

NEPHI ANSWERED MY QUESTION

I was born in the Church, but my family rarely attended while I was growing up. Despite this, I always found a way to get to church on my own. In the early 1970s I was serving as a seminary teacher in Pittsburg, Kansas, USA. When we studied the Book of Mormon, I challenged the class—myself included—to read the entire book. One day while reading, I received a powerful testimony that it is true.

A few years later my parents came for a visit. While they were visiting, my father brought up some subjects we disagreed on that I didn't want to discuss with him. He persisted, however,

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until I was close to losing my temper. I excused myself for a moment and went to my bedroom, where I knelt and prayed to Heavenly Father and asked Him for help in dealing with my father. The answer came in the form of a thought: the account of Nephi and the broken bow.

I turned to the story in 1 Nephi chapter 16. I thought about Nephi being humble enough to go to his father, who had murmured against the Lord, to ask where he should go to obtain food (see verse 23). With that thought, I felt prompted to go to my father and ask for his guidance as well as for a priesthood blessing.

When I returned to the living room and asked Dad for a blessing, his heart was touched and he began to cry. “Let me think about it,” he said.

Over the next few days he fasted and prayed. Then, before Dad and Mom left, he gave me a beautiful blessing.

After that experience, Dad began to turn his life around. On their way home from Kansas, my parents visited Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri, USA, where my father had a powerful spiritual experience.

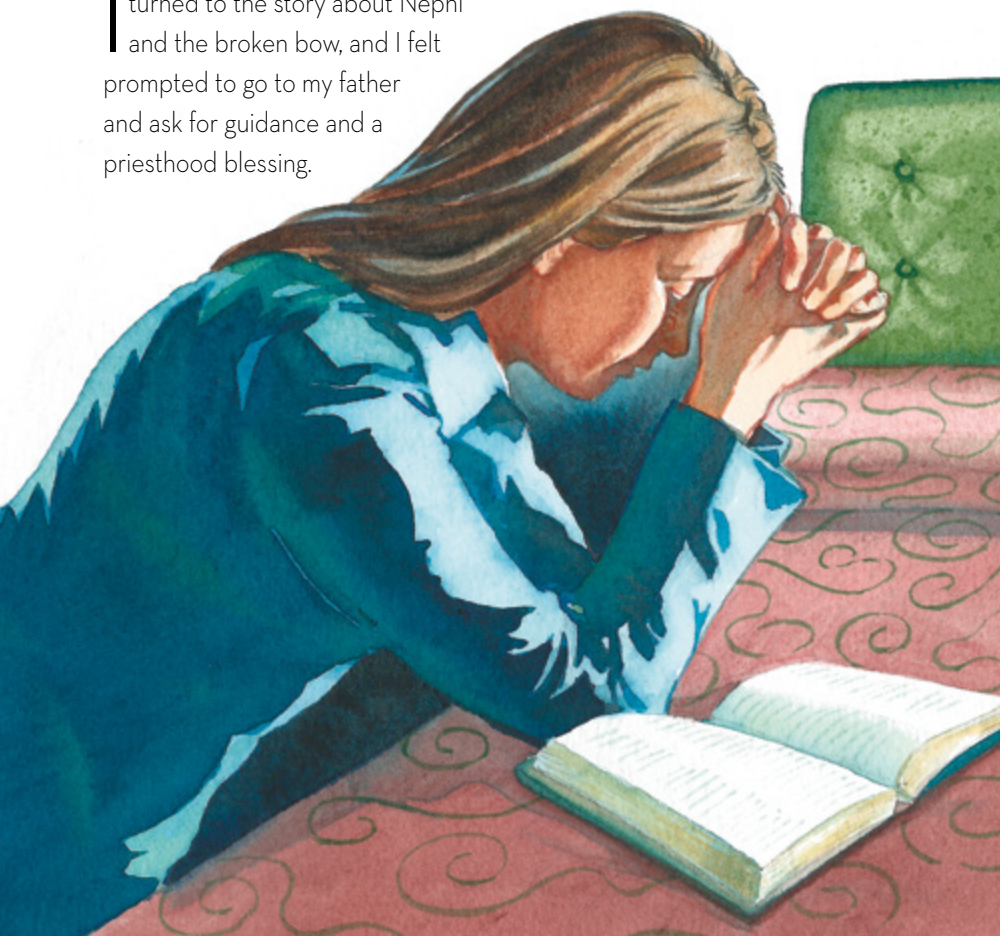
Before long, my parents became active and committed Latter-day Saints. Over the next several years, they served two missions together—one in Germany and one on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. Dad was serving as a stake patriarch when he died in 1987.

The Lord knew that Dad was a good man. It was through the Book of Mormon that I received my answer, and it was through my acting on that prompting that Dad came to know he needed to be a leader for our family. This experience changed everything for us.

I have learned that the Book of Mormon truly is another testament of Jesus Christ and that it is written for our day. I know that I can turn to it whenever I am discouraged and in any situation. The answers are there.

Indeed, the “words of Christ will tell [us] all things what [we] should do” (2 Nephi 32:3). ■

Judy M. Smith, Kansas, USA



TWO LETTERS FROM MOM

In 1996 my wife and I had two sons, ages four and seven. We were a typical busy young family. Late one night my wife made time to write a letter to my nephew, Glen, who was then serving a mission in Finland.

For some reason, she felt she needed to write a long letter—one filled with details about what each family member was doing, where they were spiritually, what was happening in my Church calling and in her Church calling, the story of her conversion, her feelings about missionary work, and her testimony of the gospel.

It was a great letter, but I wondered if my nephew really needed that much information. Later she wrote him again.

Six years later, while I was serving as bishop and our boys were 10 and 13, my world suddenly changed. On January 2, 2002, my wife, only 42 years old, died of a heart attack.

At home I tried to continue following the principles in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”¹ I found that I could preside and provide, but I fell short in giving my sons the nurturing they needed. Nevertheless, we moved on as best we could.

In June 2012 my younger son, Sam, then serving a full-time mission in the Colorado Denver South Mission, sent me an email. “Something really cool happened this week,” he wrote. “I got two letters from Mom.”

He explained that he had received a package from his cousin Glen that

included the letters she had written to him while he was in Finland.

“He told me that these two letters Mom sent him on his mission were really written for me while on my mission,” Sam wrote. “So he sent them to me, and they were incredible!”

Learning of his mother’s conversion, testimony, and feelings toward missionary work was “a great moral support at this time,” Sam wrote. He said he planned to photocopy the letters and send the originals home.

“I had no idea that you had ever served as an elders quorum president or as the ward mission leader,” Sam wrote. He learned that when he was four years old, he “would jump on the bed after prayers and shout ‘I want to be a missionary.’”

The letters were powerful, personal, and poignant when written in 1996, but given the events of subsequent years, they had become even more so.

Then he added something he had learned about his mother: “Mom must have known that I would become a wrestler because she said that I could charm the socks off a pro wrestler. :)”

I was moved to tears by Sam’s reaction to the letters. A few weeks later he mailed them home. They were powerful, personal, and poignant when written in 1996, but given the events of subsequent years, they had become even more so.

My wife’s letters had strengthened my nephew, but like “casting bread upon the water” (see Ecclesiastes 11:1), they returned years later to bless her missionary son and widowed husband. ■

Ken Pinnegar, California, USA

NOTE

1. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.



I SAW YOUR MOTHER'S FACE

One Sunday in the summer of 2002, I woke up thinking of my mother, who had recently passed away. I was visiting my old home ward in Pacific Palisades, California, USA, where my mom had worshipped for almost 50 years.

I knelt in prayer to tell the Lord how much I missed her and to ask for a spiritual experience that day.

That afternoon I planned to attend the rededication broadcast of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple at the stake building in Santa Monica,

California. Unfortunately, I arrived too late to be admitted to the session. I returned to my car and headed back onto the freeway.

As I drove, I heard a voice say, "Randi, go check on Mary!" Mary is a dear friend of our family and a devout member of another faith. She and her daughter Natasha lived next door to my Aunt Ruby for more than 25 years. Because they had no family nearby, they became part of ours. After my aunt passed away in 1984, my mother often dropped by to visit Mary, always

bringing a small gift or something she had baked.

At first I ignored the prompting. I couldn't just drop in unannounced, and I didn't have my cell phone to call her. Suddenly the voice came again, louder this time: "Randi, go check on Mary!" This time I heeded the counsel, although I barely had enough time to make my exit off the freeway.

When I arrived at Mary's, she greeted me but looked ill. I could tell she had been crying. I asked her what was wrong. She responded that she had been quite sick and in pain from a neck injury. Also, she was extremely low on food. She said she had been too ill to walk to the pharmacy or the market.

When I asked her why she hadn't called someone in our family, she said, "I prayed and asked Heavenly Father to send someone to help me."

I told her that Heavenly Father had heard her prayers and sent me. We hugged, and then she told me something I'll never forget. She said, "When you arrived on my doorstep, I saw your mother's face, not yours."

I immediately felt my mother's sweet spirit near me, and I felt prompted to serve just as my mother would serve. Her life, after all, was filled with serving others.

I hope that I never forget the importance of heeding the voice of the Spirit and the example my mother set for me of serving others. ■

Randi Reynolds Allen, California, USA



When I arrived at Mary's, she greeted me but looked ill. I could tell she had been crying.

YOU SAVED MY MARRIAGE

When I did construction work in Oman from 1979 to 1986, I worked for the ministry of defense. The ministry gave me projects located in the most inaccessible section of the country, and most of the time I was the only supervisor looking after the projects. I was also the only member of the Church working for the ministry.

One day at our company headquarters, I ran into an electrical engineer who, as he had in the past, made negative comments about the Church. I tolerated his comments because I was usually at headquarters for only a short time before I was away on another project.

Later, however, this man was assigned to inspect electrical work at projects being constructed along Oman's border with Yemen. We were scheduled to spend about an hour together before he flew back to headquarters.

When he arrived, he inspected the work and found everything to his satisfaction. During our time together, I centered our conversation on work and then drove him to the landing strip to see him off.

It was monsoon season, and the landing strip, located on a mountain plateau 6,000 feet (1,830 m) above the Indian Ocean, was covered with clouds. My co-worker's flight would be delayed.

My heart was pounding as I realized that I would have to wait in the

car with this man. After I said a silent prayer, a thought came into my mind to ask the man about his family, especially his wife.

I did so, and the engineer suddenly burst into tears, saying that he had just received word that his wife was seeking a divorce. The word *love* immediately came into my mind, and for the next two hours we talked about the love we should have for others and the love the Lord Jesus Christ has for all of us. Before I knew it, we had become friends. As we ended our conversation, the clouds cleared and the engineer boarded his flight. Soon I heard that he had resigned his position and returned home.

A few years later while on an outing with Aaronic Priesthood young men in Plymouth, a city on England's southern coast, I noticed a man making his way

toward me. As he approached, he said, "I thought it was you, Neil."

It was the electrical engineer from Oman. The next words he spoke have remained in my heart: "Thank you for talking to me about love that day on the mountain. You saved my marriage, and I will be forever grateful."

We shared a few more words, and he left. I haven't seen him since.

I will always be grateful for the inspiration I received in Oman. It blessed the engineer and gave me strength to maintain my Church beliefs when I was alone and far from home. ■

Neil S. Roy, Yorkshire, England

My heart was pounding as I realized that I would have to wait in the car with a man who had made negative comments about the Church.





By Elder
Gerrit W. Gong
Of the Seventy

BECOMING

Perfect in Christ

We sing with our children, “I feel my Savior’s love, the love he freely gives me.”¹

His atoning love, freely given, is as “milk and honey, without money and without price” (2 Nephi 26:25). Infinite and eternal (see Alma 34:10), the Atonement invites us to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).

Understanding the Savior’s freely given atoning love can free us from self-imposed, incorrect, and unrealistic expectations of what perfection is. Such understanding allows us to let go of fears that we are imperfect—fears that we make mistakes, fears that we are not good enough, fears that we are a failure compared to others, fears that we are not doing enough to merit His love.

The Savior’s freely given atoning love helps us become more forgiving and less judgmental of others and of

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ourselves. This love heals our relationships and gives us opportunities to love, understand, and serve as our Savior would.

His atoning love changes our concept of perfection. We can put our trust in Him, diligently keep His commandments, and continue in the faith (see Mosiah 4:6)—even as we also feel greater humility, gratitude, and dependence on His merits, mercy, and grace (see 2 Nephi 2:8).

In a broader sense, coming unto Christ and being perfected in Him

places perfection within the eternal journey of our spirit and body—in essence, the eternal journey of our soul (see D&C 88:15). Becoming perfect results from our journey through physical life, death, and resurrection, when all things are restored “to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23). It includes the process of spiritual birth, which brings “a mighty change” to our hearts and dispositions (Mosiah 5:2). It reflects our lifelong refinement through Christlike service and obedience to the Savior’s commandments and our covenants. And it recognizes the perfecting relationship between the living and the dead (see D&C 128:18).

The word *perfection*, however, is sometimes misunderstood to mean never making a mistake. Perhaps you or someone you know is trying hard to be perfect in this way. Because such perfection always seems out of reach, even our best efforts can leave