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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.