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GOD IF IT IS TRUE.



I NEEDED TO KNOW

The summer before my freshman year of high school, my family moved from a small town in California, USA, to northern Virginia, right outside of Washington, D.C. As I walked through the high school doors on the first day, the hallways were jam-packed with students going every which way to get to their classes. Over 2,000 students were crammed into an old, overcrowded building, but I felt alone as I walked the halls. I didn't feel like I fit in, I struggled in my classes, and I began to think things would never improve. To make matters worse, as I attended church and seminary, and as I participated in gospel discussions at home, it also became obvious to me that I didn't have a testimony of my own.

Lying in bed one night, I thought that if the gospel really is the source of peace, hope, and joy, then I needed to know for myself if it was true. I figured the best way to do that was to read the Book of Mormon and accept Moroni's invitation to ask God with a sincere heart, with real intent and faith in Christ, if it is true (see Moroni 10:4–5).

As my freshman year came to an end, I began to seriously read the Book of Mormon for the first time in my life. Throughout the summer, I read and prayed every day. It took a while, but about a month or two into my sophomore year, I had read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover.

One night, I knelt by my bed and asked Heavenly Father if the Book of Mormon and the Church were true. I was sure I was going to get an answer, but if I was expecting some kind of miraculous spiritual manifestation, I was disappointed because nothing happened. I felt confused and frustrated. Why hadn't Heavenly Father answered my prayer? Despite my disappointment, I continued to study and pray.

One day, I explored the woods behind my house. It was fall, and some of the leaves had already turned red and gold. The air was cool, the sky was blue, and beams of sunlight shone through the trees. I found a big rock by a stream to sit on, and as I watched the water flow by, I opened my heart to God again.

Suddenly I had an impression, as if God were asking me, "Eric, what has happened in your life since you started reading the Book of Mormon and praying every day?"

Immediately, I thought of my friends. I had made friends

that summer who are still dear to me today. My anxiety about school had subsided, and my grades had improved. I realized that I was a lot happier and that I had strength beyond my own to face the challenges that had been so difficult the year before.

Then it happened.

I didn't hear a voice, but the Spirit filled my heart as these words came to my mind: "Of course, it's true!" An overwhelming feeling of peace, joy, and assurance came over me. I knew I had finally found my answer.

"It's true! It's true!" I said to myself over and over again as I walked home.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) once said, "There is a power in the [Book of Mormon] which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book."¹

That day in the woods of northern Virginia, I came to know that President Benson's words are true. I realized what a difference the Book of Mormon had made in my life, and I also realized that because the Book of Mormon is true, then Joseph Smith is a prophet, we have a prophet today, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's kingdom once again established on the earth.

If you don't have a testimony, or if you feel that you're losing your testimony, don't give up! A testimony didn't come to me right away. You might have to wait too, and that's OK!

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) said a testimony "is a heavenly bestowal when there is the right effort."² Testimonies grow gradually through experiences as we obey God's commandments, study, pray, learn, serve, and share what we know with others.

When I remember my special spiritual experience, a scripture always comes to mind: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy" (Doctrine and Covenants 11:13).

I am grateful for the undeniable influence of the Holy Ghost that told me, "Of course, it's true!"

I have been blessed ever since. **NE**

NOTES

1. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," Oct. 1986 general conference.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Testimony," Apr. 1998 general conference.