

MY IRON ROD

By Katie Maudsley

I love Lehi's vision of the tree of life, recorded in the Book of Mormon.

Like Lehi and his family, we all have had to press forward through mists of darkness to reach the tree and its exceedingly desirable fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:7, 10–14). We are able to reach the tree only by clinging to the iron rod (see 1 Nephi 8:19–24, 30).

I passed through this journey myself.

Although I was raised in the Church, when I moved away to college I felt bombarded by doubts. How did I know that Jesus Christ was my Savior? How did I know that Joseph Smith had seen God the Father and Jesus Christ? How did I know that the Book of Mormon was true? I knew I had had spiritual experiences, but somehow I couldn't remember how they felt.

A Blessing from my Brother

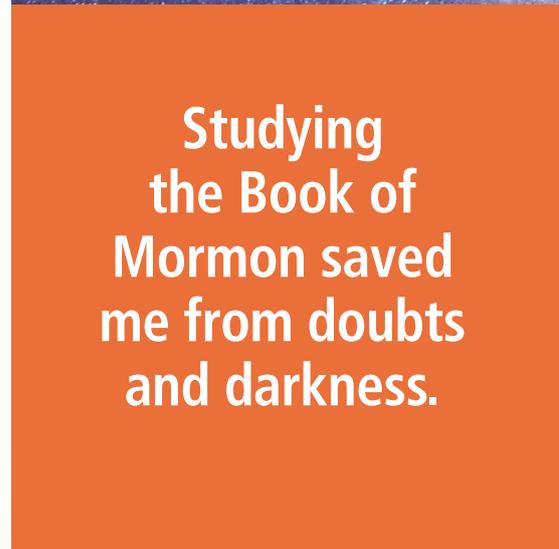
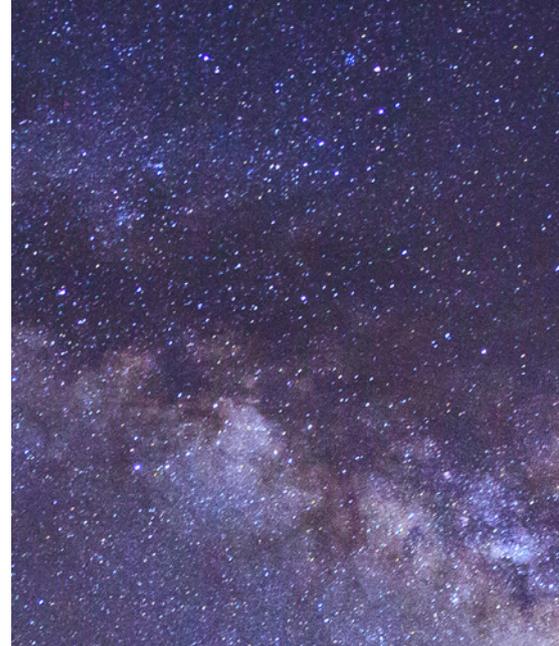
Despite the darkness that surrounded me, I continued to read the Book of Mormon and pray, but I didn't feel that my prayers were being

answered. I wanted an instantaneous, powerful spiritual experience.

I went to my older brother for help. I told him about my feelings and how I repeatedly told myself I believed in Christ in an effort to overcome my confusion. He told me that I should study and search to find out what I believed and why.

As I followed his advice, I found myself thinking hard about the reasons for the commandments. I began to ponder the purpose of life and what makes us happy. And I came to realize some things—that we are meant to have families, that certain substances are damaging, and that some choices bring happiness while others lead to self-destruction. Nevertheless, I felt incapable of breaking through the massive clouds of uncertainty that pressed down on me.

I asked my brother for a blessing, hoping to hear that my trial would be removed. Instead, I was told in the blessing that Heavenly Father



Studying
the Book of
Mormon saved
me from doubts
and darkness.



How do I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior?
How do I feel the Holy Ghost?
What is the purpose of life?

knew exactly what I needed to experience in mortality.

Light Penetrated the Darkness

As I continued to pray and study daily, little rays of sunshine gradually penetrated the darkness, giving me enough strength to press forward. I remember reading Alma's words: "Even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you" (Alma 32:27). I felt weak and that I did not have the faith to believe. However, I did have the "desire to believe," and that was enough to begin.

Finally, one night I went outside to observe the stars for a school assignment. I looked up and thought, "There are so many advancements in human knowledge, yet no scientist can create a star." That starry night, I came to feel that Someone greater than all of us existed and had created those stars.

Through these months of struggle, I came to know that the Book of Mormon is true because it saved me

from the powerful darkness that surrounded me. It was the iron rod that helped me stay on the path. Knowing that the Book of Mormon was true, I knew that Joseph Smith had restored the true Church. I realized that God gives us commandments to make us happy, and I came to know that Jesus is the Christ because of the comfort I felt from knowing I could turn to Him for succor.

This experience was a stepping-stone toward my serving a mission, and now, years later, I continue to draw on what I learned. I know that if God had taken this trial away from me, as I had wanted, He would have withheld an even greater blessing—experiencing for myself the truth of the restored gospel. The spiritual assurance I sought did not come immediately, but I held on and continued to read the Book of Mormon and pray, a journey that eventually led me to the fruit I wanted in my life. ■

The author (pictured left) lives in Utah, USA.



THE PROFOUND POWER IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

"If you are struggling, confused, or spiritually lost, I urge you to do the one thing I know will get you back on track. Begin again to prayerfully study the Book of Mormon and live its teachings every day, every day, every day! I testify of the profound power in the Book of Mormon that will change your life and strengthen your resolve to follow Christ. The Holy Ghost will change your heart and help you see 'things as they really are' [Jacob 4:13]."

Elder Kevin W. Pearson of the Seventy, "Stay by the Tree," *Ensign*, May 2015, 116.

How do I know that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ?
How do I know the Book of Mormon is true?
How do I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet?