

Book of Mormon in the BATTLEFIELD

By Eric Carter

I was raised in a home with parents who loved the Lord and gave me every opportunity to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, as a teenager I made the decision to leave the Church. Not only did I decide to leave, but I vowed I would never again have anything to do with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Convinced my family felt great disappointment, I enlisted in the United States military rather than face their disapproval. I embraced the military lifestyle—working hard but playing even harder. I became selfish and gave no thought to the welfare of my soul. I fell into Satan’s trap of believing that I was beyond saving and therefore should give up on being good. For over a decade I heaped the burden of sin onto my shoulders.

Realizing My Mortality

Despite my riotous living, I worked hard and was eventually trained as a medic. My job took me throughout the world. By this time I had a family of my own, but I felt that time away from them and a certain amount of stress were acceptable consequences of doing what I enjoyed. So I thought nothing of it when in 2007 I received an assignment to Afghanistan that would last several months, believing that my family and I were accustomed to long absences.

Initially, my time in Afghanistan was exactly what I expected: work and lots of it. Our unit was always on call, and I was the only medic. I thought I adapted well, but eventually exposure to death and the destruction of war began to take its toll. While I continued to perform

my duties as required, fear ruled my thoughts. I feared death and the justice of God, and I questioned whether I would see my wife and children again. The sins that I had so flippantly committed were now unbearable, but I had nowhere to turn for relief.

Fear and the weight of my sins nearly broke me. It took a particularly close brush with death before I gave in to the promptings of the Holy Ghost and the teachings of my parents from my youth. Despite my vow to never return to church, I carried a Book of Mormon with me on every deployment. (My mother had sent me a military scripture set when I entered basic training.) For over a decade this book accompanied me around the world but was never opened. One night I finally opened the Book of Mormon and began to read.

One day my fears caught up with me. Could the Book of Mormon be my solution?

Relief through the Word of God

The change was not instant, but over several weeks, as I read the scriptures daily, I recognized that fear no longer ruled my life. I still had no intention of returning to church and still believed the lie that I was beyond saving, but I was willing to read. At some point I read Alma 32:26–27, which forever altered my life:

“Now, as I said concerning faith—that it was not a perfect knowledge—even so it is with my words. Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge.

“But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.”

I had no faith or hope, but I had the “desire to believe” that I could be forgiven of my sins through the

Atonement of Jesus Christ. I began to “experiment” as directed in the scriptures. It took many months after I returned home for me to gain a testimony of the gospel and follow the steps required to receive forgiveness of my sins.

I still suffer consequences from some of my unrighteous decisions,

but I no longer carry the burden of past transgressions. Today I know and testify that Christ atoned for my sins, that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and that following the precepts taught within its covers will guide us in all we should do. I am so grateful for that. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.

