

What happens in the Book of Mormon? Use these pictures to learn about the prophets and stories in this marvelous book of scripture.



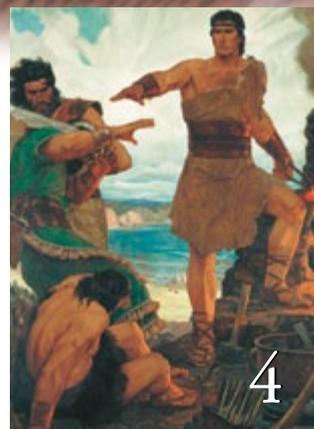
The Book of Mormon begins with a prophet named Lehi. He warned the wicked people in Jerusalem to repent, but the people didn't listen. The Lord told Lehi to take his family, including his wife, Sariah, and their sons—Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi—into the wilderness. (See 1 Nephi 1–2.)



Lehi sent his sons back to get the scriptures written on brass plates. These plates had the history of their ancestors and other things the Lord had told them to write. Lehi and Nephi took good care of these plates. They also wrote on metal plates what happened to their family. (See 1 Nephi 3–5.)



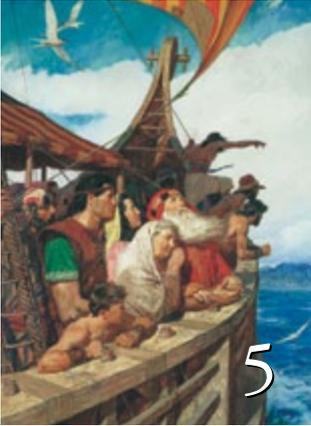
The Lord gave Lehi a compass called the Liahona to guide his family through the wilderness to the promised land. (See 1 Nephi 16.)



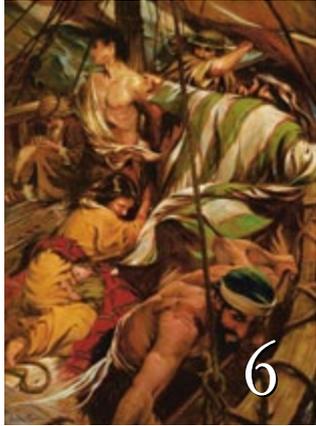
The Lord told Nephi to build a boat to take Lehi's family to the promised land. Nephi obeyed his father and the Lord, but Laman and Lemuel did not. (See 1 Nephi 17.)

LEFT: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT CASEY; DETAIL FROM LEHI TRAVELING NEAR THE RED SEA, BY GARY SMITH; I DID OBEY THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT, BY WALTER RANE; LEHI AND THE LIAHONA, BY JOSEPH BRICKEY; NEPHI REBUKING HIS REBELLIOUS BROTHERS, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI; RIGHT: LEHI AND HIS PEOPLE ARRIVE IN THE PROMISED LAND, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI; THEY DID TREAT ME WITH MUCH HARSHNESS, BY WALTER RANE; NEPHI WRITING ON THE GOLD PLATES, BY PAUL MAIN © 1988; I DID RAISE MY VOICE THAT IT REACHED THE HEAVENS, BY WALTER RANE; IN THE SERVICE OF YOUR GOD, BY WALTER RANE; DETAIL FROM ABINADI, APPEARING BEFORE KING NOAH, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI; COME INTO THE FOLD OF GOD, BY WALTER RANE; ALMA, ARISE, BY WALTER RANE; PAINTINGS BY WALTER RANE COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM

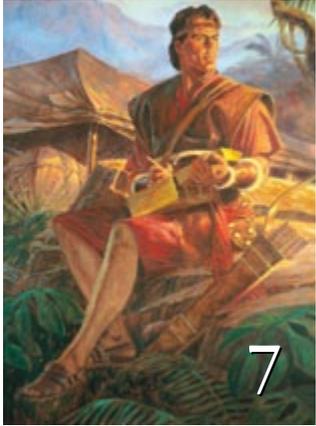
Lehi and his family sailed to the promised land on the boat they built. (See 1 Nephi 18.)



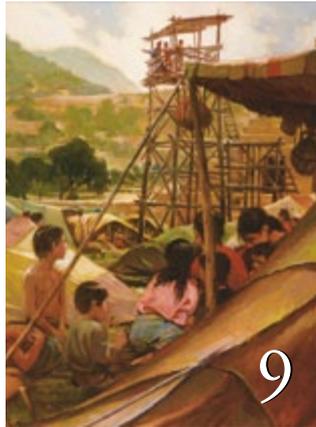
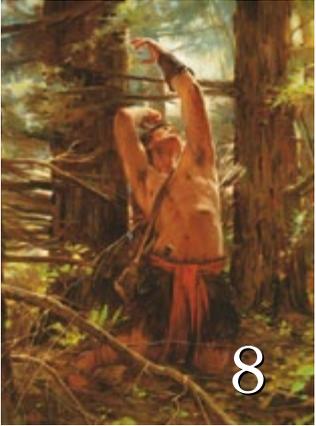
Laman and Lemuel continued to disobey their father and the Lord. Their descendants are known as the Lamanites. Nephi continued to obey his father and the Lord. His descendants are called Nephites. (See 2 Nephi 4–5.)



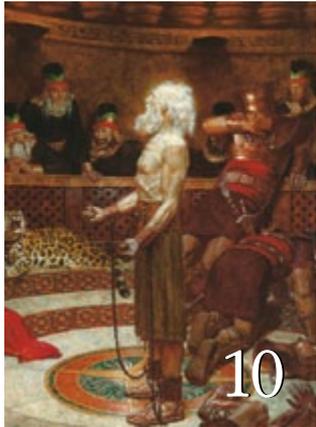
After Lehi and Nephi died, other people, such as Nephi's brother Jacob, were in charge of writing important teachings and events on the plates. (See Jacob 1.)



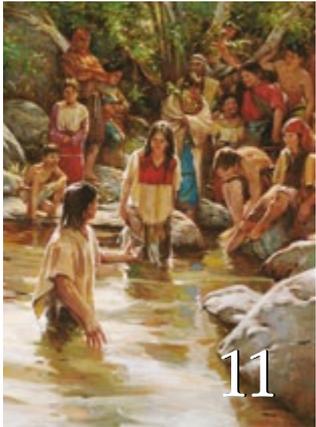
Enos prayed to be forgiven of his sins, and he was forgiven. (See Enos 1.)



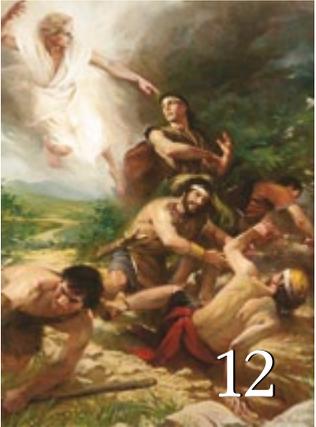
King Benjamin built a tower to teach his people the gospel. (See Mosiah 2–6.)



A wicked king named Noah had the prophet Abinadi put to death. But Abinadi's teachings converted one of Noah's priests named Alma. (See Mosiah 11–17.)

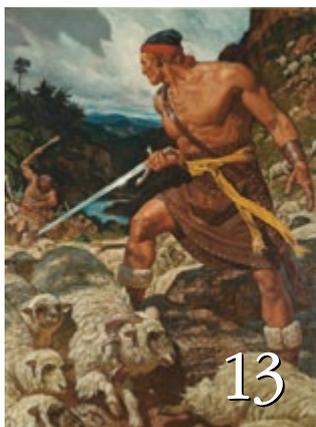


Alma escaped from King Noah's court, taught other people about the gospel, and baptized them. (See Mosiah 18.)



Alma's son Alma the Younger was not obedient. He and his friends, the sons of Mosiah, were wicked. Then an angel told them to repent. Alma and the sons of Mosiah repented and spent the rest of their lives preaching the gospel. (See Mosiah 27–28.)

Mosiah's son Ammon converted many Lamanites after Ammon defended King Lamoni's flocks and won his trust. (See Alma 17–19.)



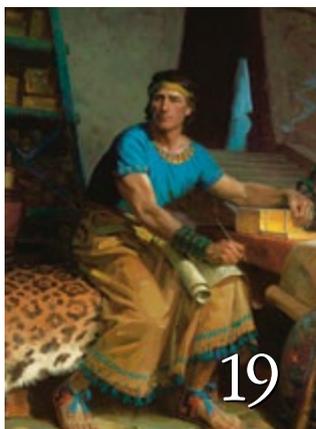
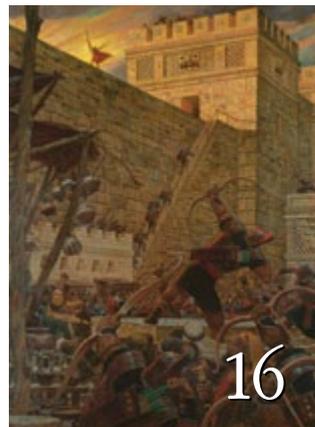
Captain Moroni wrote the title of liberty and fought to defend the liberty of his people. (See Alma 46; 48.)



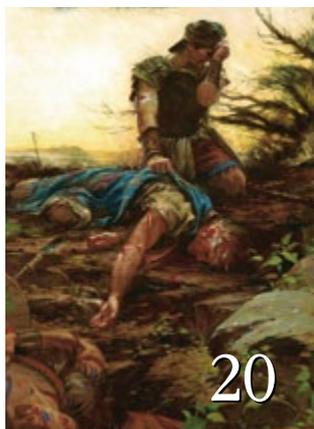
Helaman led an army of 2,000 righteous young men. (See Alma 53; 56–58.)



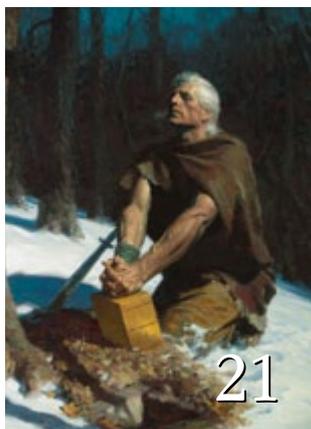
A Lamanite prophet named Samuel prophesied that Jesus Christ would soon be born. (See Helaman 13–16.)



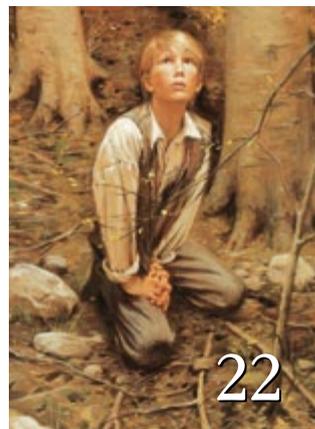
A 10-year-old boy named Mormon was chosen to write on the plates when he grew older. At age 24 he began combining the most important stories from all the records onto a set of metal plates. (See Mormon 1.)



Before Mormon died, he gave the plates to his son Moroni. Moroni was a general in the army. He was the last Nephite to survive a great battle between the Lamanites and the Nephites. (See Mormon 6; 8.)

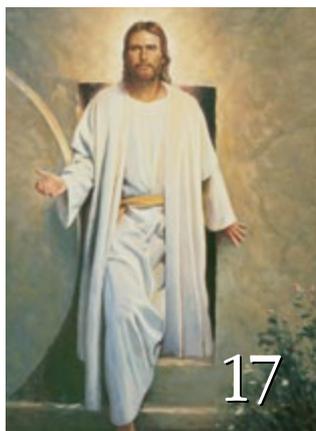


Before Moroni died, he buried the plates in a place called Cumorah. About 1,400 years after Moroni buried the plates, a 14-year-old boy named Joseph Smith prayed to know which church was right. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:5–16.)

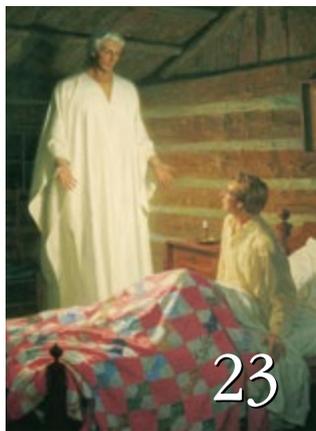


Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ visited Joseph Smith and told him that none of the churches were true and complete. Joseph would help restore the true Church of Jesus Christ. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:17–20.)

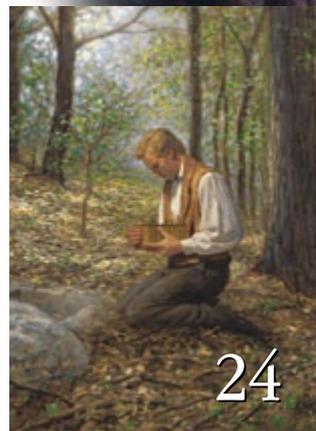
Far away in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ was born. He taught His gospel, healed and blessed people, and set up His Church. Then He was crucified and resurrected. (See 3 Nephi 1; 8–10.)



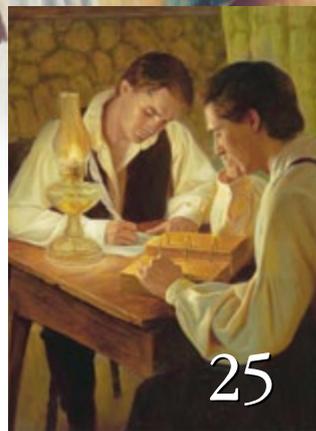
After His Resurrection, He visited the righteous Nephites and Lamanites. He taught them His gospel, healed them, and blessed them, just as He had in the land around Jerusalem. (See 3 Nephi 11–28.)



Moroni visited Joseph Smith and told him about the buried plates. When Joseph Smith got older, he would get the plates and translate them. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:27–54.)



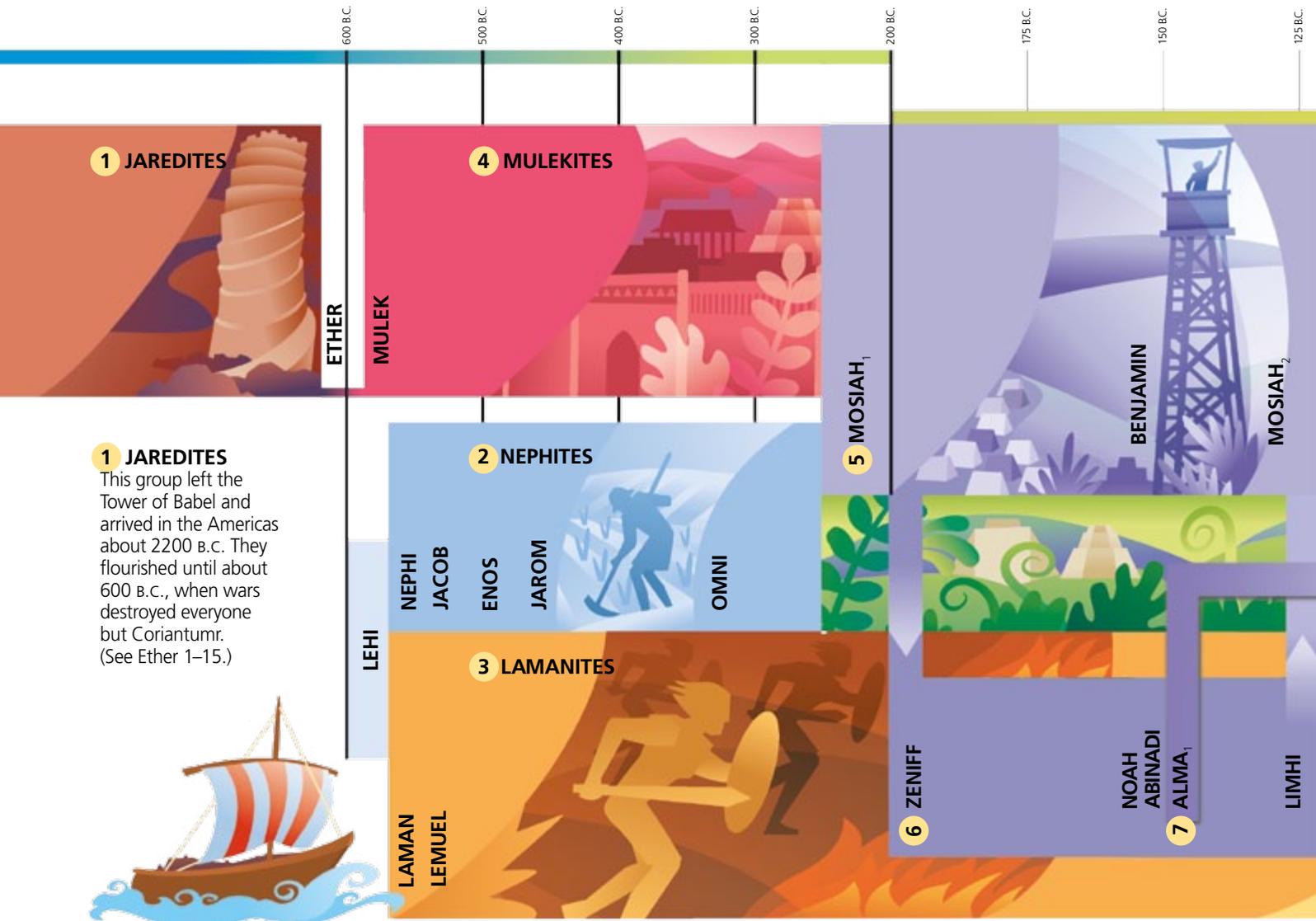
When Joseph Smith was 21, he went to the Hill Cumorah and got the plates from the place where Moroni had buried them. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:59.)



Through the power of God, Joseph Smith translated the writing on the plates. He published this translation. It is called the Book of Mormon. (See title page and introduction to the Book of Mormon.) ■

LEFT: AMMON DEFENDS THE FLOCKS OF KING LAMONI, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951 IRI; COME FORTH, BY WALTER RANE, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM; MORONI APPEARS TO JOSEPH SMITH, BY TOM LOVELL © 2003 IRI; CUMORAH'S HILL, BY JON MCNAUGHTON; JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF MORMON, BY DEL PARSON © 1996 IRI. RIGHT: HE IS RISEN, BY WALTER RANE, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM; MORONI BURYSING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL © IRI; EVEN REMAIN ALONE, BY WALTER RANE, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM; MORONI BURYSING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL © IRI; THE DESIRES OF MY HEART II, BY WALTER RANE, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM; MORONI BURYSING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL © IRI; THE ANGEL MORONI APPEARS TO JOSEPH SMITH, BY TOM LOVELL © 2003 IRI; CUMORAH'S HILL, BY JON MCNAUGHTON; JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATING THE BOOK OF MORMON, BY DEL PARSON © 1996 IRI.

BOOK OF MORMON



1 JAREDITES

This group left the Tower of Babel and arrived in the Americas about 2200 B.C. They flourished until about 600 B.C., when they destroyed everyone but Coriantumr. (See Ether 1–15.)

2 NEPHITES

Lehi's group left Jerusalem about 600 B.C. and came to the Americas. Gradually his posterity became divided. After Lehi died, the righteous followed his son Nephi northward. They became known as Nephites. (See 1 Nephi 1–22; 2 Nephi 1–5.)

3 LAMANITES

After Lehi's death, the wicked remained with his son Laman and became known as Lamanites. (See 2 Nephi 5.)

4 MULEKITES

Mulek, a son of King Zedekiah, led a group from Jerusalem in about 587 B.C. and came to the Americas. They found Coriantumr. (See Omni 1:14–21.)

5 MOSIAH₁

By about 225 B.C. the Nephites had become wicked, so Mosiah₁ led a group of righteous Nephites to Zarahemla and merged with the Mulekites. They called themselves Nephites. Mosiah₁ became their righteous king. King Benjamin was his son. (See Omni 1:12–23.)

6 ZENIFF

In about 200 B.C. Zeniff, a Nephite, took a group south to reclaim the Nephite lands. Once Zeniff and his group arrived, the Lamanites put them in bondage. Later, King Mosiah₂ sent Ammon to find the group, and Ammon converted King Limhi. (See Mosiah 7; 9–22.)

TIME LINE



100 B.C. 75 B.C. 50 B.C. 25 B.C. 0 A.D. 33 A.D. 100 A.D. 200 A.D. 300 A.D. 400



7 ALMA₁
Born among the people of Zeniff, Alma₁ became one of wicked King Noah's priests. The prophet Abinadi was killed after he called King Noah to repentance. But Alma₁ believed Abinadi's teachings and fled with a group of believers, eventually joining the Nephites. (See Mosiah 11; 17–18; 23–24.)

8 ALMA₂ AND THE SONS OF MOSIAH₂
As young men, Alma₂ and the sons of King Mosiah₂ worked to destroy the Church. An angel rebuked them, and they repented. Alma₂ became a righteous leader. (See Mosiah 27–29.) The sons of Mosiah₂ became missionaries to the Lamanites. After much success, they and Alma₂ reunited. (See Alma 17–26.)

9 GADIANTON ROBBERS
The influence of this murderous secret band was strongest when the society was wicked and weakest when the society was righteous. By about A.D. 350 they threatened the safety of all people. (See Helaman 2; 6; 4 Nephi 1:42–46.)

10 JESUS CHRIST
Following His Resurrection in Jerusalem, the Savior appeared in the Americas, ministered to the people, taught His gospel, and organized His Church. For 200 years following His visit, the people lived in peace. (See 3 Nephi 11–28.)

11 NEPHITES DESTROYED
Gradually wickedness returned, wars raged, and the Nephites were destroyed. The only survivor, Moroni, kept the Nephite records and then buried them before he died. (See 4 Nephi 1:24–28; Mormon 8:1–8; Moroni 10.)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TARA MORLEY





WHO WROTE

Ancient prophets, historians, and leaders engraved their testimonies and history on golden plates. Later, the Prophet Joseph Smith, by the gift and power of God, translated an abridgment of those original plates.

Authors or Sources of the Original Ancient Records

Nephi₁, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, and others

Mormon

Brass plates of Laban (see 1 Nephi 5:10–14)

Zeniff

Lehi (see 2 Nephi 1:1–4, 11; D&C 3, section introduction); Benjamin (see Omni 1:12–23; Words of Mormon 1:16–18; Mosiah 1–6); Mosiah₂ (see Omni 1:23–25; Mosiah 6:3); Alma the Younger, Sons of Mosiah, Helaman₂, Pahoran, Captain Moroni, Nephi₃, Nephi₄

Mormon

Jaredite records on 24 plates, including the writings of Ether (see Ether 1:1–5)

Moroni

Records That Made Up the Plates

Small plates of Nephi (spiritual records; about 600 B.C. to 130 B.C.)

Words of Mormon (connects the small plates and the abridgment of the large plates of Nephi; see verses 1–18)

Large plates of Nephi (temporal records and religious history; about 130 B.C. to A.D. 321)

Records of Mormon (about A.D. 345 to A.D. 385)

Book of Ether, edited Jaredite records (about 2400 B.C. to 600 B.C.)

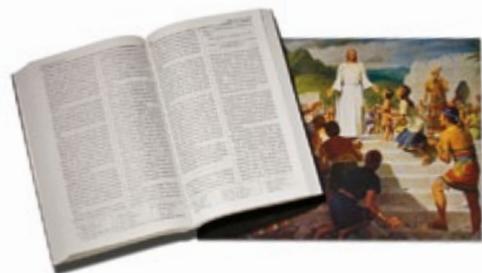
Records of Moroni (see Mormon 9:30–37; about A.D. 385 to A.D. 421)



THE BOOK OF MORMON?



On the evening of September 21, 1823, the angel Moroni appeared to young Joseph Smith and told him of the golden plates that would be translated as the Book of Mormon. Four years later, Joseph was able to take the plates in order to translate them (see Joseph Smith—History 1:27–54).



Golden Plates Given to the Prophet Joseph Smith by the Angel Moroni on September 22, 1827



The Book of Mormon

Plates of Mormon
(records compiled and abridged
by Mormon and Moroni)

Title Page*
1 Nephi
2 Nephi
Jacob
Enos
Jarom
Omni
Words of Mormon
Mosiah
Alma
Helaman
3 Nephi
4 Nephi
Mormon
Ether
Moroni

Sealed portion
(not translated)



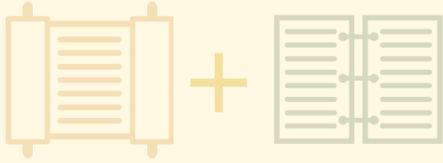
The original manuscript of the translation was completed in 1829, the printer's manuscript was completed during 1829–30, and the first 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon were published in 1830.

*Joseph Smith explained, "The title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates" (*History of the Church*, 1:71).

Information in this chart was compiled from the preface and the text in the Book of Mormon.



FROM LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY IED CLARK; MORMON ABRIDGING THE PLATES, BY TOM LOVELL; THE ANGEL MORONI APPEARS TO JOSEPH SMITH, BY TOM LOVELL; PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG DIMOND; MORONI DELIVERING THE GOLDEN PLATES, BY GARY KARP; MAY NOT BE COPIED; PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY LEISHMAN; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN LUKE



THE BOOK OF MORMON A Witness with the Bible

In harmony with the biblical law that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1), both the Book of Mormon and the Bible testify of Jesus Christ and teach the principles of His gospel. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that “scriptural witnesses authenticate each other. This concept was explained long ago when a prophet wrote that the Book of Mormon

was ‘written for the intent that ye may believe [the Bible]; and if ye believe [the Bible] ye will believe [the Book of Mormon] also’ [Mormon 7:9]. Each book refers to the other. Each book stands as evidence that God lives and speaks to His children by revelation to His prophets.”¹

Below is a list of fundamental doctrines taught in the Bible for which the Book of Mormon adds an additional witness.

God’s Plan for Us

The Bible and Book of Mormon teach that God is our Heavenly Father. As such, He has prepared a “plan of salvation” (Alma 24:14) whereby we may be saved through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Loving Father in Heaven

Bible: “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28; see also Psalm 82:6; Hebrews 12:9).

Book of Mormon: “I know that [God] loveth his children” (1 Nephi 11:17; see also 1 Nephi 17:36).

Death and the Spirit World

Bible: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7; see also 1 Peter 3:19–20; 4:6).

Book of Mormon: “The spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11; see also verses 12–14).

Resurrection

Bible: “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:26; see also Ezekiel 37:12; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:54).

Book of Mormon: “I know that ye know that our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God” (2 Nephi 9:4; see also 2 Nephi 9:12; Alma 11:43–45; 40:23).

Commandments Provide a Guide

The Bible teaches that God has given commandments and will bless us when we obey. Book of Mormon prophets also recorded and followed the commandments.



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“Do not trust in yourselves, but study the best books—the Bible and Book of Mormon—and get all the information you can, and then cleave to God and keep yourselves free from corruption and pollution of every kind, and the blessings of the Most High will be with you.”

President John Taylor (1808–87), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (2001), 148.

Blessings of Obedience

Bible: “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive. . . . And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments” (Deuteronomy 6:24–25; see also Proverbs 4:4; John 14:21).

Book of Mormon: “He has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you” (Mosiah 2:22; see also 2 Nephi 1:20).

The Ten Commandments

Bible: The Lord revealed the Ten Commandments to Moses (see Exodus 20:1–17).

Book of Mormon: Abinadi taught the Ten Commandments to the priests of King Noah (see Mosiah 12:33–36; 13:12–24).

Tithing

Bible: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house” (Malachi 3:10; see also Leviticus 27:30).

Book of Mormon: “It was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed” (Alma 13:15; see also 3 Nephi 24:8–10).

Baptism and Holy Ghost

Bible: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5; see also Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36–38).

Book of Mormon: “Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20; see also 2 Nephi 9:23; 31:5–9).

The Mission of Jesus Christ

The Bible and Book of Mormon testify of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Atonement. They teach that the Savior took upon Himself our sins and overcame death.



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“The Book of Mormon . . . declares that the Bible is true, and it proves it; and the two prove each other true.”

President Brigham Young (1801–77), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 121.

Only Begotten Son of God

Bible: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16; see also Matthew 16:16; John 6:69).

Book of Mormon: “I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth” (Alma 5:48; see also 1 Nephi 11:16–21; Mosiah 3:5–8).

Atoned for Our Sins

Bible: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28; see also Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 3:18).

Book of Mormon: “Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (2 Nephi 2:7; see also 1 Nephi 11:33; Alma 34:8–10; 3 Nephi 11:14).

Bore Our Sorrows

Bible: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4; see also Hebrews 2:18).

Book of Mormon: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12; see also Mosiah 14:3–5).

Conquered Death

Bible: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20; see also John 14:19; Acts 26:23).

Book of Mormon: “Believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave” (Mormon 7:5; see also Mosiah 16:7–8; Helaman 14:17).

The Church of Jesus Christ in Ancient Times

The Lord established His Church in Jerusalem and in the Americas. The Bible and Book of Mormon are witnesses that He organizes and leads His people through prophets and apostles.

Prophets

Bible: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7; see also Jeremiah 1:7; 7:25).

Book of Mormon: “By the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets” (1 Nephi 22:2; see also Jacob 4:4–6).

The Twelve

Bible: “He called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:13; see also Ephesians 2:19–20; 4:11–14).

Book of Mormon: “Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you” (3 Nephi 12:1; see also 1 Nephi 11:29).

Priesthood Authority

Bible: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16; see also Matthew 16:19; Luke 9:1–2; Hebrews 5:4).

Book of Mormon: “[Alma] ordained priests and elders, by laying on his hands according to the order of God, to preside and watch over the church” (Alma 6:1; see also 2 Nephi 6:2; Moroni 3).



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“In this day when the Bible is being downgraded by many who have mingled philosophies of the world with Bible scriptures to nullify their true meaning, how fortunate that our eternal Heavenly Father, who is always concerned about the spiritual well-being of

His children, has given to us a companion book of scriptures, known as the Book of Mormon, as a defense for the truths of the Bible that were written and spoken by the prophets as the Lord directed. . . .

“ . . . By this second witness we may know more certainly the meaning of the teachings of the ancient prophets and, indeed, of the Master and His disciples as they lived and taught among men. This should inspire all who would be honest seekers after truth to put these two sacred scriptures together and study them as one book, understanding, as we do, their true relationship.”

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973), *Ye Are the Light of the World* (1974), 89, 91.

Additional Study

This chart is not a comprehensive list. As part of your personal or family scripture study, you can add references to this chart and search for more principles taught in both the Book of Mormon and the Bible using the Topical Guide or Guide to the Scriptures and the online study tools at scriptures.lds.org. ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Scriptural Witnesses,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 43.



By Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

How to Study

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Twenty-five years ago, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) detailed “three great reasons why Latter-day Saints should make the study of the Book of Mormon a lifetime pursuit.”¹ The reasons were these:

- First, the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion—the keystone of our witness of Jesus Christ, of our doctrine, and of our testimony.
- Second, the Book of Mormon was written for our day.
- Third, the Book of Mormon helps us draw nearer to God.

These reasons for studying the Book of Mormon also suggest some ways we might go about studying this unique scripture.

The Keystone of Our Religion

Since the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our witness of Christ and the fulness of His gospel, it is important in our study to give special attention to the many teachings and testimonies of the Savior it contains. Some have done this by obtaining a new, inexpensive copy of the Book of Mormon and marking all of the verses that refer to or teach about the Savior, His ministry, and His mission. This brings both a deeper witness of Jesus as

the Son of God and a fresh appreciation of what He has done and continues to do for us.

Written for Our Day

The Book of Mormon authors wrote with future generations in mind, specifically the latter days. In abridging the Nephite records, Mormon said he could not include “even a hundredth part” (see 3 Nephi 5:8; see also Words of Mormon 1:5). Moroni commented, “I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:35). These two authors and others, acting under inspiration, wrote what would be of greatest benefit to us in these latter days.

We should therefore study with these questions in mind: “Why was this included? How does this apply today and to me?” President Benson observed, for example, that in the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Savior’s Second Coming. We learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war, deal with persecution and apostasy, do missionary work, and respond to the dangers of materialism.² As Nephi did, when we study, we should “liken” the scriptures to ourselves—that is, try to discover how to apply what we find in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 19:23).



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CRAIG DIMOND

KEEP STUDYING TO KEEP LEARNING

The first time I read the Book of Mormon I was not a member. I was 16, and I read it in a week. Near the end of my reading, I came across a verse that affirmed that if a church were Christ's, it would bear His name (see 3 Nephi 27:8). At that moment tears coursed down my cheeks. I knew the Book of Mormon was true, and I decided to be baptized.

After my baptism I read the book again, but this time I bought a highlighter and marked the verses or passages that were inspiring to me. In later readings I did the same, except that I added notes to the highlighted verses in the margins. The next time I added references to related verses, whether from the Book of Mormon or the other standard works.

Then, at the beginning of one year, I purchased a new copy of the scriptures, since the one I had was full of markings, especially after I had used it on my mission and prepared many lessons with it. This time my study and marking were based on topic. I assigned a color of ink to specific topics—for example, orange for faith, green for repentance, and so on.

By continually studying the Book of Mormon using these various methods, I have learned that one single reading of the Book of Mormon is not enough. We learn line upon line as we keep studying. I've also learned that no matter how many times we've already read, there's always something that will make us say, "Why didn't I see that before? It must have been there."

The scriptures—especially the Book of Mormon—teach us about Jesus Christ and about our Father in Heaven. Studying the scriptures has drawn me nearer to Them.

Cristina Vergara Ramírez, Chile

Drawing Nearer to God

Quoting President Benson once again: “It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book.”³



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“I started to read the Book of Mormon before I was old enough to be a deacon, and I have been reading it ever since, and I know that it is true. . . .

. . . It seems to me that any member of this Church would never be satisfied until he or she had read the Book of Mormon time and time again, and thoroughly considered it so that he or she could bear witness that it is in very deed a record with the inspiration of the Almighty upon it, and that its history is true.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1961, 18.

Indeed, studying the Book of Mormon invites the Spirit, and the Spirit is the medium of revelation. This suggests that we study in a thoughtful, meditative fashion—pondering, praying, and perhaps making notes as we read. This puts us in a condition to receive added light and understanding, both about what we are studying and about other matters. Sometimes it is helpful to read the entire Book of Mormon in a relatively brief period of time to grasp the sweep of its story and message. But generally it is best to focus on devoting adequate time each day to studying the book

as opposed to reading some fixed number of verses or pages per day.

Study Aids

We are fortunate today to have a number of tools that can assist our study of the Book of Mormon. Some are bound with our scriptures—the Topical Guide, Bible Dictionary, and index in the English scriptures and the Guide to the Scriptures in other languages. And we have in Latter-day Saint editions of the scriptures numerous footnotes and cross-references on every page.

Other study aids in printed form include the Sunday School Class Member Study Guide, the Seminary Student Study Guide, and the Institute Student Manual. New to our time and age is the growing volume of electronic tools, described in the sidebar on page 31.

Instrument of Conversion

The Book of Mormon is an incomparable treasure and the instrument of conversion that the Lord has designed and provided for our dispensation. I recognize it as the foundation of my own testimony of Jesus Christ, of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, and of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as “the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth.”⁴ I am happy to join my testimony with Jesus Christ’s that “as your Lord and your God liveth it is true” (D&C 17:6). May your lifelong study of the Book of Mormon deepen your conversion and lead you in a direct course to eternal life. ■

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 5–7. This classic talk is reprinted in this issue on pages 52–58.
2. See Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 6–7.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7.
4. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.

THE SCRIPTURES ON THE INTERNET AND MOBILE DEVICES

In addition to facilitating quick keyword searches and cross-referencing, the scriptures online (scriptures.lds.org) and on mobile devices (mobile.lds.org) provide several new functions that can help you in your personal study:



My Study Notebook (notebook.lds.org)

This online study notebook offers many of the same tools you may have used in traditional study—highlighting, note taking, and cross-referencing, for instance—but it allows you to use and save these electronically. In addition, you can “tag” or categorize your notes and other content as it becomes available. Because you log in to My Study Notebook with your LDS account, your notebook revisions remain updated no matter how many different devices you use to access it. These tools allow you to create your own unique topical archive for gospel study and teaching.

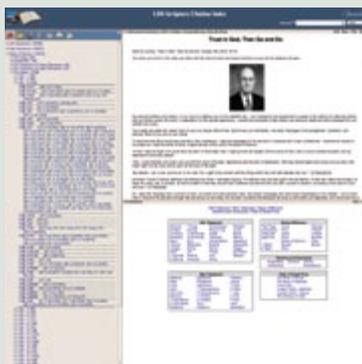


Scripture Languages and Formats (scriptures.lds.org)

The electronic text and audio recordings of the scriptures are now available at LDS.org and for mobile devices in many languages and are in process in many others.

In addition to online reading and listening, you can also download and use the audio, ePub, and PDF files offline. The Church's latest online scriptures site also facilitates easy sharing of passages and personal notes with others via e-mail and social media tools.

The scriptures at LDS.org are currently available in 21 languages; mobile device applications are available in approximately 10 languages, depending on the platform.



LDS Scripture Citation Index (scriptures.byu.edu)

This resource, produced in English by two Brigham Young University teachers, connects verses of scripture with statements from modern-day prophets and apostles. For example, suppose you want to know who has cited 1 Nephi 3:7 in general conference. Click on the Book of Mormon link at the left side of the screen and scroll down to 1 Nephi 3; there you'll find the answer.



General Conference Topics Index (conference.lds.org)

Another resource to help you connect scripture study with the words of living prophets, conference.lds.org features topic-based lists for each general conference. For instance, if you are studying the Atonement in the scriptures, you can find five talks that discussed that topic in the April 2011 conference.



Lehi's Dream

HOLDING FAST TO THE ROD

The overarching theme of the Book of Mormon—inviting all to come unto Christ—is paramount in Lehi's vision.



**By Elder
David A. Bednar**
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



I love the Book of Mormon. Some of my earliest gospel memories are of my mother reading to me from *Book of Mormon Stories for Young Latter-day Saints*, by Emma Marr Petersen. In those childhood experiences and during a lifetime of ongoing personal study and prayer, the Holy Ghost repeatedly has borne witness to my soul that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.

I testify that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ. I know the Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon with and by the power of God. And I witness that the Book of Mormon is “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man [will] get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”¹

Key Symbols in Lehi’s Dream

The importance of reading, studying, searching, and pondering the scriptures in general and the Book of Mormon in particular is highlighted in several elements of Lehi’s vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8).

The central feature in Lehi’s dream is the tree of life—a representation of “the love of God” (see 1 Nephi 11:21–22). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Thus, the birth, life, and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ are the greatest manifestations of God’s love for His children. As Nephi testified, this love is “most desirable above all things” and, as the angel in his vision declared, “most



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

"I testify to you that the Book of Mormon is truly the Word of God, that communication between earth and heaven has been opened up again, and that the true way of the Lord has been revealed to men on earth, showing the means by which all needful knowledge and blessings may be received by every true believer in Christ."

President David O. McKay (1873–1970), "Marks Pointing to Authenticity of Book of Mormon," *Instructor*, Oct. 1952, 318.

joyous to the soul" (1 Nephi 11:22–23; see also 1 Nephi 8:12, 15). Chapter 11 of 1 Nephi presents a detailed description of the tree of life as a symbol for the life, ministry, and sacrifice of the Savior—"the condescension of God" (1 Nephi 11:16).

The fruit on the tree is a symbol for the blessings of the Atonement. Partaking of the fruit of the tree represents the receiving of ordinances and covenants whereby the Atonement can become fully efficacious in our lives. The fruit is described as "desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10) and produces great joy and the desire to share that joy with others.

Significantly, the overarching theme of the Book of Mormon—inviting all to come unto Christ—is paramount in Lehi's vision. Of particular interest is the rod of iron that led to the tree (see 1 Nephi 8:19). The rod of iron is the word of God.

Clinging versus Continually Holding Fast to the Rod

Father Lehi saw four groups of people in his dream. Three of the groups were pressing forward along the strait and narrow path seeking to obtain the tree and its fruit. A fourth group did not seek after the tree, desiring instead the great and spacious building as their ultimate destination (see 1 Nephi 8:31–33).

In 1 Nephi 8:21–23 we learn about the first group of people who pressed forward and commenced in the path that led to the tree of life. However, as the people encountered the mist of darkness, which represents "the temptations of the devil" (1 Nephi 12:17), they lost their way, wandered off, and were lost.

Notice that no mention is made in these verses of the rod of iron. Those who ignore or treat lightly the word of God do not have access to that divine compass which points the way to the Savior. Consider that this group obtained the

HEEDING THEM NOT

Throughout my life, I have gained spiritual strength from the phrase "we heeded them not" (1 Nephi 8:33). In 1 Nephi some who are making their way to the tree of life don't heed the mocking voices. Fingers of scorn are pointed at them, but they don't falter. They don't listen. Likewise, we hear many loud, tempting voices today. Sometimes it can be a real struggle not to heed those voices, but Lehi shows that it is possible.

I have found that I can mute out worldly voices as I attend the temple, read my scriptures, go to church, and follow the prophet. As I do these simple things, I'm able to hear the voice of the Holy Ghost. That's the voice worth listening to. And as I heed the Spirit's voice, I gain more strength to withstand temptation.

When we follow Lehi's example and "heed . . . them not," we can stay on the strait and narrow path and continually partake of the love of God.

Melissa Heaton, Utah, USA



path and pressed forward, exhibiting a measure of faith in Christ and spiritual conviction, but they were diverted by the temptations of the devil and were lost.

In 1 Nephi 8:24–28 we read about a second group of people who obtained the strait and narrow path that led to the tree of life. This group “did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree” (verse 24). However, as the finely dressed occupants of the great and spacious building mocked this second group of people, “they were ashamed” and “fell away into forbidden paths and were lost” (verse 28). Please notice that this group is described as “*clinging to the rod of iron*” (1 Nephi 8:24; emphasis added).

It is significant that the second group pressed forward with faith and commitment. They also had the added blessing of the rod of iron, and they were clinging to it! However, as they were

confronted with persecution and adversity, they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. Even with faith, commitment, and the word of God, this group eventually was lost—perhaps because they only *periodically* read *or* studied *or* searched the scriptures. Clinging to the rod of iron suggests to me only occasional “bursts” of study or irregular dipping rather than consistent, ongoing immersion in the word of God.

In verse 30 we read about a third group of people who pressed forward “continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.” The key phrase in this verse is *continually holding fast* to the rod of iron.

The third group also pressed forward with faith and conviction; however, there is no indication that they wandered off, fell into forbidden paths, or were lost. Perhaps this third group of people *consistently* read *and* studied *and* searched the scriptures. Perhaps it was diligence and devotion to a seemingly “small and simple

Even with faith, commitment, and the word of God, the second group pressing forward along the strait and narrow path, clinging to the rod of iron, eventually was lost—perhaps because they only periodically read or studied or searched the scriptures.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW REIER

Holding fast to the iron rod entails, in large measure, the prayerful, consistent, and earnest use of the holy scriptures as a reliable guide for the journey to the tree of life—even to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[thing]” (Alma 37:6) that saved the third group from perishing. Perhaps it was “the knowledge of the Lord” and “the knowledge of the truth” (Alma 23:5, 6) obtained through faithful study of the scriptures that yielded the spiritual gift of humility—such that this group of people “fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree” (1 Nephi 8:30; emphasis added). Perhaps it was the spiritual nourishment and strength provided by continually “feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20) that enabled this group to heed not the scolding and mocking of the people in the great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 8:33). This is the group you and I should strive to join.

Nephi’s brothers asked, “What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?

“And [Nephi] said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would *hold fast unto it*, they would never perish; neither could the

temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:23–24; emphasis added).

What, then, is the difference between clinging and holding fast to the rod of iron? Let me suggest that holding fast to the iron rod entails, in large measure, the prayerful, consistent, and earnest use of the holy scriptures as a sure source of revealed truth and as a reliable guide for the journey along the strait and narrow path to the tree of life—even to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life” (1 Nephi 11:25).

The Book of Mormon Is for Us Today

The Book of Mormon sets forth truths that are relevant and essential in our day and for our circumstances. The spiritual and practical

relevance of the Book of Mormon in our lives is highlighted by Moroni: “Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:35). Having seen our day and circumstances through the foreknowledge of God, the principal authors of the Book of Mormon specifically included the topics and examples of greatest importance to the inhabitants of the earth in the latter days.

I invite you to consider carefully and prayerfully the following question: **What lessons can and should I learn from Lehi’s vision of the tree of life and from the principle of *continually holding fast* to the rod of iron that will enable me to stand spiritually strong in the world in which we live today?**

As you work diligently and seek inspiration to answer this important question, you will come to understand more fully by the power of the Holy Ghost, both in your heart and in your mind, the importance of *continually holding fast* to the rod of iron. And you will be blessed to apply those lessons with faith and diligence in your individual life and in your home.

May we all have eyes to see and ears to hear additional lessons from Lehi’s vision that will help us to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20). ■

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.

DON’T LEAVE THIS PATH!

My sister introduced me to the Church, and I liked it so much that I was soon baptized. Even though I didn’t know how to read, I would open the Book of Mormon and flip through it. I had a great desire to read the words on its pages. My husband, who wasn’t baptized until later, was intrigued to see me sitting there just looking at the book, and he said I was wasting my time.

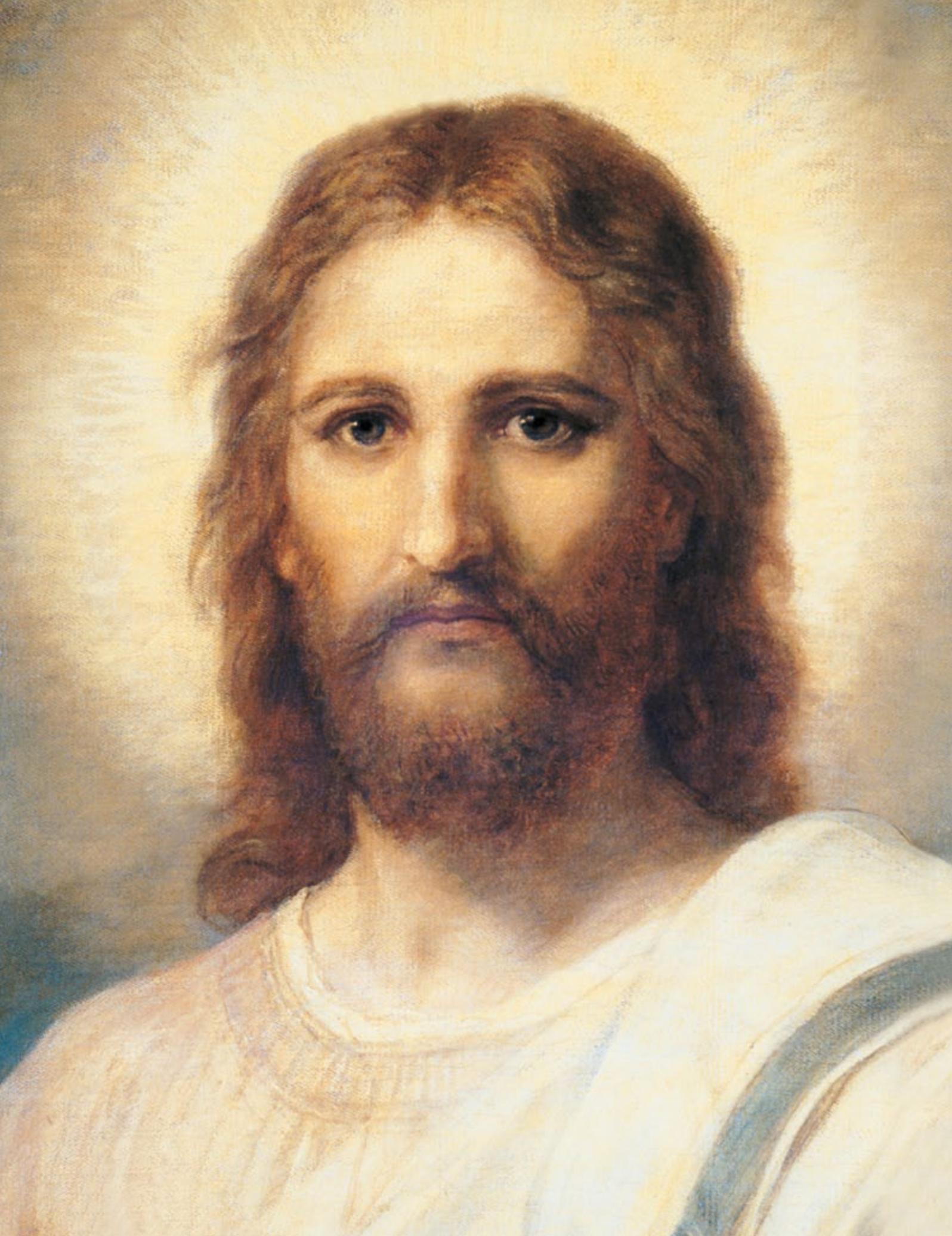
With great difficulty and with the help of my Relief Society sisters and my children, I began trying to read. It was always my objective to read the Book of Mormon.

During an especially hard moment, when I was having negative feelings, I clearly heard these words: “Don’t leave this path!” I looked to see if there was someone there, but there was no one.

One day I told my daughter that I was beginning to be able to read on my own. She didn’t believe me and asked me to show her. When I did, she was extremely happy.

My goal is to read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover. My reading is slow, but I am able to understand, and more important, I am able to feel the Spirit through this wonderful book.

Edite Feliciano de Paula, São Paulo, Brazil



By Elder
Neil L. Andersen
Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



THE BOOK OF MORMON Strengthening Our Faith in Jesus Christ

The Book of Mormon invites us and our families to embrace faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it shares the principles that will help our families succeed.

Compiled from the teachings of prophets through several centuries, the Book of Mormon was written for a future time when a restoration of priesthood keys, along with a great gathering of the house of Israel, would prepare the world for the Savior's return to the earth (see 2 Nephi 25; 27; 3 Nephi 21). Nephi described the sacred text as "the voice of one crying from the dust" (2 Nephi 33:13). Moroni declared: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me" (Mormon 8:35).

The Book of Mormon was written for our day and for the days ahead. Approximately one million copies of the Book of Mormon were printed in the first 100 years following the Restoration. This included 15 languages, a remarkable undertaking. In the next 50 years (1930–80), more than 25 million copies were

printed in 41 languages. Since that time 30 years ago, 125 million additional copies of the Book of Mormon have been printed in 107 languages, including Selections from the Book of Mormon. The influence and impact of the Book of Mormon will continue to grow as the kingdom of God is carried to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

The title page, written by Mormon, reveals the book's main purposes. The first purpose specifically addresses the descendants of the children of Lehi. The final purpose is the "convincing of [all people] that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Eternal God" (title page of the Book of Mormon).

Important for Our Day

Why would another testament of Jesus Christ be so important for our day? Why would the Lord bring forth another witness to strengthen the powerful declarations of the Bible?



In today's world, the arrogant arguments of Korihor, the anti-Christ, find listening ears. But faith in Jesus Christ, when solidly anchored in our souls, brings true conversion.

We live in a time unlike any other. Scientific achievement allows medical care, transportation, comfort, and convenience never imagined by generations who preceded us. The earth is flooded with information and technology, enhancing family history work and the sharing of the gospel but also the proliferation of pornography, virtual violence, and other “evils and designs [that] exist in the hearts of conspiring men” (D&C 89:4). In much of the world, we live in a time of strong attachment to material possessions.

These conditions can, if we are not careful, distract or entice us to move away from principles that are eternal and true for every generation.

When I was a young missionary in Europe in the early 1970s, we began much



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“All the ingenuity of all the men under heaven could not compose and present to the world a book like the Book of Mormon. Its principles are divine—they are from God. They could never emanate from the mind of an imposter, or from the mind of a person writing a novel. Why? Because the promises and prophecies it contains are being fulfilled in the sight of all the earth.”

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 119.

of our teaching with an explanation of the Apostasy, because the divinity of Jesus Christ was widely accepted. When I returned as a mission president 20 years later, we began our conversations differently, because belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who gave His life for our sins and rose the third day, had faded significantly.

In today's world, the arrogant arguments of Korihor, the anti-Christ, find listening ears:

“Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come.

“Behold, these things which ye call prophecies . . . are foolish traditions of your fathers.

“ . . . Ye cannot know of things which ye do not see. . . .

“ . . . Every man prosper[s] according to his [own] genius, and . . . conquer[s] according to his [own] strength” (Alma 30:13–15, 17).

We need our own secure and settled faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we need help in strengthening our families so that this faith flows into the hearts of our children and grandchildren. Faith in Jesus Christ, when solidly anchored in our souls, brings true conversion, and in its wake come repentance, honest discipleship, miracles, spiritual gifts, and enduring righteousness. This is an important part of the divine mission of the Book of Mormon.

As a young missionary, I had a most interesting discussion with a clergyman. He told us that he could not accept the Book of Mormon because it openly spoke of Jesus Christ, using His name and events of His life hundreds of years before His birth. He found this transparency uncharacteristic of the pattern of the Old Testament that referenced the Savior more subtly.

To me the bold declaration of Jesus Christ is the very power of the Book of Mormon. Of course, we must receive a spiritual witness that the book is of God. But once that is obtained, the purposes of Christ, the reality of His life and Resurrection, and the clarity of what is necessary to follow Him and obtain eternal life with Him are strikingly tangible before us.

ALL BECAUSE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

It was six months since I had been baptized, and I did not have a firm testimony of the Book of Mormon. One day when I had no desire to read the scriptures, I recalled my Gospel Principles teacher saying, “When you do not feel the desire to read, it is because Satan does not want you to read the scriptures.” Because of that warning, I opened the Book of Mormon. I read, “Who could have supposed that our God would have been so merciful as to have snatched us from our awful, sinful, and polluted state?” (Alma 26:17). Those words filled my soul with joy because I remembered my state before becoming a member of the true Church of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of the Lord testified in my heart of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

I had not wanted to be a full-time missionary, but after that day everything changed. I felt very strongly that the world needed to know the truth, and I began to prepare myself. I went to my leaders and told them of my desire to serve. I explained to my parents, who lived in another city and were not members of the Church. Then I sold everything I had and bought clothes for my mission. The end result was that I served a mission from 2003 to 2005.

Today, my family—including my wife and our daughter—is sealed eternally. This blessing is also due to my testimony of the Book of Mormon. I know the Book of Mormon is true, for it bears testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I draw close to God when I read this sacred record.

Adilson Lucero dos Santos, Paraná, Brazil



Nephi's vision



Lehi's testimony



King Benjamin's sermon



Abinadi's witness

Reading and pondering the great sermons on Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon bring a certain witness of their truthfulness.

The Testimony of Jesus Christ

Accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, reading and pondering the great sermons on Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon bring a certain witness of their truthfulness. I love to glide through the Book of Mormon feasting upon the powerful doctrines of Christ: Nephi's vision of the tree of life, with the angel asking, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Nephi 11:16); Lehi's testimony that "redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth" (2 Nephi 2:6); Jacob's addition that He is "the keeper of the gate . . . and he employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 9:41).

We then follow with King Benjamin teaching us of the qualities of discipleship, with his unwavering declaration that there is "no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ" (Mosiah 3:17).

We are soon with Abinadi, about to give his life for what he believes:

"But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death, is swallowed up in Christ.

"He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:8–9).

Alma brings the beautiful doctrines of the Atonement, justice, and mercy to life: "The

plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (Alma 42:15).

Then we come to the marvelous visit of the Savior to the children of Lehi. We too feel His love, His compassion, His teachings, His own testimony:

"This is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father. . . .

"And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross . . . that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil" (3 Nephi 27:13–14).

Finally the closing appeals of Mormon and Moroni: "Know ye that ye must . . . repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God" (Mormon 7:5). "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).



Jesus Christ's appearance



Mormon's and Moroni's closing appeals

Framed within Families

This spiritually powerful, convincing testimony that Jesus Christ is indeed the promised Messiah—the anointed Son of God, sent to earth to bring about the resurrection of all men and the spiritual cleansing of those who will repent and follow Him—is framed within the history of families.

The Book of Mormon begins with a family, a father and mother, sons and daughters heeding the revelation of their prophet-father to leave their worldly goods behind and follow the counsel of the Lord. The book's accounts are replete with parents seeking to instill in their children the promise and hope of Jesus Christ. On one occasion I pulled from its pages specific counsel from fathers to sons—it totaled 52 typed pages. In the Book of Mormon, we see how parents taught faith in Christ and obedience to God's commandments both to children who were obedient from their childhood and to children who had to find their way—sometimes in the very same family. It is a lesson for our day, for our children, for our families.

The specific roles of women and daughters are to some extent unmentioned, as is common in ancient writing. But looking beyond the obvious, we see their eternal and enduring influence. We treasure the precious morsels that speak of women and mothers, such as when their feelings are described as “tender and chaste and delicate before God” (Jacob 2:7) or when Helaman describes the goodness of his youthful army as influenced by their righteous mothers:

“They did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did remember the

TWO BOOKS, ONE ETERNAL FAMILY

My husband was coming home when he found a bag in the street. To his surprise, inside was a copy of the Book of Mormon. He brought it home and showed it to me. He read it for a while, found it interesting, but eventually put it away.

A short time later, he died. I went to one church after another looking for comfort and wanting to know if life would go on after death. I was engulfed in doubt, with many unanswered questions.

Then on my way to work, I saw a book that I recognized on the sidewalk—the Book of Mormon. I took it with me because finding it brought back memories of my dear husband. I mentioned my discovery to someone who suggested that I read it.

The days went by, and one night I visited my sister, who was a Latter-day Saint. The full-time missionaries were there, and they sang the hymn “I Am a Child of God.” I knew right then that the missionaries could answer my questions.

After receiving the discussions and gaining a testimony, I was baptized. Today I can testify with total certainty that Joseph Smith saw the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

I believe it was no coincidence that my husband and I both found the Book of Mormon. Even though my husband was not able to be baptized during his life, I am happy that, because of temple ordinances, he and I and our two precious children can be together as a family for all eternity. The Book of Mormon brought us together and brought peace to our souls.

María Mash, Guatemala

NEPHI'S VISION, BY CLARK KELLEY PRICE; DETAIL FROM UAHONA, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951; IRI; KING BENJAMIN'S ADDRESS, BY JEREMY WINBORG, MAY NOT BE COPIED; DETAIL FROM ABRINADI APPEARING BEFORE KING NOAH, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951; THAT YE DO ALWAYS REMEMBER ME, BY GARY KAPP © 1998, MAY NOT BE COPIED; MORMON BIDS FAREWELL TO A ONCE GREAT NATION, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG © 1951; IRI

The Book of Mormon's accounts are replete with parents seeking to instill in their children the promise and hope of Jesus Christ.



words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them. . . .

“Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually. . . .

“ . . . They had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.

“And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (Alma 57:21, 27; 56:47–48).

I would invite you to ponder these questions to help you liken the teachings of the Book of Mormon to your family:

- What passages in the Book of Mormon teach us that children need to see integrity and righteousness in the faith of their parents?
- What counsel have fathers in the Book of Mormon given their sons that we may want to share with our children?
- What do we learn about our efforts with children who are not being obedient?
- How do parents in the Book of Mormon share their deep beliefs with their children?
- What do we learn about faith as it is transferred from one generation to another?

There is nothing more important to share with another than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It brings understanding to the challenges of this life, happiness amid difficulty, and eternal life in the world to come.

There are many worldly influences that pull us and our families from this most vital faith. The Book of Mormon invites us and our families to embrace faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it shares the principles that will help our families succeed.

I testify that the Book of Mormon is true and that in very fact it was delivered to the Prophet Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni, under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for our day, for our children and grandchildren. As we open it daily with faith, I promise the Lord’s Spirit will be upon us and our families will be blessed forever. ■

ANCIENT EVENTS, MODERN APPLICATIONS

I can always find answers in the Book of Mormon. I’m learning many things from studying it, and I feel I’m changing in good ways.

Recently I was considering what to do now that my six children are raised. I wondered what Heavenly Father desired me to do.

In my regular scripture study, I came across one of the stories of war in the Book of Mormon. I was struck by Moroni’s call to action in defending, among other things, families (see Alma 46:12). The Nephites were determined to protect their families. As I read that story, I decided that no matter what, I wanted to have that same purpose in my life, to fight for family. It was a personal, tender experience.

I know that the Book of Mormon was written for our day. I am grateful that I can go to this book for direction in my life; it truly is an iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8).

Eun Jung, Korea



Faith • Family • Relief

If We Do Not Doubt

In the Book of Mormon we read about exemplary young men who were exceedingly valiant, courageous, and strong. “Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:21). These faithful young men paid tribute to their mothers—their examples and teachers.

The mothers of Helaman’s warriors lived in times not unlike our own. Their circumstances were difficult and dangerous, and youth were being called upon to defend physical and spiritual liberty. Today we live in a world where we “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Challenging times cry out for strong parents and examples who teach the truth that Helaman’s warriors knew: “If they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (Alma 56:47). Teaching and exemplifying this truth today requires vigilance. However, we need not fear. When we know who we are and who God is and we have made covenants with Him, we—like these mothers of warriors—will have great influence for good.

Most likely, each of Helaman’s 2,060 warriors was influenced by a mother. But these mothers did not act alone. Together with other righteous men and women, these mothers must have united their faith and example to teach the power of covenants. The young people of the day understood the covenant their parents had made not to engage in warfare. And even when it seemed impossible, a loving Heavenly Father opened a way for these parents to keep their covenant—and to preserve their liberty (see Alma 56:5–9). We likewise must honor our covenants so that children and youth—our own children and those in our wards, branches,

Study this material and, as appropriate, discuss it with the sisters you visit. Use the questions to help you strengthen your sisters and to make Relief Society an active part of your own life.

What Can I Do?

1. How can I help my sisters recognize and act on the power they have to influence the rising generation?
2. What inspiration will I find in the Book of Mormon to answer the challenges I face today?

neighborhoods, and communities—will understand and support covenant keeping.

When we honor our covenants, Heavenly Father can prepare the way for us. We are to live our covenants with precision. We can, for example, be precise in praying, in studying the scriptures, in holding a current temple recommend, in dressing modestly, in honoring the Sabbath. As we do so, our children will know and be able to say, “We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:48).

Latter-day Saint women who recognize that their strength comes from the Lord’s Atonement do not give up during difficult and discouraging times. As covenant keepers, we excel at upholding, nurturing, and protecting children and youth so that one day we might say of this rising generation, “Never had I seen so great courage, nay, not amongst all” (Alma 56:45). ■

Julie B. Beck, Relief Society general president.

For more information, go to www.reliefsociety.lds.org.

From the Scriptures

Alma 53; 56–58



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT CASEY

TWO THOUSAND STRIPLING WARRIORS

Words by Bonnie Hart Murray
Music by Janice Kapp Perry

Boldly ♩ = 96-100

1. Two thou - sand strip - ling war - riors, young men of pow'r and might Re -
 2. This will - ing band of broth - ers were by their moth - ers taught To
 3. With He - la - man, their lead - er, this val - iant bro - ther - hood U -
 4. Two thou - sand strip - ling war - riors, cou - ra - geous for their cause, Went

spond - ed to the bat - tle cry: O who will stand and fight? Be -
 trust in God con - tin - ual - ly, be true in deed and thought. For
 nit - ed in ex - ceed - ing faith, and fear - less - ly they stood. With
 forth as with the strength of God, and not one soul was lost. Their

hold, our God is with us! We serve at His com - mand. They
 God would then pro - tect them; their faith He would re - ward. They
 no de - sire for blood - shed but want - ing to be free, They
 faith had made them might - y; their strength was mul - ti - plied. They

did not fear to give their lives but bold - ly took a stand.
 did not doubt their moth - ers knew; they trust - ed in the Lord.
 fought for life and lib - er - ty, for God and fam - i - ly.
 fought with pow'r be - yond their own, for God was on their side.

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Alma 53, 56-57

Teachings for Our Day



The Lord Is Mindful of Us

“I am reminded of the words of the Lord found in the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon. Said the Lord, ‘Ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have

gone forth, and the floods which shall come’ [Ether 2:25]. My brothers and sisters, He has prepared us. If we heed His words and live the commandments, we will survive this time of permissiveness and wickedness—a time which can be compared with the waves and the winds that can destroy. He is ever mindful of us. He loves us and will bless us as we do what is right.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Closing Remarks,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 109.



Jesus Is the Christ

“The Book of Mormon is the most powerful written testimony we have that Jesus is the Christ. What did Nephi say was the basis for receiving the Holy Ghost? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Will reading the Book of Mormon now and then ensure faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ? You wouldn’t count on it if you read Nephi carefully. He said this ‘is the gift . . . to all those who diligently seek him.’ Diligently surely means regularly. And it surely means pondering and praying. And the praying will surely include the fervent pleading to know the truth. Anything less would hardly be diligent. And anything less will not be enough for you and for me.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Going Home,” in *Brigham Young University 1986–87 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (1987), 77–78.



A Declaration of the Gospel

“The core elements of the gospel message are found in all the holy scriptures but are most clearly given to us in the Book of Mormon and in the revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Here Jesus Himself plainly declares His doctrine and His gospel, with which God’s children must comply to ‘have eternal life’ (D&C 14:7).”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, “Have We Not Reason to Rejoice?” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 19.

We learn from ancient prophets that the Book of Mormon contains many “plain and precious things” that were preserved to instruct us in our day (see 1 Nephi 13:40; 19:3). These truths provide clarity and increased understanding of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and help students of the Book of Mormon navigate through life’s challenges with hope and strength. In the following quotes, modern prophets and apostles testify of these important teachings.



Baptism of Little Children

“[Some believe] that little children are conceived in sin and enter mortality in a state of natural corruption. That doctrine is false! . . .

“‘If I have learned the truth,’ Mormon wrote, ‘there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children’ (Moroni 8:5).

“He called their disputation ‘gross error’ and wrote: . . .

“Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God.

Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; . . .

“And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children’ (Moroni 8:7–9). . . .

“Read his entire epistle. It is true doctrine.”

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Little Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17.



Warnings from the Book of Mormon

“Among the lessons we learn from the Book of Mormon are the cause and effect of war and under what conditions it is justified. It tells of evils and dangers of secret combinations, which are built up to get power and gain over the people. It tells of the reality of Satan and gives an indication of some of the methods he uses. It advises us on the

proper use of wealth. It tells us of the plain and precious truths of the gospel and the reality and divinity of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for all mankind. It informs us of the gathering of the house of Israel in the last days. It tells us of the purpose and principles of missionary work. It warns us against pride, indifference, procrastination, the dangers of false traditions, hypocrisy, and unchastity.

“Now it is up to us to study the Book of Mormon and learn of its principles and apply them in our lives.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Blessings Resulting from Reading the Book of Mormon,” *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 8.

TWO STICKS BECOME ONE

Almost since birth I have been in possession of the Bible, yet until I received a copy of the Book of Mormon, I was not acquainted with all the principles of the gospel. I discovered that the full gospel of Jesus Christ is accessible only with knowledge of this second “stick” (see Ezekiel 37:15–17). When the two came together for me, they provided a life-changing experience—an increased understanding of who I am and my potential to become part of the eternal family of God. This prophesied combining—“they shall become one in thine hand” (verse 17)—became possible because two faithful missionary sisters cared and left me a copy of the second stick.

Before, I walked by candlelight; now every niche and cranny is highlighted by the fulness of gospel blessings. I feel I’ve been given a new lease on life.

Ary Sala, British Columbia, Canada

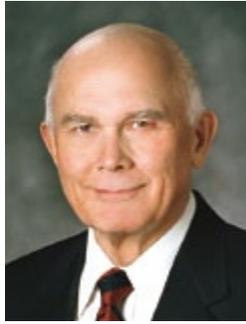
A FAMILY IS FOREVER

I have read the Book of Mormon since my baptism in 1995. But it was not until I got married that reading about Lehi's sons journeying to and fro from Jerusalem became meaningful to me in terms of my own family.

It seems that the Lord wanted Lehi to have a forever

family. He first told Lehi to leave everything behind and save his *present* family by taking them to the promised land. While they were still in the wilderness, the Lord told Lehi to send his sons back to get the record of *past* family members. After that, He sent them to get Ishmael and his daughters. This was preparing for their *future* family.

Testimonies of the Book of Mormon from other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles can be found in this issue on pages 10, 28, 32, 38, and 80.



All Things Shall Be Restored

"The literal and universal nature of the resurrection is vividly described in the Book of Mormon. The prophet Amulek taught:

"The death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.

"The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; . . .

"Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame' (Alma 11:42-44).

"Alma also taught that in the resurrection 'all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame' (Alma 40:23). . . .

"What a comfort to know that all who have been disadvantaged in life . . . will be resurrected in 'proper and perfect frame.'"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Resurrection," *Liahona*, July 2000, 17; *Ensign*, May 2000, 15.



Dangers of Secret Combinations

"The Book of Mormon teaches that secret combinations engaged in crime present a serious challenge, not just to individuals and families but to entire civilizations. Among today's secret combinations are gangs, drug cartels, and organized crime families. The secret combinations of our

day function much like the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon times. . . . Among their purposes are to 'murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness, contrary to the laws of their country and also the laws of their God' [Helaman 6:23].

"If we are not careful, today's secret combinations can obtain power and influence just as quickly and just as completely as they did in Book of Mormon times."

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Standing for Truth and Right," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 38.

Creating the link between the present, past, and future of our eternal family is an important responsibility that I need to treasure—just like Lehi did. Perhaps these experiences helped prepare Lehi for the vision of the tree of life and an understanding that the love of God should be cultivated within an eternal family.

Salote Malani Maiwiriwiri, Hawaii, USA



Resolving Life's Challenges

"The Book of Mormon contains messages that were divinely placed there to show how to correct the influence of false tradition and how to receive a fullness of life. It teaches how to resolve the problems and challenges that we face today. . . . [The Lord] has provided the way to correct the serious errors of life, but this guidance is of no value if it remains locked in a closed book."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "True Friends That Lift," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 76.



A Reminder of Our Covenants

"We are reminded from the Book of Mormon that our baptism is a covenant to 'stand as witnesses of God [and His kingdom] *at all times and in all things, and in all places* that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life' (Mosiah 18:9; emphasis added)."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom," *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 7; *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 7.



The Blessings of Obedience

"In numerous places in the Book of Mormon, the people were promised that they would prosper in the land if they would keep the commandments [see 1 Nephi 2:20; 2 Nephi 4:4]. This promise is often accompanied by the warning that if they do not keep the commandments of God, they shall be cut off from His presence [see Alma 36:30]." ■

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Hope Ya Know, We Had a Hard Time," *Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 104.

MOVING FORWARD WITH LIGHT

In chapter 2 of Ether we read that the brother of Jared was worried because there would be no light in their boats. When he asked the Lord about this, the Lord answered with a question: "What will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light?" (verse 25).

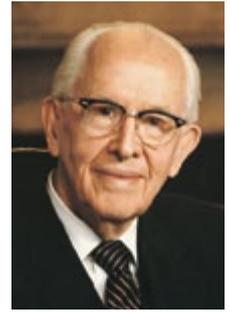
I have thought a lot about how the brother of Jared responded to the Lord's question. First he climbed a mountain, where he "did molten out of a rock 16 small stones" (Ether 3:1). He carried the stones to the top of the mountain, where he prayed. He began by humbling himself before the Lord. He asked for mercy, and he acknowledged the power the Lord had to answer his prayer. Then he demonstrated his faith by saying, "We know that thou art able to show forth great power" (Ether 3:5). The brother of Jared asked the Lord to touch the stones so they could illuminate the boats.

This passage has changed the way I pray. Before, I often asked, "Father, what would Thou have me do?" In reality many situations require that I put in some thought, analyze my resources, come up with a plan, then go to the Father and ask Him if the plan is OK—afterward praying for the miracles that I can't make happen by myself.

Elena Gómez de Santurión, Uruguay



By President
Ezra Taft Benson
(1899–1994)



THE BOOK OF MORMON Keystone of Our Religion

Ezra Taft Benson became 13th President of the Church on November 10, 1985. He is remembered for his firm testimony of the power of the Book of Mormon and his emphasis on its importance in daily scripture study, missionary work, and gospel teaching. This year marks the 25th anniversary of this October 1986 general conference address.

My beloved brothers and sisters, today I would like to speak about one of the most significant gifts given to the world in modern times. The gift I am thinking of is more important than any of the inventions that have come out of the industrial and technological revolutions. This is a gift of greater value to mankind than even the many wonderful advances we have seen in modern medicine. It is of greater worth to mankind than the development of flight or space travel. I speak of the gift of the Book of Mormon, given to mankind 156 years ago.

This gift was prepared by the hand of the Lord over a period of more than a thousand years, then hidden up by Him so that it would be preserved in its purity for our generation. Perhaps there is nothing that testifies more clearly of the importance of this modern book of scripture than what the Lord Himself has said about it.

By His own mouth He has borne witness (1) that it is true (D&C 17:6), (2) that it contains the truth and His words



(D&C 19:26), (3) that it was translated by power from on high (D&C 20:8), (4) that it contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ (D&C 20:9; 42:12), (5) that it was given by inspiration and confirmed by the ministering of angels (D&C 20:10), (6) that it gives evidence that the holy scriptures are true (D&C 20:11), and (7) that those who receive it in faith shall receive eternal life (D&C 20:14).

A second powerful testimony to the importance of the Book of Mormon is to note where the Lord placed its coming forth in the timetable of the unfolding Restoration. The only thing that preceded it was the First Vision. In that marvelous manifestation, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned the true nature of God and that God had a work for him to do. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon was the next thing to follow.

Think of that in terms of what it implies. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon preceded the restoration of the priesthood. It was published just a few days before the



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

"[The Book of Mormon] is the word of God. It is a powerful second witness of Christ. And, certainly, all true believers who love the Redeemer will welcome additional evidence of his divinity.

"This inspiring book was never tampered with by unauthorized translators or biased theologians but comes to the world pure and directly from the historians and abridgers. The book is not on trial—its readers are."

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 133.

Church was organized. The Saints were given the Book of Mormon to read before they were given the revelations outlining such great doctrines as the three degrees of glory, celestial marriage, or work for the dead. It came before priesthood quorums and Church organization. Doesn't this tell us something about how the Lord views this sacred work?

Once we realize how the Lord feels about this book, it should not surprise us that He also gives us solemn warnings about how we receive it. After indicating that those who receive the Book of Mormon with faith, working righteousness, will receive a crown of eternal glory (see D&C 20:14), the Lord follows with this warning: "But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation" (D&C 20:15).

In 1829, the Lord warned the Saints that they are not to trifle with sacred things (see D&C 6:12). Surely the Book of Mormon is a sacred thing, and yet many trifle with it, or in other words, take it lightly, treat it as though it is of little importance.

In 1832, as some early missionaries returned from their fields of labor, the Lord reproved them for treating the Book of Mormon lightly. As a result of that attitude, he said, their minds had been darkened. Not only had treating this sacred book lightly brought a loss of light to themselves, it had also brought the whole Church under condemnation, even all the children of Zion. And then the Lord said, "And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon" (D&C 84:54–57).

Has the fact that we have had the Book of Mormon with us for over a century and a half made it seem less significant to us today? Do we remember the new covenant, even the

Book of Mormon? In the Bible we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word *testament* is the English rendering of a Greek word that can also be translated as *covenant*. Is this what the Lord meant when He called the Book of Mormon the "new covenant"? It is indeed another testament or witness of Jesus. This is one of the reasons why we have recently added the words "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" to the title of the Book of Mormon.

If the early Saints were rebuked for treating the Book of Mormon lightly, are we under any less condemnation if we do the same? The Lord Himself bears testimony that it is of eternal significance. Can a small number of us bring the whole Church under condemnation because we trifle with sacred things? What will we say at the Judgment when we stand before Him and meet His probing gaze if we are among those described as forgetting the new covenant?

There are three great reasons why Latter-day Saints should make the study of the Book of Mormon a lifetime pursuit.

The *first* is that the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. This was the Prophet Joseph Smith's statement. He testified that "the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion."¹ A keystone is the central stone in an arch. It holds all the other stones in place, and if removed, the arch crumbles.

There are three ways in which the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion. It is the keystone in our witness of Christ. It is the keystone of our doctrine. It is the keystone of testimony.

The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the cornerstone of everything we do. It bears witness



of His reality with power and clarity. Unlike the Bible, which passed through generations of copyists, translators, and corrupt religionists who tampered with the text, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation. Therefore, its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power. But it does even more. Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious Resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of those. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Truly, this divinely inspired book is a keystone in bearing witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ.²

The Book of Mormon is also the keystone of the doctrine of the Resurrection. As mentioned before, the Lord Himself has stated that the Book of Mormon contains the “fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching,

In the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation.

every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation. The Book of Mormon offers so much that broadens our understandings of the doctrines of salvation. Without it, much of what is taught in other scriptures would not be nearly so plain and precious.

Finally, the Book of Mormon is the keystone of testimony. Just as the arch crumbles if the keystone is removed, so does all the Church stand or fall with the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. The enemies of the Church understand this clearly. This is why they go to such great lengths to try to disprove the Book of Mormon, for if it can be discredited, the Prophet Joseph Smith goes with it. So does our claim to priesthood keys, and revelation, and the restored Church. But in like manner, if the Book of Mormon be true—and millions have now testified that they have the witness of the Spirit that it is indeed true—then one must accept the claims of the Restoration and all that accompanies it.

Yes, my beloved brothers and sisters, the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion—the keystone of our testimony, the keystone of our doctrine, and the keystone in the witness of our Lord and Savior.

The *second* great reason why we must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of study is that it was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“The Book of Mormon is a sacred record containing information that is found in no other book. The Lord has commanded us to divide with all his children the truths of the everlasting Gospel that have been revealed to prepare them for a place in the Celestial kingdom. . . .

“It fills my heart with joy to know that every man who will read [the Book of Mormon] prayerfully, every man who will desire to know whether it be of God or not has the promise, not of Joseph Smith or any living being, but the promise of our Heavenly Father that they shall know of a surety that it is of God.”

President George Albert Smith (1870–1951), in Conference Report, Apr. 1936, 13–14, 15.

events that would be most helpful to us.

Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. Nephi said: “The Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation” (2 Nephi 25:21). His brother Jacob, who succeeded him, wrote similar words: “For [Nephi] said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation” (Jacob 1:3). Enos and Jarom both indicated that they too were writing not for their own peoples but for future generations (see Enos 1:15–16; Jarom 1:2).

Mormon himself said, “Yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel” (Mormon 7:1). And Moroni, the last of the inspired writers, actually saw our day and time. “Behold,” he said, “the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:34–35).

If they saw our day and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, “Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?”

And there is example after example of how that question will be answered. For example, in the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for

preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ’s coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.

From the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war. From the Book of Mormon we see the evils of secret combinations portrayed in graphic and chilling reality. In the Book of Mormon we find lessons for dealing with persecution and apostasy. We learn much about how to do missionary work. And more than anywhere else, we see in the Book of Mormon the dangers of materialism and setting our hearts on the things of the world. Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection?

The *third* reason why the Book of Mormon is of such value to Latter-day Saints is given in the same statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith cited previously. He said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” That is the third reason for studying the book. It helps us draw nearer to God. Is there not something deep in our hearts that longs to draw nearer to God, to be more like Him in our daily walk, to feel His presence with us constantly? If so, then the Book of Mormon will help us do so more than any other book.

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that.



It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (see D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.

Our beloved brother, President Marion G. Romney . . . testified of the blessings that can come into the lives of those who will read and study the Book of Mormon. He said:

“I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell

Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection?

therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness.”³

These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God.

Brethren and sisters, I implore you with all my heart that you consider with great solemnity the importance of the Book of Mormon to you personally and to the Church collectively.

Over 10 years ago I made the following statement regarding the Book of Mormon:

“Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book? Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation.

“Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life. There is a difference between a convert who is built on the rock of Christ through the Book of Mormon and stays hold of that iron rod, and one who is not.”⁴

I reaffirm those words to you this day. Let us not remain under condemnation, with its scourge and judgment, by treating lightly this great and marvelous gift the Lord has given to us. Rather, let us win the promises associated with treasuring it up in our hearts.



There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 84, verses 54 to 58, we read:

“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

“Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.

“And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.

“And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—

“That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion.”

Since last general conference, I have received many letters from Saints, both young and old, from all over the world who accepted the challenge to read and study the Book of Mormon.

I have been thrilled by their accounts of how their lives have been changed and how they have drawn closer to the Lord as a result of their commitment. These glorious testimonies have reaffirmed to my soul the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Book of Mormon is truly “the keystone of our religion” and that a man and woman will “get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”

This is my prayer, that the Book of Mormon may become the keystone of our lives. ■

Spelling and capitalization standardized.

NOTES

1. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
2. See title page of the Book of Mormon.
3. Marion G. Romney, “The Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 67.
4. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 65.

FOR 25 YEARS

Even though I have been a faithful member of the Church since 1965, one single event in 1986 solidified my testimony of the restored gospel more than anything else.

In October of that year I went to my chapel in Cornwall, England, to watch the broadcast of general conference. After hearing President Ezra Taft Benson’s landmark address “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” I knew I could improve in my efforts to read the Book of Mormon.

That night I went home, got down on my knees, and covenanted with the Lord that I would not treat the Book of Mormon lightly ever again. Now, 25 years later, I can report that I have not missed reading the Book of Mormon a single day.

The blessings I have received from this decision have been innumerable. There is a special spirit in the Book of Mormon that you can’t find anywhere else, not even in other books of scripture. I have felt the Holy Ghost near, helping me experience a sense of comfort in all of life’s challenges, especially when my wife of nearly 50 years passed away in February 2007.

Alistair Joseph Welsh, Scotland

A Sacred Work

By David A. Feitz

One evening my missionary companion and I knocked on the door of a young man who was an international student studying at one of London's many universities. He invited us in, and we explained that we were missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He seemed eager to learn more about the Restoration of the gospel, so we testified of the Prophet Joseph Smith and told him about a sacred book from our Heavenly Father called the Book of Mormon. We emphasized that it was sacred because it testifies of Jesus Christ.

We explained that he could know for himself of its truthfulness and offered to give him a copy. As I handed the Book of Mormon to him, he got up from his chair and left the room without saying a word. I held the Book of Mormon in my hand momentarily, and my companion and I looked at each other in puzzled silence, wondering what to do. I put the book down on the table.

We could see our young friend in the kitchen washing his hands and drying them on a fresh towel. He came back into the room and picked up the Book of Mormon from the table and simply said, "My people always wash their hands before they touch something sacred." Tears came to my eyes as I watched this young man open the Book of Mormon for the first time and turn its sacred pages with his clean hands.

He was receptive to everything we taught. So why wouldn't he take the Book of Mormon when I handed it to him?

Alma taught that the scriptures are sacred and are preserved to bring souls to salvation. He declared to his son Helaman, "God has entrusted you with these things, which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations" (Alma 37:14).

I was sent on a mission to teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, yet I was the one being taught by this young man with his clean hands. In many cultures—including my own—it isn't necessary to wash our hands before reading the scriptures, but his simple gesture of respect was a reverent and powerful reminder of the sacredness of the Book of Mormon. ■





**By Elder
Walter F. González**

Of the Presidency
of the Seventy

IF YOU
REALLY WANT
TO KNOW,

*I feel everlasting gratitude
for the Book of Mormon. It
changed my life forever, and
I know it can change yours.*

You Will Know

I was 18 years old when I became a member of the Church. The Book of Mormon played a key role in my conversion. At the time, I was searching for new ideas that could explain the world around me. I remember my college professors taking very materialistic approaches in their teaching. I started to lean toward agnostic ideas about the existence of God.

One day I noticed a sky-blue book that a couple of missionaries had left in our home about six years before. It was the Book of Mormon. Along with the book, they had left a pamphlet about the Prophet Joseph Smith and also some instructions about how to pray to God.

I started reading the Book of Mormon. I was only a few verses into the book, in 1 Nephi, when I felt something different. I began to debate between my feelings and my intellect. So I decided to ask God in prayer.

This was the first time in my life that I had prayed on my knees. The experience that followed became one of the most sacred of my

life. A feeling of such overwhelming happiness filled me that I knew in my heart that the Book of Mormon was more than just a book. It was a book of divine origin. It had to be the word of God. I later came to understand that the feeling was the Spirit testifying of its truthfulness.

While some may have similar experiences, there are different ways one can come to know that the Book of Mormon is true.

How Will You Know?

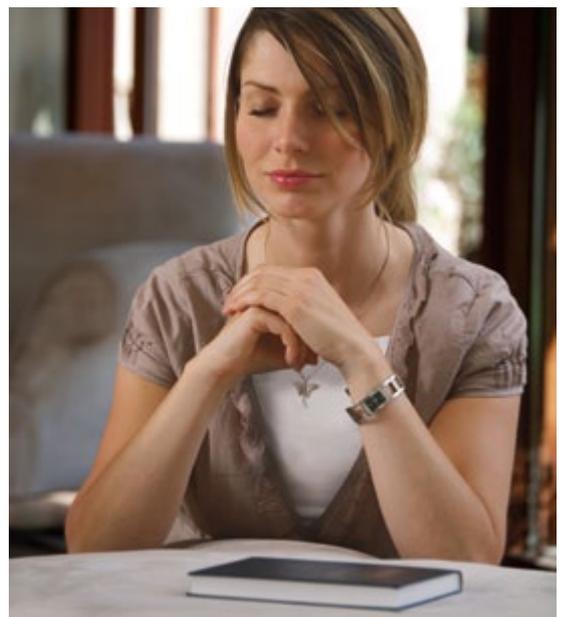
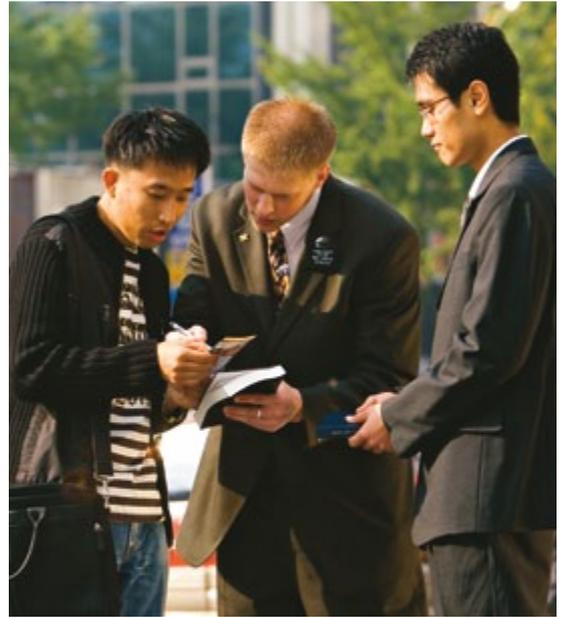
1. Some will know by hearing. You may be among those who will know simply by listening to what the book teaches. The Book of Mormon tells of thousands who heard the sons of Mosiah teach the gospel of Jesus Christ and “were converted unto the Lord” (see Alma 23:5–6). Missionaries today teach that same gospel found in the Book of Mormon. Some will know the Book of Mormon is the word of God simply by hearing others share its teachings.



2. *Some will know by reading.* You may be among those who will know simply by reading the Book of Mormon with a real desire to know the truth. Such was the case with my wife. She was 12 years old when she took to heart the instruction to read the book from cover to cover. As she did this, she knew it was true. The feeling was so strong that, as she read, she decided to follow the Savior forever. She has remained true to what she felt.

3. *Some will know by doing.* You may be among those who will know simply by doing the things the book teaches. Some people gain their testimonies by doing (see John 7:17). Nephi, a prophet in the Book of Mormon, understood this principle well. He wrote that in order to “more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer . . . *I did liken all scriptures unto us*, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23; emphasis added). By likening, or applying, the teachings of the Book of Mormon in your own life, you may also become persuaded of its divine origin.

4. *Some will know by asking God.* You may be among those who will know by reading from the Book of Mormon and then asking Heavenly Father in prayer whether the book is true. This is what I experienced. It is the sublime promise extended by another Book of Mormon prophet, Moroni, to all sincere seekers of truth: “Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things . . . that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:3–4). I bear witness that if you read and pray about the Book of Mormon, following the directions of Moroni, you will know that it is true.



MORONI'S PROMISE

At the end of the Book of Mormon, a prophet named Moroni promises that if we will read the Book of Mormon, ponder its message in our hearts, and ask God in prayer if it is true, God will answer us through the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moroni 10:3–5).

Personal revelation is personal. It comes in different ways and at different times to each of us according to the will of the Lord. Understanding the following principles can help you come to know for yourself.

1. Think about It

Before inviting us to pray, Moroni invites us to ponder. Pondering means to think deeply. Ask yourself: How do I feel when I read the Book of Mormon? Why do I feel that way? What have I learned? Is it good?

The Lord taught this principle to Oliver Cowdery: “You took no thought save it was to ask me. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; *then* you must ask me if it be right” (D&C 9:7–8; emphasis added).

2. Pray Diligently

Focusing our thoughts and concentrating on the Holy Ghost’s quiet answers takes mental effort. Maybe that is partly why Enos in the Book of Mormon talked about his prayer as a “wrestle . . . before God” (Enos 1:2).

When you read, ponder, or pray, find a time and place with as few distractions as possible. Find a position that will help you concentrate. Praying vocally can help focus your thoughts.

3. Ask the Right Questions

The Lord told Oliver Cowdery not just to ask but to ask if the matter he was considering was right. Often, especially when we are inexperienced at receiving answers from our Heavenly Father, it is easier to understand the answer to a simple yes or no question.

“A key to improved prayer is to learn to ask the right questions,” taught Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.¹

4. What Do You Intend?

One of the keys to Moroni’s promise is that we ask with “real intent.” When 14-year-old Joseph Smith went into the woods to pray, “he prayed with the intent not only to listen but to obey,” said President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency. “. . . And because of his faithfulness, in the days and months and years ahead his prayers were answered with a flood of light and truth.”²

5. Don’t Miss It

Not all revelation is spectacular. Some people have dreams, visions, or visitations. But most of us will experience something quiet and subtle, such as a warm, peaceful feeling.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), 12th President of the Church, taught, “Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication.”³

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2007, 8.
2. Henry B. Eyring, “Prayer,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 18; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 17.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 241.



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“The Book of Mormon is the word of God. We invite you

to read this wonderful record. It is the most remarkable volume in existence today. Read it carefully and prayerfully, and as you do, God will give you a testimony of its truthfulness as promised by Moroni (see Moroni 10:4).”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95), *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 54.



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“I am one that has received from the Lord the strongest

revelation concerning the truth of [the Restoration, including the Book of Mormon]. That manifestation was with me powerfully for hours and hours; and whatever circumstances may occur in my life, as long as my memory lasts this perfect knowledge will remain with me.”

President Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901), in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1900, 61.

God Has Promised You'll Know

If you really want to know, you will come to know the Book of Mormon is true. God has promised to give this knowledge to the honest seekers of truth, and He is “a God of truth, and canst not lie” (Ether 3:12).

Another Book of Mormon prophet, Alma, taught his son that God had promised that He “would preserve [this book] for a wise purpose in him, that he might show forth his power unto future generations. And now behold, one purpose hath he fulfilled, even to the restoration of many thousands . . . to the knowledge of the truth; and he hath shown forth his power in them, and he will also still show forth his power in them unto future generations; therefore [this book] shall be preserved” (Alma 37:18–19).

That same convincing power is found

today in this singular volume of scripture, and the Lord will show it to anyone who sincerely seeks to know. I can say this with certainty as I look back to those days when I was learning about the Church. Today, because of the convincing power of the Book of Mormon, I testify that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that it teaches that Jesus is the Christ, the Holy Messiah. The book is tangible evidence that the Restoration of His gospel has taken place and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

If you are among those who sincerely seek the truth, the Lord has promised that you will know. You may come to know by listening to the book’s teachings, by reading the book, by doing what the book teaches, by praying to know of its truthfulness, or by a combination of these elements. But you will know. ■

HOW I KNOW

Although I was baptized at age nine, my family wasn’t active in the Church. But when I was 13, the missionaries invited me to attend church, and I did so. I also attended seminary. The course of study was the Doctrine and Covenants, which seemed confusing to me. I especially struggled with Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. I wanted to find God, but I just wasn’t sure how or where.

Over time I thought a lot about conversations with the missionaries. I thought about seminary. I thought about conversations I had had with members of other Christian faiths. Occasionally I prayed to know what was right, but it was more of a passing thought than a sincere question. Then one night I decided to pray with “real intent.”

I told Heavenly Father that I wanted to know Him and to be part of His true Church. I promised: “If

Thou will let me know whether Joseph Smith is a real prophet and whether the Book of Mormon is true, I’ll do whatever Thou would have me do. If The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true Church, I’ll follow it and never give it up.”

I had no spectacular manifestation, but I felt at peace and went to bed. Several hours later I awoke with a distinct thought: “Joseph Smith is a true prophet, and the Book of Mormon is true.” The thought was accompanied by indescribable peace. I fell asleep again, only to awake later with the exact same thought and feeling.

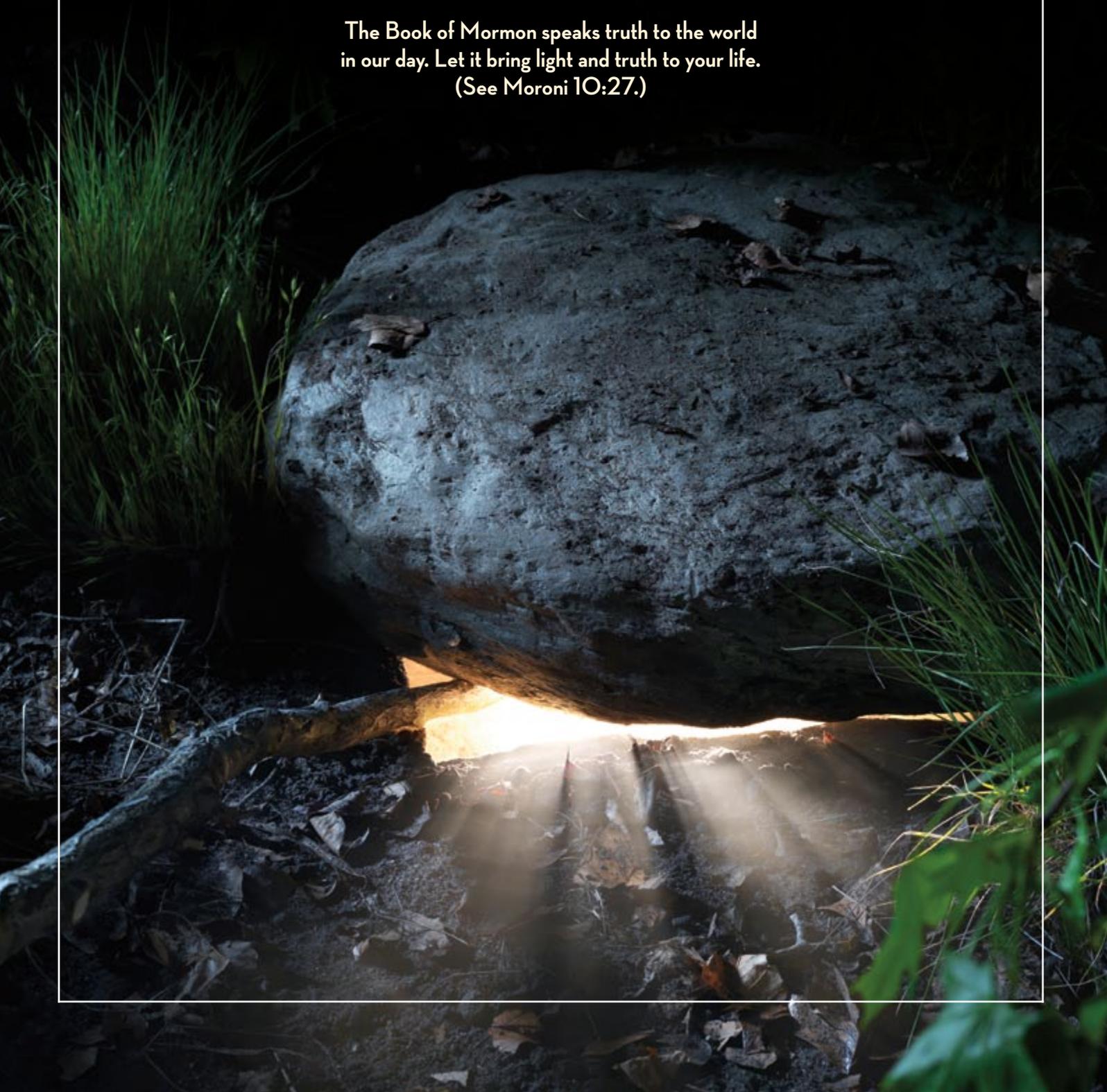
Since that time, I have never doubted that Joseph Smith is a true prophet. I know that this is the Savior’s work and that Heavenly Father will answer our sincere petitions.

Rodolfo Armando Pérez Bonilla, El Salvador

A VOICE

FROM THE DUST

The Book of Mormon speaks truth to the world
in our day. Let it bring light and truth to your life.
(See Moroni 10:27.)



A Fire Burning WITHIN ME

The day he learned to read is also the day Eduardo gained a testimony of the Book of Mormon and its power.

By Michael R. Morris

Church Magazines

My grandfather used to say, ‘If we want to become somebody, we have to learn to read,’ says Eduardo Contreras. ‘My grandfather was right.’

For Eduardo, however, the road to reading was a long one. As one of five children reared by his widowed mother in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, he quit school when he was eight years old and went to work to help support his family.

‘We were very poor,’ he recalls. To help make ends meet, Eduardo shined shoes, made bricks, picked potatoes, sold newspapers, and took on other odd jobs until, as a young man, he found full-time employment with the city government.

As the years passed, Eduardo married and started a family of his own. By the time most of his five children began to leave home, he still could not read and had little prospect of ever learning how. That changed one day when he chased off several local boys who were heckling two Latter-day Saint missionaries in front of his home. He invited the missionaries in, and before long



For Eduardo Contreras, pictured above with his wife, María, the Book of Mormon was the door to literacy. ‘I feel the Spirit every time I open it to read,’ he says.

he and his wife, María, were taking the discussions.

‘I had a hard time understanding anything they said because they spoke little Spanish,’ Eduardo recalls, ‘but they showed me a pamphlet that had pictures of the Savior and of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove. I thought the pictures they showed us and the things they taught us were beautiful.’

Soon those missionaries were replaced by others, including a native Spanish speaker. Eduardo and María, who had lost an infant daughter to death a few years earlier, were touched by the Church film *Families Are Forever*. They, along with their youngest son, Osvaldo, were soon baptized.

With Eduardo’s baptism in 1987 came a desire to strengthen his testimony by reading the Book of Mormon. ‘How do I learn to read?’ he asked his wife. María told him to look at the letters, put them together in his mind, try to sound out words, and then attempt to read aloud. With practice, she assured him, he would eventually learn to read.

Eduardo, then 45, knew the sounds of many letters, but he had not attempted to read since leaving school nearly four decades before.

I Felt a Fire

With a prayer in his heart, Eduardo sat down one hot summer day in a shady spot in the backyard of his home. “There,” he says, “I determined to make the attempt.”

María says she never would have imagined what happened next. As she worked in the kitchen, she listened off and on as Eduardo attempted to sound out letters and words. “Suddenly I heard him speaking rapidly,” she says. “I listened and realized that he was reading—fluently. Less than half an hour had passed, and he was reading!”

Eduardo was so immersed in his attempt that he hadn’t realized he was reading. But as he read, he recalls, “I felt a fire burning within me.” Frightened and surprised, Eduardo called to his wife, “Mami, what is happening to me?”

“It’s the Spirit of the Lord,” María replied. “You are reading fluently!”

As she recalls the experience, María says, “It was something we can never deny.”

Eduardo adds, “The day I learned to read is also the day I gained my testimony of the Book of Mormon and its power.”

From then on, Eduardo began arising at 4:00 a.m. to read the Book of Mormon before going to work. He then read the Doctrine and Covenants, followed by the Bible. A library now graces the Contreras home, where few books were found before 1987.

As Eduardo’s and María’s gospel knowledge grew, so did their testimonies. When their son Osvaldo died following a traffic accident in 2001, their testimonies—coupled with powerful spiritual experiences during prayer and in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple, where they and Osvaldo had been sealed—helped them deal with their loss.

“Perhaps some parents would have gone crazy,” Eduardo says, “but we felt a calmness that said, ‘Your son



A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND POWER

“What does the Book of Mormon mean to you? Has it been a source of inspiration and power in your life? Will it continue to be?”

“If you have not yet drunk deeply from this fountain of pure truth, with all of my soul I encourage you to do so now. Don’t let the consistent study of the Book of Mormon be one of the things that you intend to do but never quite accomplish. Begin today.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Power of the Book of Mormon in My Life,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 11.

is well.’ Of course we wept. He was a good son, and we miss him. But we have been sealed in the temple, and we know where he is.”

The Light of Literacy

Thanks to tutoring from a member of his ward, Eduardo also learned to write. “Before,” he says, “I couldn’t even sign my name.”

With the light of literacy, Eduardo came to understand the truthfulness of his grandfather’s words.

“We are here on earth so we can progress a little more each day,” he says. By learning to read and write, he adds, he is showing his children and grandchildren that it is never too late to learn, improve, and become what God wants us to become. “Because I can read, I learn something new every day,” he says.

Today Brother Contreras can read anything he wants to read, including the newspapers he once sold as an illiterate child. The scriptures remain his favorite books, especially the Book of Mormon. He has read it cover to cover eight times.

“For me the Book of Mormon was the door,” he says, still grateful for how literacy and the gospel have changed his life. “The Book of Mormon was everything to me. It is everything to me. I feel the Spirit every time I open it to read.” ■

WHERE COULD I FIND ANSWERS?

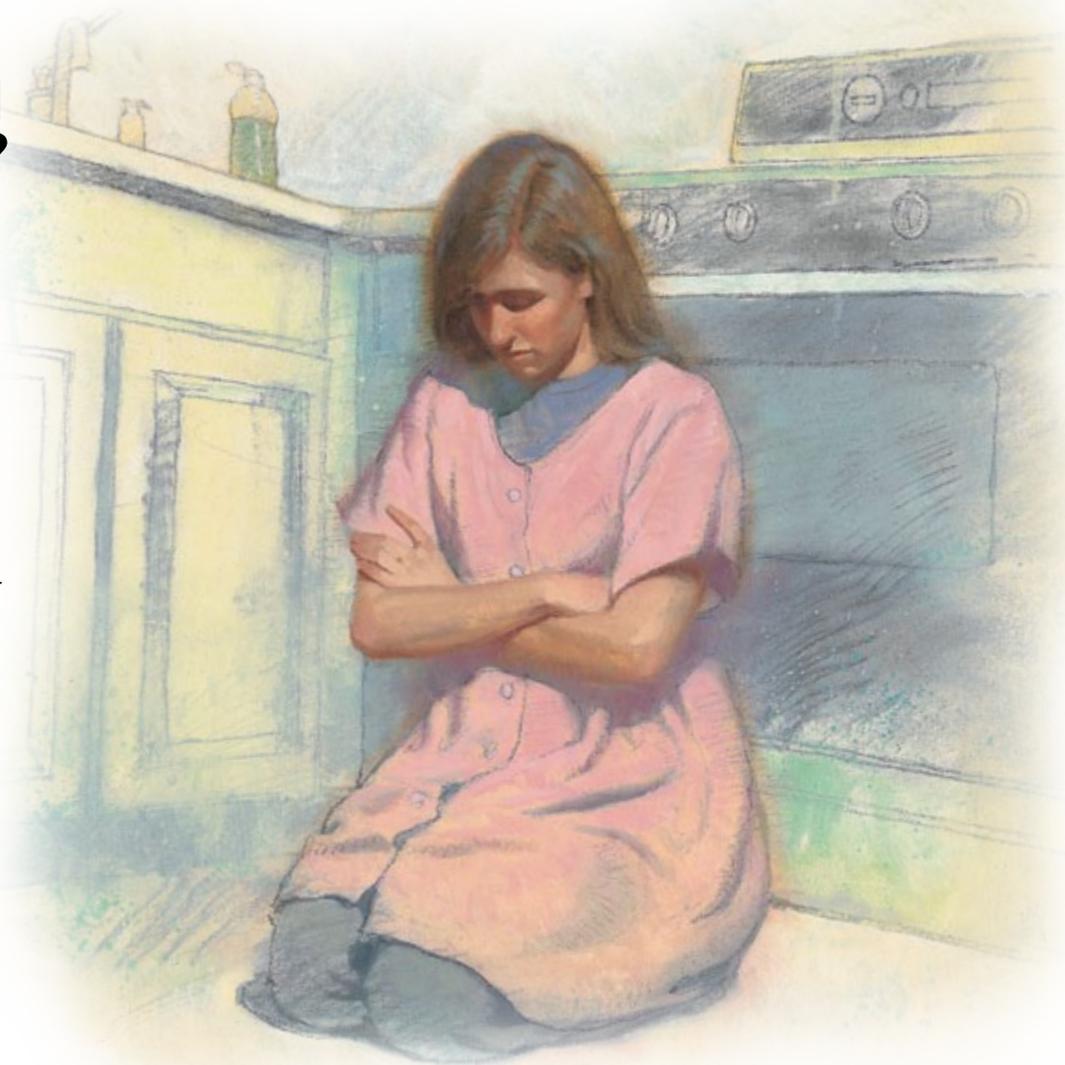
When I was 21, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were teaching English classes in my area of Russia. I initially attended for the language lessons, but I soon began to stay longer for the spiritual thoughts the elders shared after class and to ask them questions.

I had been raised in the predominant religion of my country, but I had lots of unanswered religious questions. The missionaries and the members of their Church had answers to questions that no one in the past had been able to provide to my satisfaction.

Feeling particularly bold after one English class, I asked the missionaries for a copy of their book, the Book of Mormon. But when I got home, I placed it unread on a shelf.

It didn't stay there long, however. I'd heard members of the Church who attended the English class say that the scriptures had solutions to problems. So when I encountered personal challenges or problems, I pulled the Book of Mormon off the shelf and began to read. Invariably, I found answers—the kind of answers that told me exactly what I needed to know.

At that point I began to feel that I could not live without the Church. It was where I wanted to be. It was where I felt I belonged.



One evening I slipped by myself into the kitchen—slightly separated from the rest of our home—and asked Heavenly Father if the Church was true.

Still, I wanted to be sure by asking God. The problem was that I lived in a small one-room apartment that I shared with my landlord, an elderly woman, and there was no private place for me to pray. But one evening I slipped by myself into the kitchen—slightly separated from the rest of our home—and asked Heavenly Father if the Church was true. I received such a strong feeling in response that I knew what I needed to do.

I was baptized a short while later, and my time as a member of the Church has been the happiest of my life. Where before I had questions, now I have answers. Where before I felt empty, now I feel full.

I am grateful that Heavenly Father has not left us without answers. I know that He will speak to us, both through prayer and through the scriptures. ■

Olga Ovcharenko, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Russia

I FELT A FIRE INSIDE

I grew up attending Sunday School at a church next door to my childhood home in Michigan, USA. I had a wonderful teacher who filled me with a love for Jesus Christ.

Each week she passed out cards illustrating events from the Savior's mortal ministry, including principles He taught and miracles He performed. Each week I pasted the cards into a scrapbook and reread the stories in the Bible. As I grew older, I continued to study the Gospels in the New Testament.

Years later, during the summer of 1968, missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints visited the home of a family member. She declined the elders' invitation to learn about the Church but sent them to my home.

At our first meeting the missionaries taught me that "a falling away" had occurred from the Church that Jesus Christ had established (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3). What they taught coincided with my personal study, so when they asked if they could visit me again, I agreed.

During their next visit, I had a list of questions. Did Latter-day Saints baptize by immersion? Did they believe in priesthood authority? Did they believe in the healing of the sick? Their answers supported what I had studied in the New Testament. At the end of the visit, they left me with a book they said testified of Jesus Christ.

I set the book on top of the TV and went to bed. But in the middle of the night, I was awakened by a strong feeling I later recognized as the Holy Ghost. I felt prompted to start reading, so I read for an hour and a half before returning to bed. A short time later, I reawakened with the same feeling, so I read some more.

This pattern continued for the next two nights. I loved what I was reading and recognized that the Book of Mormon testified of Jesus Christ.

I decided to ask God for direction. For the first time since I was a little girl, I knelt to pray. I asked Heavenly Father to help me know what to do with the fire I felt inside of me. When I finished my prayer, I felt prompted to revisit the account of the Lamanites' conversion in 3 Nephi 9. I read that they "were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not" (verse 20).

The phrase "they knew it not" spoke to me. The thought came to me: "The Church of Jesus Christ really is on the earth!" I was eager to talk to the missionaries about what I had read and what I now knew. But when they responded to my questions with an invitation to be baptized, I told them I couldn't. My husband wouldn't understand.

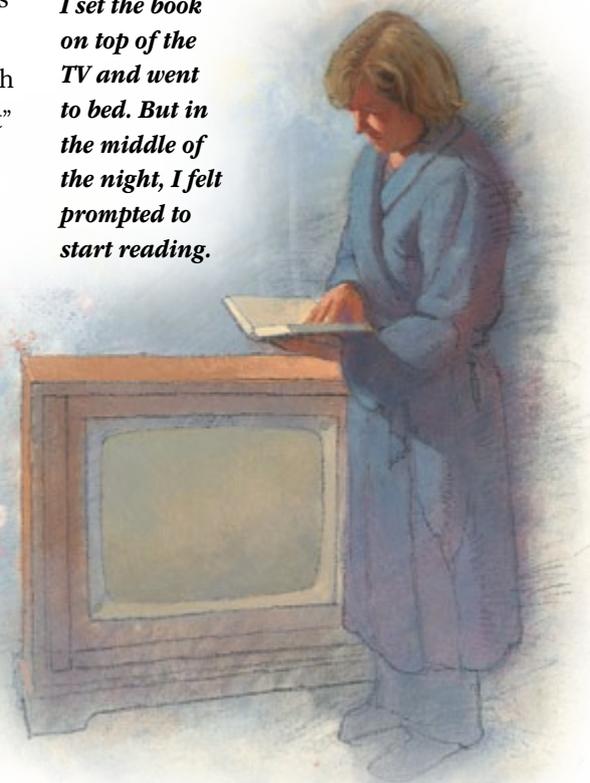
As I continued to think about that verse, however, I realized that it contained clear direction for me to offer the sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit." I prayed and asked my Father in

Heaven to help me, which He did. After my husband took the missionary discussions, he gave his consent for me to be baptized.

How grateful I am to a loving Heavenly Father for that precious and powerful experience I had as a young mother in reading the Book of Mormon. It led me to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result, the influence of the Holy Ghost I felt those nights in 1968 is now a constant gift—something that has guided me during my more than 40 years as a member of the Church. ■

Claudia Williams, Florida, USA

I set the book on top of the TV and went to bed. But in the middle of the night, I felt prompted to start reading.



THE BOOK OF MORMON SPOKE TO ME

When our youngest child, Amanda, was two years old, she was diagnosed with leukemia. Her case was difficult, and her cancer did not go into remission following chemotherapy. She then had to have a bone marrow transplant.

While my husband and two sons were home in Utah, I stayed with Amanda in another state from September until the first part of January. We missed celebrating Christmas together, but with the end of follow-up care, we returned home.

On our first visit to the hospital for a checkup after returning home, doctors again found leukemia cells in Amanda's blood. The transplant had failed. Hearing the news, I felt as though I were sinking right through the floor. Our family had been through a lot of worry, work,

separation, and difficult times. Now we would lose our daughter anyway.

I returned home that afternoon to my two sons. While we waited for my husband to come home from work, we got out our copies of the Book of Mormon and began to read. We were in 2 Nephi 9. As we read, the following words spoke to me:

"I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children.

"For I know that ye have searched much, many of you, to know of things to come; wherefore I know that ye know that our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God. . . .

"For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the

great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection. . . .

"O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death. . . .

"And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

"And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day" (2 Nephi 9:3–4, 6, 10, 21–22).

As I read these words, the Holy Ghost filled the room. I felt that my Heavenly Father knew the news I had received that day. I felt that the words the prophet Jacob had written more than 2,000 years before were written to me for that day and came directly from the Savior. He knew the pain and sadness I felt after hearing that our daughter would die. And He was there to comfort our family with His promise that He had prepared a way and that one day, through the power of the Resurrection, "in our bodies we shall see God."

Amanda lived for almost another year, but I have never forgotten that day when the words of the Book of Mormon spoke to me in my need and the Lord gave me hope, comfort, and understanding of His plan. ■

Gina Baird, Utah, USA

As I read, the Holy Ghost filled the room. I felt that my Heavenly Father knew the news I had received that day.



I PUT MORONI'S PROMISE TO THE TEST

A few years ago I was at the house of a friend when I met two well-dressed young men who introduced themselves as Latter-day Saint missionaries. I thought it was strange that they had come all the way to Italy to convert people who already believed in the Savior.

I later asked them to come to my house. "If you want, you can come see me for a cultural exchange," I said. "But don't think I'm going to change religions."

When we met the next night, the missionaries spoke of the Book of Mormon. I thought it strange that I had never heard of it before. I invited them back, but after the second visit my wife, Anna Maria, decided they were crazy and would leave the house during our discussions. The missionaries seemed a little unusual to me as well, but I was curious to know what they had to say and continued to meet with them.

One night when Anna Maria came home, she heard us talking about eternal marriage. This greatly interested her, and we decided that we would start the discussions again together. She had a great knowledge of the scriptures and always had a long list of questions. The elders answered some of them right away, but others they had to go home and research. Each week without fail



I asked Heavenly Father, "Is the Book of Mormon true, and if so, when should I be baptized?"

they returned with responses, and each week Anna Maria had another list of questions.

Shortly after we had finished the discussions, Anna Maria surprised me by asking for my permission to be baptized. I told her I had nothing against it if she was truly converted. I attended her baptism on March 5, 1995, enjoying a wonderful feeling during the service.

I continued to read extensively about the Church, and the missionaries continued to encourage me. Finally I decided to put Moroni's promise to the test (see Moroni 10:4–5). I wanted to know whether the Book of Mormon came from God or whether it was just a nice novel.

One day in June 1995 while I was alone at home, I knelt at the foot of my bed and asked Heavenly Father, "Is the Book of Mormon true, and if so, when should I be baptized?" Suddenly I felt in my heart and in my

mind a clear voice that told me, "The Book of Mormon is true." I then had a clear impression when to be baptized. A week later I prayed again and received the same answer. My heart was bursting with joy. I now knew that God had spoken to me: the Book of Mormon was inspired of God and Joseph Smith was a true prophet.

Finally, on September 17, 1995, I entered the waters of baptism, a year and a half since I started meeting with the missionaries. Soon our daughter, Aba Chiara, became interested in the Church and was also baptized. In January 1997 our family was sealed in the Bern Switzerland Temple.

We know that this is the true Church, governed by Jesus Christ through a prophet and the priesthood. We are thankful to the Lord for His love, for leading us to the missionaries, and for our knowledge of the gospel. ■

Francesco Ferraresi, Lombardy, Italy

To Every Tongue and People

By Lia McClanahan
Church Magazines

When the Book of Mormon prophet Alma entrusted the records of his people to his son Helaman, he instructed his son to remember that the Lord had “a wise purpose” for preserving the scriptures (Alma 37:12). He said of the records, “They should be kept and handed down from one generation to another . . . until they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Alma 37:4).

In 1827 Joseph Smith obtained those records and by 1829 had finished translating them into English by the gift and power of God. The book, published in 1830, was a powerful missionary tool for convincing readers of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With an initial print

run of 5,000 copies, however, sending the Book of Mormon to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” may have seemed a long way off.

Still, the Lord reaffirmed this prophecy to Joseph Smith in 1833, foretelling a day when “every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language” (D&C 90:11). The Book of Mormon, which “contains . . . the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9), is playing a key role in the fulfillment of this prophecy.

In the mid-1800s missionaries carried the gospel to Europe. The Book of Mormon was published in Danish in 1851, followed by editions in French, German, Italian, and Welsh in 1852. Today the



The first edition of the Book of Mormon had a print run of 5,000.

full Book of Mormon is available in 82 languages, with selected chapters in another 25 languages. The prophecy that all people will hear the gospel in their own tongue is unfolding year by year as translation and missionary work move forward.

The Work of Translation

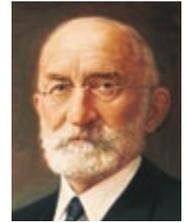
The process of translating the Book of Mormon from English into a new language sometimes takes years to complete. The process begins only after the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have approved

the project and there are enough members who are native speakers of the language to serve as translators. Translators and reviewers are given careful guidelines and are instructed to stay close to the Spirit as they translate. After the translation is finished, the text goes through a separate ecclesiastical review process.

After publication, members can order the new edition through Distribution Services. Many of these members previously have had only selected chapters of the Book of Mormon in their language or, in some cases, only the testimony of the missionaries.

The Book of Mormon and Missionary Work

When a geographic area is first opened to missionary work, language barriers can pose a significant challenge. With no printed Church materials in that area’s language, missionaries must learn the language and bear testimony with the Spirit. In some parts of the world, many people speak a second language, and the missionaries are able to give them a Book



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“I cannot understand how any intelligent man could think that anyone without the help of the Lord could have produced the Book of Mormon, which has been before us now for more than a hundred years and has stood the test during all that period of time, notwithstanding the ridicule that has been brought against it, for one reason and then another. Today that book, which was translated by Joseph Smith as the instrumentality of the Lord, stands out supreme. It is today the greatest missionary that we have for proclaiming this gospel; there is nothing else to compare with it.”

President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945), *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 15.

of Mormon in that language. Before the Book of Mormon was translated into Mongolian, for example, many members in Mongolia studied the Russian edition.

But the gospel is best understood in the familiarity and clarity of one’s native tongue. Eric Gemmell, who served in the Slovenia Ljubljana Mission from 2001 to 2003, saw firsthand what a difference it makes for members and investigators to have the Book of Mormon in their first language. He served the first 18 months of his mission before the

Book of Mormon was available in Slovenian.

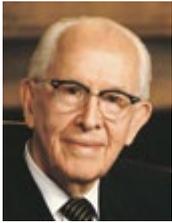
The work was difficult. The first branch of the Church had been established only a decade before. Slovenia had recently gained independence and was in the process of phasing out the former state language of Serbo-Croatian. The missionaries carried copies of the Book of Mormon in Serbo-Croatian and English, which most young people had studied in school. But more often than not, people declined the book because they could not understand either language.

Eric remembers how hollow it felt to bear testimony to people of the greatness and importance of the Book of Mormon—and then to have to tell them that he didn’t have a copy in their language.

Six months before Eric went home, the first shipment of copies of the Slovenian Book of Mormon arrived. The branch held a meeting where each member and missionary received a copy. “There was a special spirit in the air,” Eric remembers. He recorded in his journal how it felt to hold such a precious, long-awaited book. “It was like



As translation work moves forward, members around the world, such as Lea and Flora Lotrič in Slovenia, experience the joy of holding for the first time a copy of the Book of Mormon in their own language.



A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path.”

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 4; also in this issue on page 52.

After a translation is completed, Church members who speak the language are asked to review the text. From left: Walter Barillas Soto, Mike Peck, Sulenny Ruby Cucul Sierra, John Bringham, and Josefina Cucul Tiul review the Kekchi Book of Mormon in Cobán, Guatemala.

holding the golden plates themselves,” he wrote.

After the meeting, the missionaries took the remaining books to use for missionary work. Eric and his companion were so thrilled that when they got to their apartment, they opened the boxes, spread the books out, and took pictures to remember the event. They could hardly wait to share the books with people. With the Slovenian Book of Mormon in hand, not only did the missionaries have more success approaching people, but they also had a way to reinvigorate the testimonies of less-active members who hadn’t been to church in years.

In the last six months of his mission, Eric watched

the testimonies of the Slovenian members blossom. “Once they got the Book of Mormon in their native language,” he says, “they really understood it. It sunk deep into their hearts.” Before, speakers and teachers in Church meetings had to read scriptures in Serbo-Croatian and have someone translate and explain some of the words. “It felt like we were limping along on borrowed words from another language,” Eric remembers. When the members started reading the Book of Mormon in their native language, “their understanding of the gospel increased immediately,” Eric says.

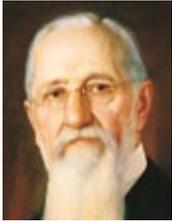
In Their Own Tongue

Mojca Zheleznikar is one of those members

who joined the Church in Slovenia before the Slovenian Book of Mormon was available. Her testimony of the gospel came by listening to the missionaries and studying the Book of Mormon in Croatian and English. After the Slovenian translation was complete, Mojca read the translated text and felt the power of the words in her native language. “I felt the truth expand before me in clear simplicity and profound purity,” she recalls. “It was like the voice of my Creator speaking to me in my own language, the language that my mother spoke to me.”

Members around the world experience similar feelings when they receive the Book of Mormon in their language. In 2003, after the Book of Mormon was translated into Kekchi, a language spoken by the Maya people of Guatemala and Belize, translators reviewed the translation with groups of local members. One translator recalls, “We had assembled a group of pioneer members in the Senahú chapel to do the reading, and as we completed each passage, a reverent silence settled over the room. The





A PROPHET TESTIFIES

“By the gift and power of God [Joseph Smith] translated this book (the Book of Mormon) from its original language, and from the engravings upon the golden plates into the language which we now read within the lids of this book; and it contains the fullness of the everlasting Gospel. It will lead men to the obtaining of the knowledge of truth whereby they may be saved and brought back again into the presence of God and partake of His glory and of endless lives.”

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 42.

understanding was complete, and the Spirit was powerfully present. It was a sacred experience.”

One of the members in that meeting, Elvira Tz’i, is grateful for the Kekchi translation of the Book of Mormon because of the blessings it will bring to the rising generation. She says the translation will allow younger members to “gain a thorough understanding of the Lord’s word and have respect for what the Lord requires.”

For members of the Church, studying the Book of Mormon in their own language is a source of countless blessings. As members “prayerfully learn and teach from the scriptures,” the First Presidency has said, “their testimonies will grow, their knowledge will increase, their love of family and others will expand, their ability to

serve others will enlarge, and they will receive greater strength to resist temptation and defend truth and righteousness.”¹

Far-Reaching Blessings

The rich blessings that the Book of Mormon brings into the lives of those who study it result in a strong motivation to share the book with others, further fulfilling prophecy. Every year about four million copies of the Book of Mormon are distributed worldwide in over 100 languages as one by one, members and missionaries share their testimonies of Jesus Christ. The “wise purpose” Alma spoke of in ancient times is being revealed in the global reach of the Book of Mormon and in each changed life. ■

NOTE

1. First Presidency letter, Oct. 15, 2008.

FORMATS AVAILABLE

The Book of Mormon is available in formats other than the printed word, accommodating the diverse ways people study and learn.

Internet and Mobile Editions

The Book of Mormon can now be read on the Internet (scriptures.lds.org) and on mobile devices (mobile.lds.org). Currently, 21 languages are available online with more soon to come. Online cross-referencing and search features make it possible to study the scriptures in a different way, resulting in new insights.

Audio Editions

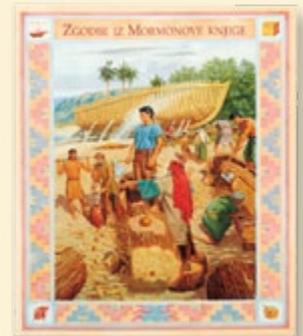
Currently, there are audio editions of the Book of Mormon in English, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish. You can download the recordings from scriptures.lds.org at no cost or purchase CDs through Distribution Services (store.lds.org). Select chapters are also available on audiocassette in Cakchiquel, Mam, Navajo, Quiche, and Tzotzil. Work is under way to produce audio editions in other languages.



Other Editions

Featuring colorful illustrations and simplified text, *Book of Mormon Stories* emphasizes visual learning for those who are learning to read. It is printed in more than 70 languages. *Book of Mormon Stories* is also available online at scripturestories.lds.org.

Also available through Distribution Services are a set of DVDs in American Sign Language, a large-print version (in English, Portuguese, and Spanish), and an English Braille edition.



COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON



What is the Book of Mormon, and how does it compare to the Bible?

The Book of Mormon is a book of scripture similar to the Bible. It is another testament of Jesus Christ.¹ The Bible principally discusses the lives and teachings of ancient Israel. The Book of Mormon contains the writings of several groups who came to the Americas, including a family who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. These people were also descendants of the house of Israel. Thus the Bible and Book of Mormon were written by people of the same heritage but in different parts of the world.

Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon is more than

a historical account. It contains “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9): the teachings, doctrines, and prophecies that testify of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that the Book of Mormon “tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent [the Americas] after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists, the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers,

Whether from friends, family, the truly interested, or the antagonistic, we all get asked questions about the Book of Mormon. Here are some possible responses.



and blessings, as were enjoyed on the eastern continent; . . . that the last of their prophets who existed among them was commanded to write an abridgment of their prophecies, history, etc., and to hide it up in the earth, and that it should come forth and be united with the Bible for the accomplishment of the purposes of God in the last days.”²

Members of the Church study both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. In fact, two out of four years of our Sunday School curriculum are devoted to studying the Bible. (For more on this topic, see pages 16, 24, and 52 in this issue.)



Who wrote the Book of Mormon?

Ancient prophets, such as Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Mormon's son Moroni, were its primary authors. Mormon compiled and abridged the records kept by prophets about their history, prophecies, and teachings. He also included some of his own experiences. Mormon engraved this record on bound sheets of metal—gold in color—which are often referred to as the golden plates.

After Mormon's death, Moroni finished the record and buried it in a hill to preserve it for our day. In 1823 Moroni appeared as an angel to Joseph Smith and showed him where the record was buried. Four years later Joseph was permitted to obtain the records. He "translated the record through the gift and power of God" into English from the ancient language it was written in.³ He then published and distributed the Book of Mormon. (For more on this topic, see pages 22 and 72 in this issue.)

Who else saw the golden plates?

What happened to the original record—the golden plates?

Joseph Smith obtained the plates in September 1827 and had them until the spring of 1829. When he wrote his history in 1838, he explained what happened to the plates: "When, according to arrangements, the messenger [Moroni] called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight" (Joseph Smith—History 1:60).

Who else saw the golden plates?

In addition to Joseph Smith, several other men and women saw the plates and testified of their existence. Eleven men in particular, known as the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses, recorded their testimonies of seeing the plates and, in the case of the Eight Witnesses, of holding the



plates. Their testimonies are included at the front of each copy of the Book of Mormon.

These men stand as powerful witnesses of the Book of Mormon, perhaps even more so because some of them became "for a time hostile to Joseph," affirms Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Nevertheless, they "testified to their death that they had seen an angel and had handled the plates. 'They have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man,' they declared. 'Wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true.'"⁴



Is there physical evidence that the Book of Mormon is true?

Although we don't base our faith on physical evidence, there is linguistic, historical, and archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon. For example, the idea of writing on metal plates was once ridiculed, but in recent years numerous examples of sacred writings on metal plates—some hidden in stone boxes—have been found.

Linguists have noted Book of Mormon words and phrases that sound awkward in English but make perfect sense in Hebrew and related languages that would have been known by the people of the Book

of Mormon—languages young Joseph Smith did not know.

But these kinds of evidences are not what convince us of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. It is a matter of faith and personal revelation.

How can I know the Book of Mormon is true?

The only sure way to know for yourself is through the power of the Holy Ghost. The last chapter in the Book of Mormon invites anyone who reads it, ponders it, and sincerely wants to know if it is true to ask Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. Those who take this approach will know by the power of the Holy Ghost that the book is true (see Moroni 10:3–5). Millions of members of the Church have prayed and know through the witness of the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true. (For more on this topic, see pages 4, 60, and 80 in this issue.)



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOOK OF MORMON

There is a wealth of information online in several languages that can help you learn more about the Book of Mormon and share that information with your family and friends.

- To read the Book of Mormon online, visit scriptures.lds.org/bm.
- To learn more about the Book of Mormon, to ask questions, or to chat with missionaries, go to mormon.org/book-of-mormon.
- To request a free copy, visit mormon.org/free-book-of-mormon.
- For more information, articles, and explanations, see lds.org/study/topics/book-of-mormon?lang=eng.

I'm confused by Revelation 22:18–19, which tells us not to add anything to the word of God.

One of our key beliefs is that God has always revealed His will to His children on earth and always will. We believe the Bible to be the word of God but don't believe it contains all the revelation that God has given or will give His prophets. Even today He continues to reveal His will through living prophets and apostles, the foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see Ephesians 2:20).

When the Apostle John penned the book of Revelation, it was not the last book of the Bible. The Old and New Testaments were not bound in a single book of scripture—now called the Bible—until the third century A.D.

In the same way, Deuteronomy 4:2 tells us not to add to the words of Moses. Of course, this verse, early in the Old Testament, does not

invalidate the rest of the Bible. Neither Moses nor John could have referred to altering a volume that did not exist yet; instead they warned against altering the true teachings of the gospel.

The Book of Mormon, which contains the fulness of the gospel, does not alter God's word but reaffirms it. (For more on this topic, see pages 24 and 38 in this issue.)

I have heard that changes have been made to the Book of Mormon since it was first published. What was changed and why?

The answer to this question depends on understanding a little about the Book of Mormon translation and publication process.

1. As Joseph Smith translated the golden plates by the power of God, he dictated the words to a scribe. The scribes occasionally made spelling and grammatical mistakes as they wrote down his words. For



How can I know the Book of Mormon is true?

example, in 1 Nephi 7:20 the words “were sorrowful” were transcribed as “ware sarraful.” The scribes weren’t uneducated, but spelling hadn’t been standardized at the time.

2. The original handwritten manuscript of the translation was then copied to make a new handwritten manuscript for the printer. At this stage, some spelling and grammatical errors were corrected, and punctuation was added. But some new errors also crept in as words were miscopied.

3. The printer did his best to accurately set the type. However, he occasionally introduced still other errors. For example, in Alma 57:25 he misread the word “joy” and instead typeset “foes.”

4. The Prophet Joseph Smith looked carefully at the first three editions of the Book of Mormon, and he continued to help make refinements and adjustments. But some errors weren’t found until later editions. In 1981 a printer’s

error in Alma 16:5 was finally corrected, changing “whether” to “whither”—making it conform to the original manuscript as the Prophet had translated it from the golden plates.

5. Other changes included new chapter and verse breaks and footnotes with cross-references.

Share a Copy

No matter what questions people ask about the Book of Mormon, the book is its own best defender. You can testify of the book, share a copy, and invite others to pray about it for themselves. If a person has a sincere heart and truly desires to know if the book is true, the Lord “will manifest the truth of it unto [that person] by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). ■

NOTES

1. See, for example, Boyd K. Packer, “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2002, 71; *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 62.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 64.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 60.
4. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 90.

A TESTIMONY, A COVENANT, AND A WITNESS

By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland
Of the Quorum of
the Twelve Apostles



The holy affirmations I have had regarding the Savior and His restored Church first came to me as a young man when I read the Book of Mormon. It was while reading this sacred record that I felt—again and again—the undeniable whispering of the Holy Ghost declaring to my soul its truthfulness.

Reading the book was the beginning of my light. It was the source of my first spiritual certainty that God lives, that He is my Heavenly Father, and that a plan of happiness was outlined in eternity for me. It led me to love the Holy Bible and the other standard works of the Church. It taught me to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to glimpse His merciful compassion, and to consider the grace and grandeur of His atoning sacrifice.

Because I learned for myself that the Book of Mormon is a true witness—another testament and a new covenant—that Jesus is the Christ, I also learned that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God. As my great-great-grandfather said in the early days of the Restoration, “No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so.”¹

To my first convictions have been added all of the other quickening moments and sanctifying manifestations that today give deepest meaning to my days, purpose to my life, and a solid foundation to my testimony.



*I bear witness
that the Book
of Mormon is a
new covenant,
a new testament
from the New
World to the
entire world.*

Now, I did not sail with the brother of Jared. I did not hear King Benjamin speak his angelically delivered sermon. I was not among the Nephite crowd who touched the wounds of the resurrected Lord, nor did I weep with Mormon and Moroni over the destruction of a civilization. But my testimony of this record and the peace it brings to the human heart—given to me through the whispering of the Holy Spirit just as it is given to you—is as binding and unequivocal as was theirs. I testify of this book as surely as if I had, with the Three Witnesses, seen the angel Moroni or, with the Eight Witnesses, handled the plates of gold.

I further testify that not one of us can come to full faith in this latter-day work and thereby find the fullest measure of peace and comfort in our times until he or she embraces the divinity of the Book of Mormon and the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it testifies. As Mormon said to Moroni in one of their most demanding times, so I say in our demanding times: “Be faithful in Christ. . . . And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power . . . be, and abide with you forever” (Moroni 9:25–26).

The Book of Mormon is the sacred expression of Christ’s great last covenant with mankind. It is a new covenant, a new testament from the New World to the entire world. The light I walk by is His light. His mercy and magnificence lead me—and you—in our witness of Him to the world. ■

NOTE

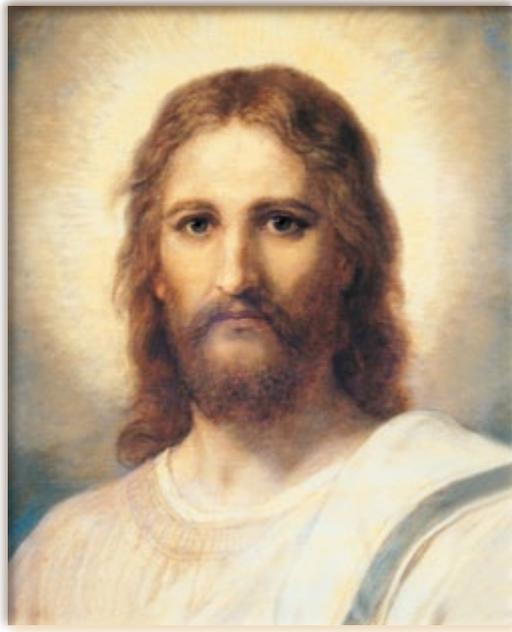
1. George Cannon, quoted in “The Twelve Apostles,” in Andrew Jenson, ed., *The Historical Record*, 6:175.



And He Did Heal Them Every One, by Gary Kapp

*“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. . . .
“ . . . For I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.
“And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the
multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their*

*afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their
dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and
he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him”
(3 Nephi 17:7–9).*



“Now . . . all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and . . . they teach all men that they should do good.

“And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day” (2 Nephi 33:10-11).