



FROM GENERATION

What will you do with the spiritual knowledge offered to you?

BY ADAM C. OLSON
Church Magazines

If you've read the first verse of the Book of Mormon, you already know something about 17-year-old Juan Ordoñez and his 15-year-old sister, Mayra, of the Pachitol Ward, Patzicía Guatemala Stake.

Juan, Mayra, and their seven older brothers and sisters were "born of goodly parents," who have passed on skills the family needs to survive, such as the family trades of farming and tortilla making, as well as the language of their ancestors, Cakchiquel.

But those aren't the only ways their family is like Nephi's. Juan and Mayra have parents who understand that it is as important to pass on a "knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God" (1 Nephi 1:1) as it is to pass on physical survival skills.

While many teens don't have Lehi- and Sariah-like parents to pass on the gospel (see sidebar on page 47), for Juan, Mayra, and others who do, the question is: Will we be Nephi-like learners, who listen, apply gospel truths,

and pass them along as well? Or will we be like Laman and Lemuel, who heard the same information but didn't want to find out the truth for themselves and couldn't pass it on?

How Is It Passed On?

Juan can't remember how old he was when he started working with his dad in the fields. "The children would start going with me when they were small," Juan's dad, Joel, says. "They learned by watching and then doing what they could, depending on their strength and capacity."

Mayra learned to make tortillas the same way, watching her mom and sisters until she was old enough to pitch in and help.

But plowing, planting, and tortilla making aren't the only things being passed from one generation to the next. As Mayra's mother, Carmela, molded and shaped tortillas, she was also giving shape to her daughter's character. As Brother Ordoñez prepared, planted, or cultivated the ground, he was doing the same for Juan's heart.

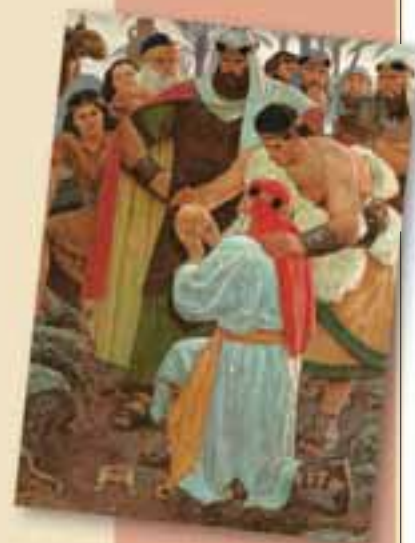
As the family spent time together, the children could see not just how their parents worked but how they lived. And when the opportunity arose, their parents made the gospel a topic of conversation while they worked.

But observing—and even doing— isn't always enough. In the Book of Mormon's first family, Laman and Lemuel heard the same things that Nephi heard from their father, and they too even went and did what their father asked. But they were missing something important, something that Juan and Mayra have—a desire to learn.

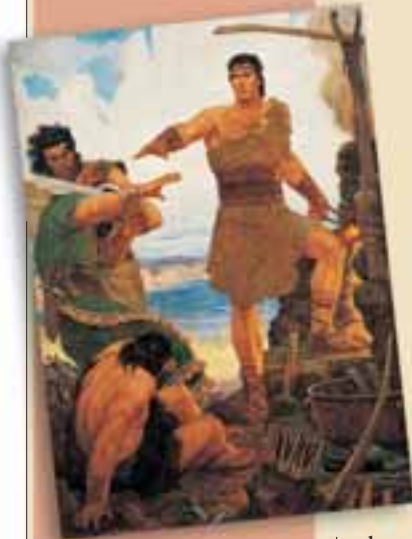


The things that Juan (bottom left) and Mayra (left) are learning from their parents (opposite page) are important not only to their physical survival but to their spiritual survival as well.

TO GENERATION



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM C. OLSON; FAR RIGHT: DETAIL FROM LIAHONA, BY ARNOLD FRIBERG



If Juan and Mayra don't learn these important things for themselves, how will they be able to pass them on to their children?

How Much Do You Want It?

Juan and Mayra live in Patzicía, a Cakchiquel community a few hours from Guatemala City.

Because many of those who buy their tortillas and seek their plowing services don't speak Spanish, it was important to Juan and Mayra to learn Cakchiquel.

But not everyone feels that way. Cakchiquel isn't taught in the schools. The language has been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. However, in each succeeding generation there are many who don't want to learn it or feel they don't need it.

A desire to know is key in more than just learning a language. Lehi wanted his family to know for themselves that the gospel is true, but not all of his family wanted to



know (see 1 Nephi 8:12, 17–18). In addition to hearing his father and doing what he asked, Nephi wanted to know for himself (see 1 Nephi 10:17). Laman and Lemuel, though they had obeyed their father, had done it grudgingly (see 1 Nephi



GAINING A TESTIMONY

"A testimony is not genetic. That is, we are not born with a testimony. Likewise, a testimony does not pass automatically from generation to generation without the examples of good teachers."

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Teaching by Faith," *Liahona*, Sept. 2003, 16; *Ensign*, Sept. 2003, 26.

2:11–12). They weren't interested in making the effort to find out for themselves, saying, "The Lord maketh no such thing known unto us" (see 1 Nephi 15:8–9).

Don't Break the Chain

As their children grew, Brother and Sister Ordoñez

often wondered if their children would listen. Would they obey? Would they want to know, like Nephi? Would they pass the gospel on to *their* children?

It may be too early to tell. But Brother and Sister Ordoñez have reason to hope.

Their older children are starting to pass gospel truths on. And the younger children are recognizing the importance of passing the gospel on too. "It's hard sometimes to take counsel from your parents," Juan says. "But I'm grateful for their help."

"They didn't just teach me how to cook



beans and make tortillas," Mayra says. "They have taught me the right path—to follow God." ■

LIVING THE GOSPEL ON YOUR OWN

What if your parents aren't passing on the gospel? Maybe they haven't accepted it, or they aren't living it. Being the first in your family to accept the gospel or the only one to actively live it can be lonely. But it doesn't mean you are alone.

There are others like you in the Church and in the scriptures. When Alma the Elder was a young man, he was the only one who accepted the gospel Abinadi taught. He was chased out of the city for defending the truth. But because he was bold enough to live and teach the gospel, soon



others believed. His children were blessed by his faith, and it helped to establish a multigenerational chain of believers whose examples and leadership were a great strength to the Church.

If you have felt alone in living the gospel, take heart. There were others like you then, and there are many like you now.

“Perhaps not since the early days of the Church has the first generation constituted such a large percentage of total Church membership as it does

today,” said Elder Paul B. Pieper of the Seventy in the October 2006 general conference. “Your faith and testimonies are a great strength and blessing to others. . . .

“ . . . As a first-generation member, you occupy an important place in your family. You are an example to your family of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Whether they are members of the Church or not, as you live the gospel at home, those around you will feel the Savior’s love through you. They know that you are engaged in something good, even if they do not understand it or have enough faith to accept it. Be



patient and kind, pray each day to know how you can serve them, and the Lord will help you and bless you to influence your family for good. By being consistently good and upright, you will establish patterns of faithfulness and righteousness. Those patterns will shape your life, but more importantly, they will become a standard for your family and posterity” (“The First Generation,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 11–12).

So whether you are part of the first generation or the fifth, how you live can help create or continue a long chain of generations that enjoy the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.