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An Unexpected Answer



By Amy Carpenter

I've noticed a lot of times when I've picked up a Church magazine or listened to the testimonies of others, people often share experiences when they've been overcome by the Spirit after asking Heavenly Father a particular question, specifically if the Book of Mormon is true. Spiritual experiences are amazing; I love reading about them. However, I think many people get the wrong impression that if they don't receive an overpowering response to their question that somehow their testimony must not be strong enough. In my experience, the Spirit more often comes in a quiet, soft way rather than a metaphorical lightning bolt of truth.

Last summer the youth in our ward were challenged to read the entire Book of Mormon. Eventually the summer came to an

THE STILL SMALL VOICE

"We should recognize that the Lord will speak to us through the Spirit in his own time and in his own way. . . . In most cases, 'his own way' is not the thunderous interruption or the blinding light, but what the scriptures call 'the still small voice' (1 Kgs. 19:12; 1 Ne. 17:45; D&C 85:6). Some have misunderstood this principle. As a result, some have looked exclusively for the great manifestations that are recorded in the scriptures and have failed to recognize the still, small voice that is given to them. This is like making up our minds that we will learn only from a teacher who shouts and that we will refuse to listen to even the wisest teaching when it comes in a whisper.

"We need to know that the Lord rarely speaks loudly. His messages almost always come in a whisper."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit," *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 7.

end, and I finished the Book of Mormon. As I kneeled to pray and asked if the book was true, I remember thinking that this was it—I would finally have the experience that everyone seems to talk about where they are overcome by the Spirit.

The truth is, when I prayed, I didn't feel that way. At first I was a little upset. Why hadn't I received such a witness? Was I not worthy? But I soon realized that though many people might feel the Spirit confirming truth to them very strongly when they pray about the Book of Mormon, there are many others who don't have that same experience. Just because you may not receive an extremely strong confirmation does not mean the Book of Mormon isn't true or that your testimony is not as strong as someone else's. It simply means that the Spirit can speak to people in different ways and at different times.

For me, this experience taught me that we don't always receive answers in the way we expect. I thought I would feel an overpowering spiritual impression after I prayed about the Book of Mormon—but I didn't. Honestly, I believe I already knew it was true.

Though I may not have felt the Spirit very strongly at that time, I knew I had felt it while reading about Alma's conversion and about Ammon and his brothers bringing thousands of Lamanites to the gospel, and about Christ teaching the Nephites after His Resurrection. I realized that feeling the Spirit while reading different parts of the Book of Mormon also confirmed to me that the entire book was true.

I believe this same message is applicable to any part of the gospel. The things we know can help us accept the things we may not fully understand. I know that this gospel is true, and I know that we can all gain testimonies if we work at it. **NE**