

# Ensign



## Enhancing YOUR Study OF THE Book of Mormon

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THE  
CHURCH  
IS HERE

# Leipzig Germany

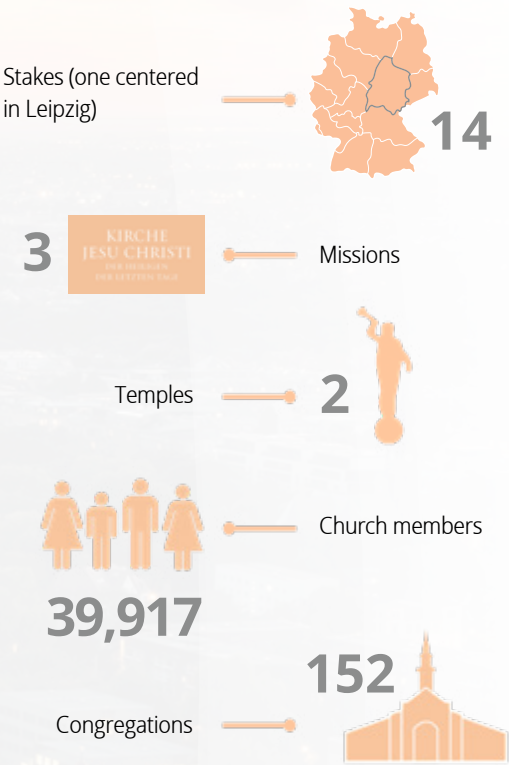




PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

In Leipzig in 1519, Martin Luther engaged in a debate that strengthened the Protestant Reformation, helping prepare the world for the Restoration.

Here are a few facts about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Germany today:



**1843** First congregation organized in Darmstadt.

**1961** Three stakes created.

**1985** Freiberg Temple dedicated in what was then East Germany; rededicated in 2016.

**2019** Frankfurt Temple rededicated in October.



Learn more about the Church in various locations at [history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/GlobalHistories](https://history.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/GlobalHistories).



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## Looking to the Future, Lifted by the Past



For most of the world, the new year is a time to consider the future. But it's also a time to learn from the past. At this intersection of where we've been and where we're going, we find opportunities to grow.

In that spirit, not only does this issue feature some exciting new changes for the future, but it also explores our past in order to understand our part in what is to come.

This year we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the First Vision. The First Presidency and others have prepared a series of articles that examine the past and help us to shape our future. This month President M. Russell Ballard, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, helps us understand our place in the ongoing Restoration of God's kingdom and His efforts to prepare us for the Second Coming (see page 14). The time line on page 22 offers additional historical and spiritual perspective.

Looking to the future, this issue also provides resources for the Church's new effort to support children and youth (see pages 52 and 58) and launches the Book of Mormon course of study for individuals and families (see the contents page for articles with a "Come, Follow Me Support" icon).

We hope the *Ensign* continues to be a valuable resource in supporting your home-centered gospel study as we move forward together, propelled by the progress of the past.

Adam C. Olson

Managing Editor


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Photograph by  
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 *Come, Follow Me*  
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



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# January Digital-Only Articles

Available in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)



## Come, Follow Me Resources

For a list of articles and activities (organized by week) that can enrich your family's study of the Book of Mormon, see "Come, Follow Me: Book of Mormon—Support Articles and Activities" in the digital version of this issue (available in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

### Find More

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### Saints, Volume 2

Read chapter 6, "Seven Thunders Rolling," in the digital version of this issue. The complete book will be released in February.



### There Are No Coincidences By Charlette (Charlie) Williams

A young adult reflects on how the hand of God led her to the restored gospel and how her inquisitive mind helped her identify with Joseph Smith.



### How the Book of Mormon Opened the Heavens For Me

By Jessica Patterson Turner

A young adult shares how the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ has changed her for the better.

### SUBMISSIONS

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# JESUS CHRIST IS THE . . .

HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

CREATOR

# SAVIOR

LAMB OF GOD

# SON OF GOD

*Only Begotten Son*

REDEEMER

# MESSIAH

GOOD SHEPHERD

“Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the **HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL**; and he employeth no servant there” (2 Nephi 9:41).

“He shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the **CREATOR** of all things from the beginning” (Mosiah 3:8).

“If it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our **SAVIOR**, . . . it shall be well with you in the day of judgment” (Mormon 7:10).

“The **LAMB OF GOD** is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and . . . all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved” (1 Nephi 13:40).

“Because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the **SON OF GOD**” (Mosiah 15:2).

“Whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine **ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**, unto a remission of his sins” (Alma 12:34).

“I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy **REDEEMER**; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men” (2 Nephi 2:3).

“[Lehi] testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a **MESSIAH**” (1 Nephi 1:19).

“The **GOOD SHEPHERD** doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ” (Alma 5:38).

## Rachel Lighthall

California, USA



*Walk around the ashes and rubble where Rachel used to live, and of course you notice all that's gone. But even after the fire that destroyed Paradise, California, you'll notice Rachel's faith as she speaks of how she has seen God's hand in her life.*

**RICHARD M. ROMNEY, PHOTOGRAPHER**

Everyone who believes in God has seen His hand in this fire. You probably couldn't prove to somebody that there's a God because of one huge miracle, but God has brought about a million small miracles here in Paradise. If you believe in God, you can see His hand everywhere. Even though it's been challenging, it has also been miraculous. God has helped us learn exactly what we need to learn.

God has worked with me for years to prepare me for this situation. I've had other "disasters" in my life that have helped me know that God is beautifully guiding my life.

There's nothing hard I go through that doesn't have perfect and beautiful purpose and meaning. I've noticed that when I've allowed God to teach me, I've always learned from my challenges. God allows us to go through these challenges so we can come to trust Him and love Him. I know that when things get hard, He's always there.



### DISCOVER MORE

See more about Rachel's journey of faith, including additional photos, in the digital version of this article in the Gospel Library app or at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E1206](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/E1206).

President Russell M. Nelson shares his experience meeting fire victims in Paradise, California, and shares what matters most in life at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/1207](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/1207).





# Ministering Principles

## GATHERING ISRAEL THROUGH MINISTERING

*Ministering is an opportunity to follow the prophet's counsel to gather Israel.*

**P**resident Russell M. Nelson has invited us to help gather Israel—“the most important thing taking place on earth today.”<sup>1</sup>

For those who want to be a part of this work of gathering Israel, ministering can be a wonderful opportunity. Because the Lord’s work of salvation is all one work, ministering is an inspired way to change people’s lives. Whether we are ministering to less-active members or inviting them to help us as we serve those outside of our faith, ministering provides opportunities to gather Israel.



## Bearing One Another's Burdens

*“Our sheep may be hurting, lost, or even willfully astray; as their shepherd, we can be among the first to see their need. We can listen and love without judgment and offer hope and help with the discerning guidance of the Holy Ghost.” —Bonnie H. Cordon<sup>2</sup>*

“I quietly observed the woman sitting next to me on my 7:00 a.m. flight home. She had ordered an alcoholic drink before the plane had taken off, and when she asked me if I was married, my **negative judgments** of her began piling up.

“‘Yes, I have four children and four grandchildren,’ I answered with some pride.

“She then told me something that changed everything. Her husband had passed away the previous day after being in a coma for five days. Though she was an emergency physician, she had been unable to save him after he collapsed while on vacation.

“I was ashamed that my quick judgments were so far off the mark. What could I say to her? As I gathered my composure, I felt Heavenly Father **pour out His Spirit** so I could minister to this woman and share some of the precious truths of the gospel.

“I **learned** that though she didn’t attend any church, she believed in Jesus Christ and read the Bible. When I asked if she knew about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she replied that she knew very little. I shared with her a general conference message by Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) titled, ‘The Eternal Blessings of Marriage,’ and then **testified** of eternal families and how Heavenly Father knows and loves each of us individually. I found that she was going to Hawaii, USA, where she had grown up, and I **encouraged** her to visit the Laie Hawaii Temple.

“We parted in the Salt Lake City, Utah, airport. I am so grateful that the Lord was able to use me, in spite of my faults, to reach a sister in need of love and comfort.”

John Tippetts, Utah, USA



### PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER

#### “Negative judgments”

Being quick to judge can keep us from seeing divine potential (see Matthew 7:1).

#### “Pour out His Spirit”

Trust God’s promise to give us what to say in the very moment (see Doctrine and Covenants 100:5–6).

#### “Learned”

Ask what others believe, listen with compassion, and treat their beliefs with dignity.

#### “Testified”

Look for opportunities to share testimony of how the Lord has worked in your life (see Mosiah 24:14).

#### “Encouraged”

Invite them to act on truth so the Holy Ghost can testify to them (see John 7:17; Moroni 10:5).



## PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER

### “Visited me every month, despite her allergy to dogs”

How can you show that you care about those you minister to more than other things? (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:44).

### “Questions”

Asking the right questions can help provoke self-assessment. Remember that our ministering has a purpose that goes beyond being social.<sup>4</sup>

### “Waiting for me”

Everyone should feel welcome (see 3 Nephi 18:32).

### “There at my side on my journey back”

Our support can make a significant difference to those who have stumbled to return to the Savior and be healed (see Hebrews 12:12–13).

## Rescuing Returning Members

*“With love as the motivation, miracles will happen, and we will find ways to bring our ‘missing’ sisters and brothers into the all-inclusive embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” —Jean B. Bingham<sup>3</sup>*

“I had been inactive for at least six years when my husband and I moved to a new town. My new Relief Society president visited me, asking if she could send a sister to visit me. With some trepidation, I agreed. This sister **visited me every month, despite her allergy to dogs**—and I have a very affectionate dog! Her ministering continued for two years, and it had an enormous impact on me.

“Though her visits were usually purely social, occasionally she asked me **questions** that led us to spiritual conversations. These made me a little uncomfortable, but they prompted me to decide whether to go forward in the gospel or stay where I was. This decision was a struggle for me, but I chose to visit with the sister missionaries.

“On the day I went to attend sacrament meeting for the first time in six years, I was scared to go inside. When I walked into the church, my ministering sister was **waiting for me**, and she walked with me into the chapel. Afterward, she walked me back to my car, asking me what she could do to help me best as I grew closer to the Savior.

“My ministering sister’s time and love helped guide me back to activity, and I hold her efforts as one of the greatest gifts ever given to me. I’m so grateful she was **there at my side on my journey back** to the Savior’s Church.”

Name withheld, British Columbia, Canada

## Ministering and Gathering

*“In whatever ways seem natural and normal to you, share with people why Jesus Christ and His Church are important to you. . . .*

*“ . . . Your role is to share what is in your heart and live consistent with your beliefs.” —Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf<sup>5</sup>*

Ministering and sharing the gospel go hand in hand. Here are some ways we can gather our friends and neighbors while we minister—or minister while we gather our friends and neighbors:

- **Serve together.** Look for opportunities to invite a friend or neighbor to join you in ministering to someone’s needs. Ask them to help you prepare a meal for a new mother, do yard work for an elderly neighbor, or clean the home of someone who is sick.
- **Teach together.** Consider inviting a friend or neighbor who doesn’t attend often to host a missionary lesson in their home for someone meeting with the missionaries, to support you in hosting a lesson in your home, or to go with you to a lesson in someone else’s home.

- **Reach out.** In addition to ministering to those to whom you are assigned, you can also reach out to others when you see a need. Offer to give them a ride to church meetings. Invite their children to youth or Primary activities. What other ways could you minister and gather? ■

### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), [HopeOfIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://HopeOfIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
2. Bonnie H. Cordon, “Becoming a Shepherd,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 76.
3. Jean B. Bingham, “Ministering as the Savior Does,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 106.
4. See “Ministering Principles: The Purpose That Will Change Our Ministering,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2019, 8–11.
5. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Missionary Work: Sharing What Is in Your Heart,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 17.

### Use the resources the Church has provided

The Church offers many resources for members to help them with sharing the gospel. You can browse through the “Missionary” section in the Gospel Library app, watch the “Come and See” videos (at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/12011](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/12011)), and visit [ComeUntoChrist.org](http://ComeUntoChrist.org) for ideas on how to gather Israel in our communities.



# Fun Family Study



## Super Listener Word-a-Thon

**December 30–January 5 (Introductory Pages of the Book of Mormon)**

An important part of family study this year will be listening intently to the words of Book of Mormon prophets and the resurrected Savior as He visits the Americas.

- 1 Write the following on index cards, one word per card: *Mormon, Lord, Testimony, God, Jesus, Joseph, Plates, Prophet.*
- 2 Pass out the cards (one or two per person) and instruct family members to lift the card high when they hear the word.
- 3 Read the introduction to the Book of Mormon aloud.

**Discussion:** Why is it important to listen to and follow the teachings of the Savior and Book of Mormon prophets? What goals should we set as a family this year concerning the Book of Mormon?

Consider these activities during family scripture study or home evening.



## Courageous Hot Potato

**January 6–12 (1 Nephi 3:7)**

When Nephi's brothers Laman and Lemuel complained that the Lord required hard things (see 1 Nephi 3:5), Nephi said he would "go and do" whatever the Lord commanded (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

- 1 Have everyone sit in a circle.
- 2 Give someone a small, soft object (beanbag, tennis ball, balled-up sock, etc.).
- 3 Play "Nephi's Courage" on the Sacred Music app (no. 120 in the *Children's Songbook*) while family members pass the object around the circle. Pause the music at a random moment.
- 4 Whoever is holding the object when the music stops will explain one faithful act they will "go and do" this week.

**Discussion:** What are some things the Lord has asked us to do that seem hard? How can we be more faithful in our responses to those commandments?

## FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Find more home evening ideas in this month's *Friend*.



### Collaborative Art Museum

January 13–19 (1 Nephi 8)

Lehi's vision of the tree of life is a wealth of gospel learning (see 1 Nephi 8).

- 1 Give everyone a paper and pencil.
- 2 Assign each person to draw only one of the following:
  - Tree and fruit (1 Nephi 8:10–12)
  - River (1 Nephi 8:13–14)
  - Iron rod (1 Nephi 8:19)
  - Strait and narrow path (1 Nephi 8:20)
  - Great and spacious building (1 Nephi 8:26–28)
- 3 Pass the papers to the left. Add people to the drawing.
- 4 Pass again. Add captions or word balloons.
- 5 Pass again. Color with crayons or markers.

**Discussion:** What do the various parts of the vision represent? (see 1 Nephi 11:21–23; 12:16; 15:23–24; John 14:6; 1 Nephi 11:36). What do we need to do to reach the tree and find joy?



### Visionary Word Scrambler

January 20–26 (1 Nephi 11–15)

Because Nephi “desired” to know the truth, and “believing” he could (see 1 Nephi 11:1), his eyes were opened and he saw many wonders in vision.

- 1 Write the following scrambled words and scriptures on cards:
  - gnivri (1 Nephi 11:15)
  - lewtve stlesasp (1 Nephi 12:9)
  - etiglne (1 Nephi 13:3)
  - nma (1 Nephi 13:12)
  - pogsle (1 Nephi 13:34)
- 2 Read the scriptures to unscramble the words.

**Discussion:** Why did the Lord reveal so much to Nephi? We may not have visions as Nephi did, but we can open our eyes, minds, and hearts to revelation. Share a time when you have had a revelatory experience.



### Shipbuilding 101

January 27–February 2 (1 Nephi 17)

Before Nephi could start building a ship, he asked the Lord where he should go to find ore to make tools (see 1 Nephi 17:9–10).

- 1 Gather items in your home to use as “shipbuilding materials” (for example: blocks or pots or sofa cushions).
- 2 Hide the materials throughout the room.
- 3 Give your family instructions on where the materials are hidden.
- 4 Bring the materials to the shoreline (middle of the room) and give instructions on how to build a ship.

**Discussion:** Why did Nephi need help from the Lord? What are some hard things that the Lord asks us to do? What attributes did Nephi possess that made the ship a reality? How can we as a family develop those same attributes?

*Selected activity ideas contributed by Jocelyn Christensen, Camille Gillham, Mitzi Schoneman, and Brenda Slade*



THE FORCES OF LIGHT AND DARK. BY WARREN LUCH, COURTESY OF CHURCH HISTORY MUSEUM  
PHOTOGRAPH OF SACRED GROVE BY TROY CORBETT





# HOW THE LORD *Prepared the World* FOR THE RESTORATION



**By President  
M. Russell  
Ballard**

Acting President  
of the Quorum  
of the Twelve  
Apostles

In countless ways, the Lord prepared the world for the Restoration of His gospel to bless individuals, families, communities, nations, and the world.

**T**he Lord prepared the world for the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ long before the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith in 1820. In fact, the Lord’s preparation to restore the fulness of His gospel in the last days began before the earth was created.

In the October 1918 revelation known as Doctrine and Covenants section 138, received by President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), we learn that the early leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and many “*other choice spirits . . .* were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:53; emphasis added).

President Smith saw “that they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:55). He added that “they, *with many others*, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:56; emphasis added).

Following the creation of the earth, ancient “prophets since the world began” talked, sang, dreamed, and prophesied about the future “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21; see also Luke 1:67–75).

*One of the most important ways the Lord prepared the world for the Restoration was a manuscript revolution that coincided with the invention and use of papyrus and parchment. Below: Papyrus page of oldest existing New Testament manuscript.*

Speaking specifically about the first prophet of the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ, President Brigham Young (1801–77) observed, “The Lord had his eye upon [Joseph Smith], and upon his father, and upon his father’s father, and upon their progenitors clear back to Abraham, and from Abraham to the flood, from the flood to Enoch and from Enoch to Adam. He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its fountain to the birth of that man. [Joseph Smith] was foreordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation.”<sup>1</sup>

As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the First Vision this year, it may be appropriate to remember the numerous women and men over the course of centuries who were inspired by the Lord as He prepared the world for the Restoration that began when the Father and the Son appeared to young Joseph Smith, who was seeking forgiveness and direction in 1820.

As we look back in history, we will discover

that many revolutions swept across the world preparing people for the Lord’s Church to be restored in the last days.<sup>2</sup>

### THE MANUSCRIPT REVOLUTION

One of the most important ways the Lord prepared the world for the Restoration of His gospel was a manuscript revolution that grew out of the invention and use of papyrus and parchment.<sup>3</sup>

Parchment, made from animal skin, was used in ancient times and the early modern period as a writing surface.<sup>4</sup> The earliest known copies of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and many important later copies of the Bible were preserved on parchment.<sup>5</sup>

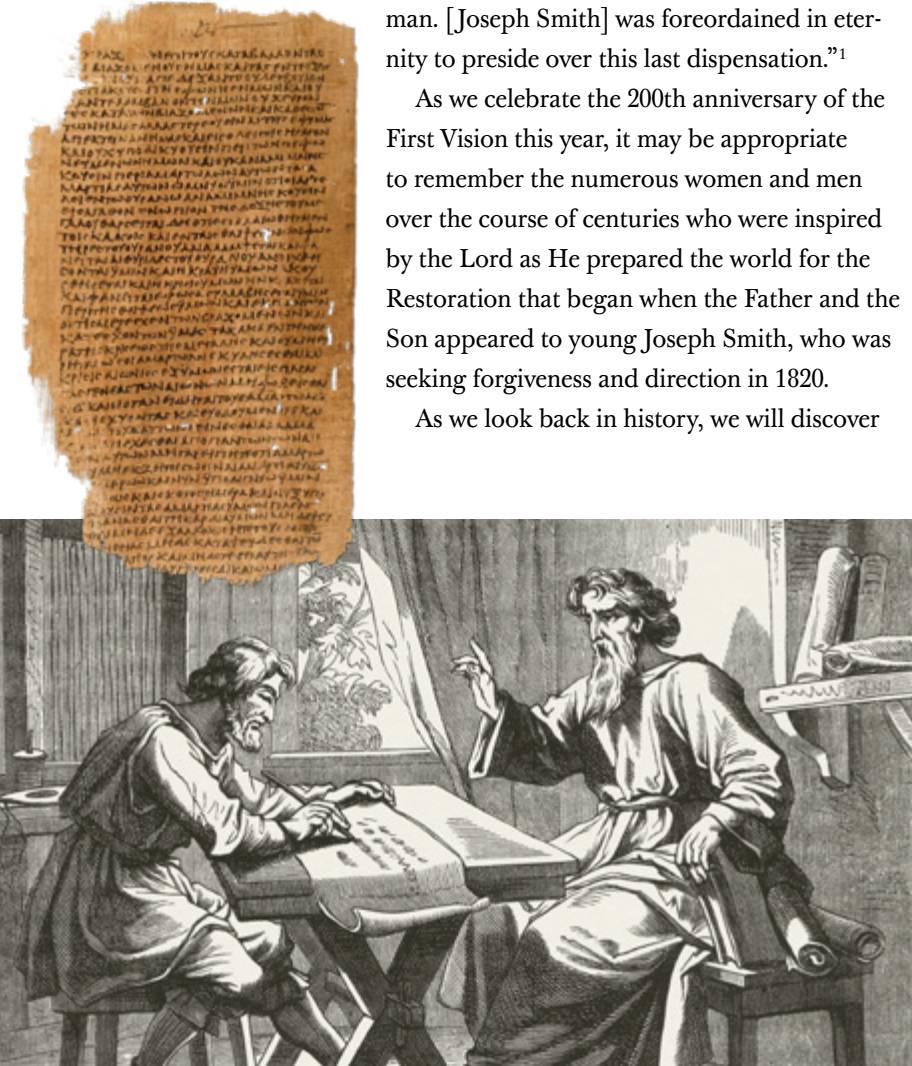
Papyrus, made from the pith of the papyrus plant, is another material used in ancient times as a writing surface. The earliest copies of the New Testament books are preserved on papyrus.

These writing materials made it easy, compared to writing on stone or clay tablets, for scribes to record God’s words received through inspired prophets and apostles. Using these writing materials, many countless and unknown scribes diligently copied, transmitted, and preserved sacred writings in multiple copies so that the flames of faith were never extinguished.

For example, I recently learned that “there are over one hundred manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew written in Greek,” with many other biblical manuscripts produced during the Middle Ages on parchment.<sup>6</sup>

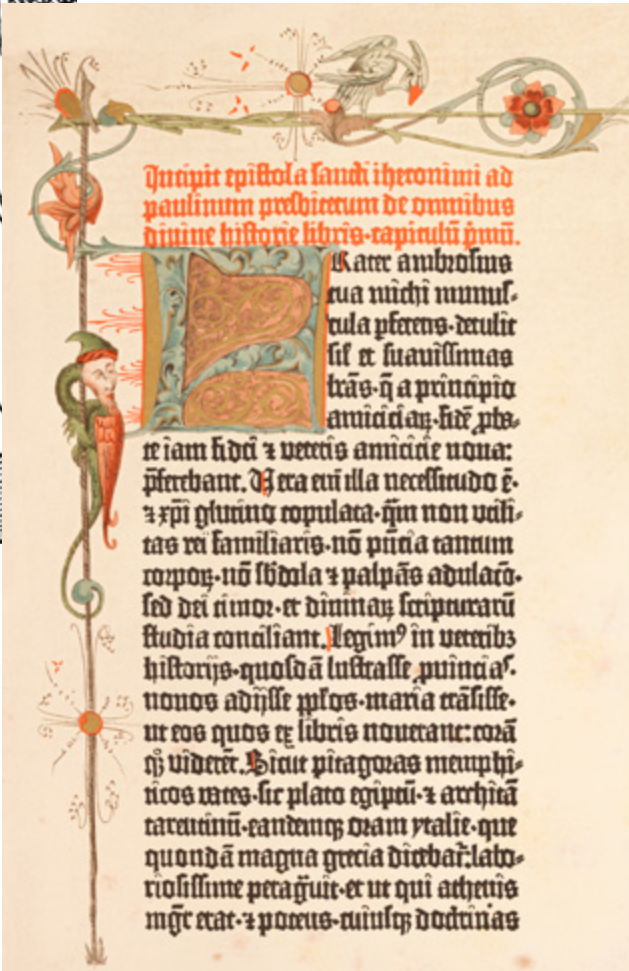
### THE PRINTING REVOLUTION

As I have often taught, the Lord inspired another monumental step in preparing the world for the Restoration of His saving gospel when a





Johannes Gutenberg was an instrument in the Lord's hand to increase knowledge, understanding, and religious faith in the world. Far right: Engraving page of Gutenberg Bible.



German goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg, adapted printing technologies first introduced in China to produce the printing press in 1439 or 1440.<sup>7</sup>

Gutenberg was an instrument in the Lord's hand to increase knowledge, understanding, and religious faith in the world.<sup>8</sup> His invention ignited a printing revolution that changed the world forever by facilitating the wide circulation of ideas and information that became "agents of change."<sup>9</sup>

Scholars estimate that about 30,000 books existed in Europe at the time Gutenberg published the Bible on his printing press. Within 50 years after his invention, more than 12 million books were found in Europe.

The Protestant Reformation utilized Gutenberg's invention to spread its ideas and to bring the Bible to the common people in ways that no one of an earlier generation ever could have imagined.

### THE LITERACY REVOLUTION AND THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

The printing revolution fed and was fed by an increase in literacy and a growing thirst among the common people of Europe to read the sacred words of scripture in their own languages.

The Latin Bible, translated from Greek and Hebrew in the fifth century AD, had been the official Bible of the western Catholic church for 1,000 years.<sup>10</sup> For centuries many Europeans learned about the Bible mainly through sermons given by priests.

But in the 15th and 16th centuries, religious reformers created new Bible translations in the common languages of Europe, such as German, Italian, English, Spanish, and French. These translations were typically based on the original Hebrew and Greek texts—not on the Latin Bible. They enabled tens of thousands of readers to experience the stories and teachings of the Bible in their own language.

Martin Luther, born in 1483, was one of the leaders in publishing the Bible in the language of his day. His German translation was published in

ILLUSTRATION OF 16TH-CENTURY PRINTING HOUSE, FROM GETTY IMAGES  
BIBLE PAGE FROM GETTY IMAGES

1534—a pivotal year in the history of western Christianity.<sup>11</sup> Luther’s belief in the power of the scriptures helped fuel the Reformation. Other reformers promoted universal education so that everyone could have the opportunity to read the scriptures for themselves.

Some religious leaders were concerned that widespread reading of the Bible would lead to heresies, the undermining of the church’s authority, and even civil unrest. They responded by imprisoning, torturing, and even putting to death many who were discovered translating the Bible into the common language of the day or owning common-language translations of the scriptures.

William Tyndale, born about 1494, came upon the scene during Martin Luther’s courageous work on the German translation of the Bible.<sup>12</sup> While still a young man, Tyndale conceived the idea of making a new and better

English version of the Bible based on the original languages of Hebrew and Greek.

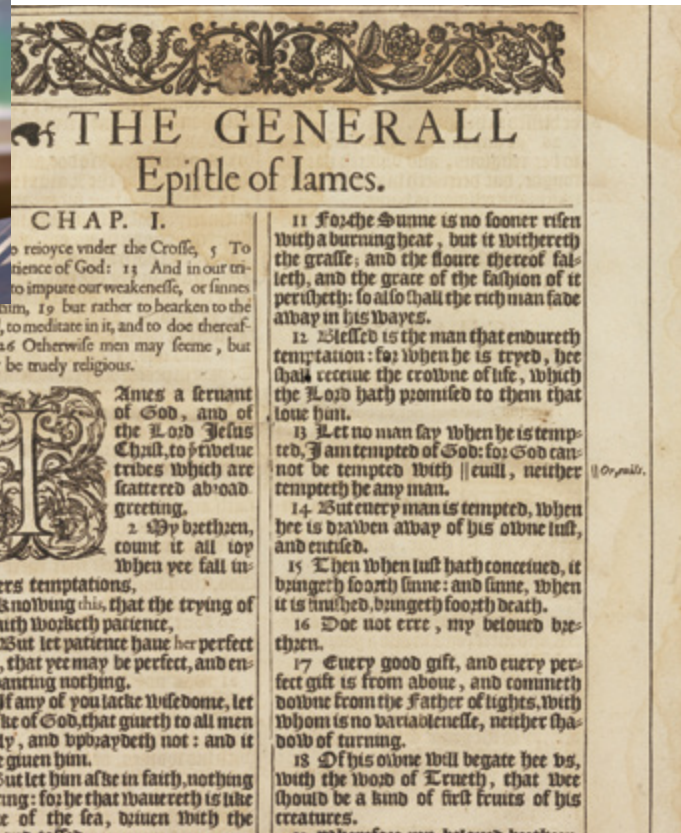
About 1523 he sought help and encouragement from the Catholic bishop of London to produce such a version but was vigorously rebuffed. Because a prohibition against translating the Bible had been passed by the convocation of Oxford in 1408, Tyndale needed official permission to proceed without interference.

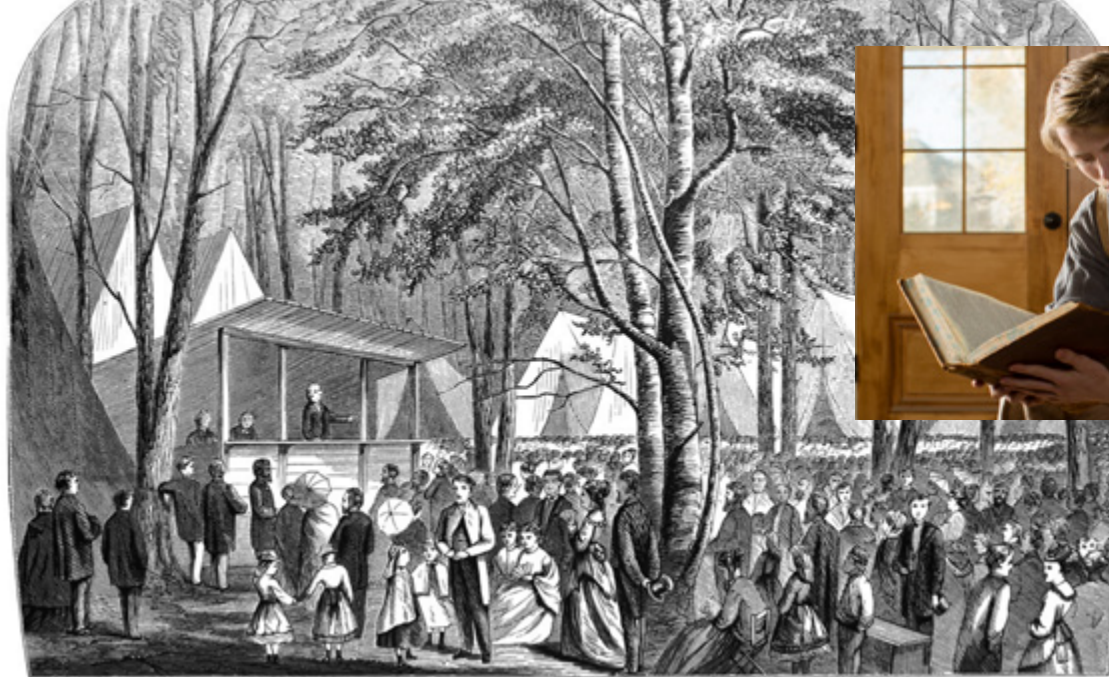
Dedicated to the task of translating the Bible into English, Tyndale secretly began his work and finished translating the New Testament in 1525. Printed in Cologne, Germany, Tyndale’s translation was smuggled into England, where it was being sold in early 1526.

Eventually, Tyndale, like many other men and women who were put to death for wanting the common people to have access to the scriptures



*Eventually, William Tyndale, like many other men and women who wanted the common people to have access to the scriptures in their own language, was put to death for the cause of Jesus Christ. Right: Page from the original King James Bible.*





*As the Lord raised up His Prophet, He inspired men and women to invent technologies so the gospel could go forth to all the world.*

in their own language, was strangled while tied to the stake in early October 1536.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, his English translation lived on as his words and phrases and entire sections of his translation were incorporated into the King James Version.<sup>14</sup>

The King James Version, published in 1611, was officially adopted by the Church of England and later influenced the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in several significant ways.<sup>15</sup> It was the most widely read English Bible at the time of Joseph Smith’s birth in 1805. By then most families, including that of Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith, owned a Bible and read from it on a regular basis. In fact, many people learned to read by hearing it read at home and by studying it themselves.

### **THE POLITICAL AND COMMUNICATION REVOLUTIONS**

The printing, translation, and literacy revolutions prepared the way for political and technological revolutions that swept across Europe and the Americas between the 17th and 19th centuries. The changing political climate in Europe and America gave people greater freedom to choose their own religious path. Religious freedom was one of many results of the political revolutions that occurred during this period.

The Lord also began to “pour out [His]

spirit upon all flesh” (see Joel 2:28; Joseph Smith—History 1:41), including on those who were prepared to dream of new transportation and communication technologies that would move His Restoration forward in dramatic ways.

As the Lord raised up His Prophet, He inspired men and women to invent technologies, such as canals, telegraphs, railroads, and steam engines, so the gospel could go forth to all the world.

In countless other ways, the Lord prepared the world for the Restoration of His gospel to bless individuals, families, communities, nations, and the world.

### **GUIDING THE SMITH FAMILY**

As we consider how the Lord prepared the world for the Restoration, we should always remember that much of what He accomplished was through the lives of individuals—ordinary men and women who, in some cases, accomplished extraordinary things.

Many individuals and families in countries around the world were prepared to receive the message of the Restoration. These included the Prophet’s parents, Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith, two deeply spiritual individuals who were raised in a culture that taught them to love Jesus Christ and study the Bible.

For years, Joseph and Lucy had experienced financial, health, and other setbacks in New England, in the northeast corner of the United States. By 1816, when they lost their crops because of the worldwide climate change caused by the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, Joseph and Lucy had little choice but to give up on New England and make a courageous decision to leave the safety net of family, friends, and community.

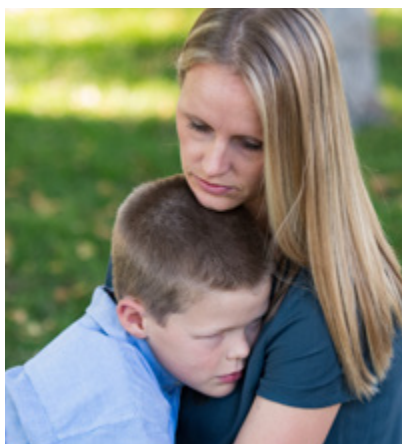
As volume 1 of the new history of the Church states: “Joseph Sr. loved his wife and children dearly, but he had not been able to provide them

much stability in life. Bad luck and unsuccessful investments had kept the family poor and rootless. Maybe New York would be different.”<sup>16</sup>

In many ways, the Smith family’s failures in New England pushed them to western New

York, where religious excitement increased and inspired Joseph Smith Jr. to seek the Lord in his quest for forgiveness and direction. It was also where the gold plates lay hidden, waiting for him to locate, translate, and publish them.

personal life histories can provide a lens to see how the Lord’s hand is manifest in our lives. In a revelation given in 1831, the Lord warned the world, “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save



*The Lord is able to make us strong, teach us new lessons, and prepare us through failures and setbacks for a much different future than we imagine.*

York, where religious excitement increased and inspired Joseph Smith Jr. to seek the Lord in his quest for forgiveness and direction. It was also where the gold plates lay hidden, waiting for him to locate, translate, and publish them.

### **RECOGNIZING THE LORD’S HAND IN OUR LIVES**

As the Lord did with the Smith family failures, He is also able to make us strong, teach us new lessons, and prepare us through failures and setbacks for a much different future than we imagine.

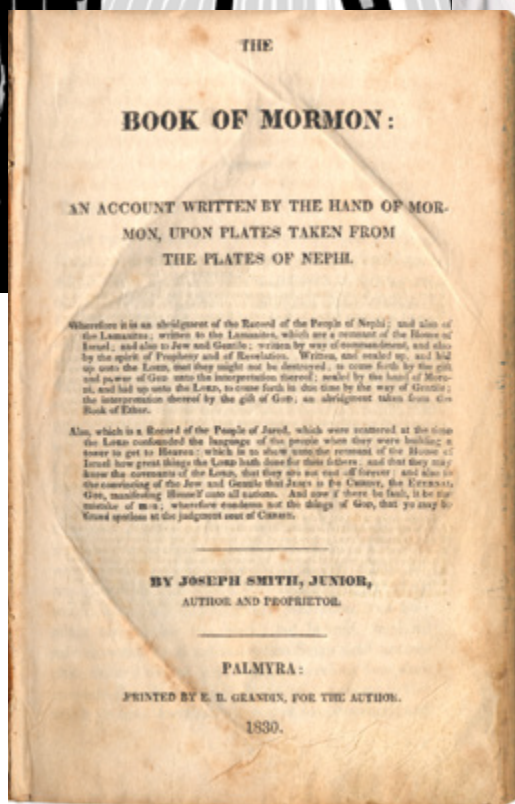
As we consider how the Lord’s hand was manifested in the lives of the Smith family, we need to recognize that His hand is also manifested in each of our lives. Looking for the hand of the Lord in our lives takes spiritual sensitivity and, in many cases, time and perspective. Fortunately, patriarchal blessings, personal journals, and

those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments” (Doctrine and Covenants 59:21).

Our willingness to obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the two great commandments to love God and our neighbor as ourselves, will be enhanced as we look for and acknowledge the hand of the Lord in our lives and His hand in preparing the world for the Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is “a marvelous work and a wonder” (2 Nephi 25:17).

The Lord is now preparing the world for His Second Coming, just as He prepared the world for the Restoration of His eternal gospel. Again, His hand is visible not only in the events of historical change but also in the lives of individuals.

When Joseph Smith went into the grove we now call sacred, he was seeking forgiveness and direction in his life.<sup>17</sup> In one sense, He was



The Lord is now preparing the world for His Second Coming, just as He prepared the world for the Restoration of His eternal gospel. Left: Title page of an 1830 Book of Mormon.

#### NOTES

1. Brigham Young, in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 544; see also Brigham Young, "Remarks," *Deseret News*, Oct. 26, 1859, 266.
2. Transportation, communication, engineering, and medical advances are a significant part of the Lord's preparation for the Restoration of His gospel and Church.
3. See L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 4th ed. (2013).
4. For example, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, official Acts of the British Parliament, Torah scrolls used in Jewish synagogues, and diplomas from some universities.
5. See Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins, *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2010) and Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (2005).
6. Thomas A. Wayment, *The New Testament: A Translation for Latter-day Saints, A Study Bible* (2019), 2.
7. See Diana Childress, *Johannes Gutenberg and the Printing Press* (2008).
8. See, for example, M. Russell Ballard, "The Miracle of the Holy Bible," *Ensign*, May 2007, 80–82.
9. See Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1980), 703.
10. See James Carleton Paget and Joachim Schaper, eds., *The New Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol. 1, From the Beginnings to 600* (2013); see also vols. 2–4.
11. This fourth-century Latin translation became the Catholic church's official version; see Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death* (1999).
12. See David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (1994).
13. Tyndale's dead body was then burned at the stake.
14. William Tyndale's English translation, although unacknowledged, is preserved in the 1611 King James Version of the Bible.
15. See David Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (2011).
16. *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (2018), 6.
17. See "First Vision Accounts," Gospel Topics, topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
18. See Joseph F. Smith, in M. Russell Ballard, "The True, Pure, and Simple Gospel of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, May 2019, 29.

responding to the Lord's inspired invitation recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

I testify that in the very beginning, the Lord's hand prepared the world for the Restoration of the "true, pure, and simple gospel" of Jesus Christ, the "saving doctrines of Christ" that are available to all God's children.<sup>18</sup> I also testify that the Lord's hand is in our individual lives inviting us to follow Him, serve others, and love Him as He prepares the world for His glorious Second Coming. ■



# SEEING THE LORD'S HAND

An overview of events leading up to the Restoration and Second Coming



**T**he Lord Jesus Christ redeems Heavenly Father's children one by one, bringing grace and salvation to each person who turns to Him individually. He also desires to lift cultures and nations so that people can enter into and keep sacred covenants. When people are receptive, He pours out His Spirit to prepare people's minds and hearts to receive His word (see Alma 16:16). He works through those who will heed His voice, removing their stumbling blocks and magnifying their efforts (see 1 Nephi 13).

In the history of human affairs, we see that some advancements directly helped further God's work while others improved the conditions or accelerated the means by which it rolls forth. In a number of ways, we can see the Lord's hand preparing the world for the Restoration of the gospel and for His Second Coming.

This time line contains some milestones in that preparation. It highlights events in religious history as well as progress that influences the conditions in which the Restoration of the gospel takes place.

For instance, efforts to translate and publish God's word are included, as well as developments that help spread the gospel: technological advancements in communication, transportation, health, and record keeping, as well as advances in personal and religious liberty. Of course, these events occurred against the familiar backdrop of human frailty and conflict that casts a constant shadow over human history.

With relation to the restored Church, significant historical events are noted, as well as other items that highlight the growth of the Church and the continuing Restoration. These include missionary work, temple building, and efforts to care for the poor and needy.

**Late 2nd century** Christians begin calling a collection of accounts of Jesus's life plus the original Apostles' teachings "the New Testament." Eventually it is combined with the Old Testament into a volume called "the Bible."

**AD 30-33\*** Jesus Christ teaches His gospel and organizes His Church.

**33\*** Jesus Christ is crucified and resurrected.

## AD 30-90

## 200

**33-90\*** Peter and the original Apostles travel extensively to preach the gospel.

**1st century** As foretold, early Church members struggle with strife and divisions and abandon gospel covenants.

**60-90\*** Original Apostles die, many violently. Priesthood leadership structure deteriorates. Variations appear in ordinances.



**3rd century** Paper production is established in China and spreads through Asia and, later, the Islamic world. It reaches Europe by the 11th century, displacing parchment and vellum.

**383-405** Jerome and others translate the Bible into common Latin using Hebrew texts and older Latin translations with references to Greek sources. The translation is known as the Vulgate.

**325-787** A series of church councils are held to resolve disputes over doctrine, practices, and authority. These are known by their locations (Nicea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, etc.) and the statements or creeds they produced.

**421** Moroni seals up the record of ancient American peoples to come forth in the Lord's own due time.



\* Dates from the earliest Christian period are approximate.





**4th–16th centuries** With great difficulty and sacrifice, translations of biblical texts are produced in most major European languages.



**1215** Magna Carta in England extends rights to certain people and introduces the idea that even the king is subject to the law.



**1517** Martin Luther disputes some nonscriptural church practices by publishing 95 “theses,” which are distributed widely. Other clergy across Europe, including Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin, call for reform and a return to the plain meaning of the scriptures. Each organizes a separate church.

**1522–34** Luther and Zwingli each publish a German translation of the Bible.



**1611** The King James Bible is published after 47 scholars spent six years translating it from Greek and Hebrew sources, drawing heavily on William Tyndale’s work. It is authorized for all English speakers.

**17th century** Religious fundamentalists known as Puritans leave Europe and establish colonies in North America. They teach the need for universal literacy.



**1776** American Declaration of Independence articulates key principles of individual freedom.

**1788** The United States ratifies its Constitution.

**1200**

**Late 14th century** John Wycliffe and Jan Hus speak and write against church excesses. Wycliffe oversees translation of portions of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into Middle English before his death in 1384.

**1450** Johannes Gutenberg invents printing with movable type. By 1455, he prints full copies of the Latin Vulgate Bible.



**1492** Christopher Columbus lands in the New World.

**1500**

**1526–37** William Tyndale publishes the New Testament in English, having translated it from early Greek sources. While translating the Old Testament from Hebrew, he is captured and executed. Miles Coverdale and John Rogers later carry on his work and publish complete English translations of the Bible.

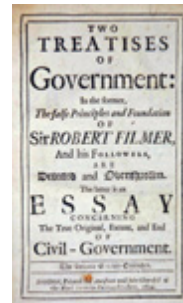
**1545–63** The Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent formally adopts the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, enacts policies to correct excesses, and defines items questioned by the Protestant Reformation.



**1600**

**1642** Colonists in Massachusetts enact a General School Law providing public education for all children.

**1679** John Locke writes *Two Treatises of Government*, arguing for the natural rights of mankind, influencing the creation of democratic governments.

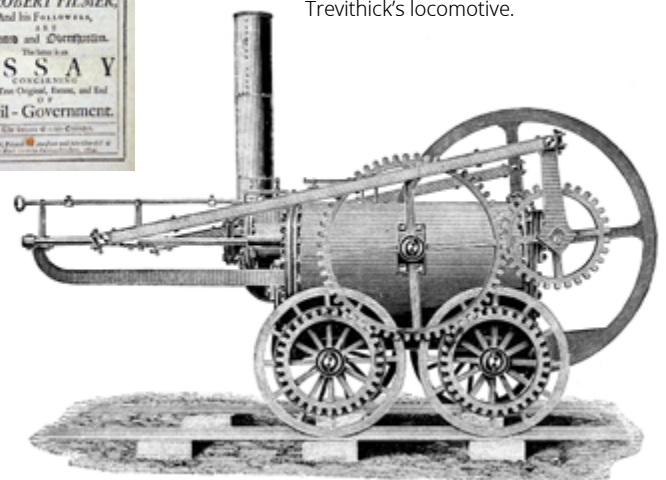


**1700**

**1791** The United States ratifies the Bill of Rights, further articulating key rights, especially the free exercise of religion.



**1804** First steam-powered railway journey is taken with Richard Trevithick’s locomotive.





**1805** Joseph Smith is born in Sharon, Vermont, USA, the descendant of Puritans and Revolutionary War soldiers.

**1813** Richard Wright launches the first sea-going steamboat. By 1838, steam-powered ships built to carry passengers and freight across the Atlantic are launched.

**1816–37** Several individuals invent working telegraph systems in various forms.

**1819** Methodist preachers hold a conference in Ontario County, New York, USA. It is likely here that young Joseph Smith hears a sermon quoting James 1:5.

**1826–1835** Nicéphore Niépce and Louis Daguerre capture photographic images with cameras.

**1827** Joseph Smith receives the gold plates from Moroni.



**1829** Priesthood authority is restored when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery are ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist and to the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James, and John.

**1830** Church membership: 280; missionaries called: 16; stakes: 0

**1833** The Lord reveals the Word of Wisdom.

**1833** The British Parliament makes owning slaves illegal throughout the empire.

**1835** Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and First Quorum of Seventy are organized.



**1835** The Church publishes the Doctrine and Covenants at Kirtland, Ohio, USA, resuming the effort to publish the Book of Commandments interrupted in Missouri in 1833.

**1840–42** Orson Hyde serves a mission to Palestine and dedicates the land for the return of “Judah’s scattered remnants.”

**1840** Joseph Smith introduces baptism for the dead.



**1842** The Relief Society organized in Nauvoo with Emma Hale Smith as its first president.

**1843** Addison Pratt leads a group of missionaries sailing from Massachusetts, USA, to the Society Islands (French Polynesia), where Pratt presides until 1847.

## 1800

**1820** Joseph reads and ponders James’s invitation to “ask of God.” He prays in a secluded spot in a nearby grove and is visited by God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, who “promise that the fulness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto [him].”

**1823** The angel Moroni visits Joseph Smith and tells him of an ancient record containing the fulness of the gospel and explains that the time is at hand for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be restored.



## 1820

**1829** Joseph Smith completes the translation of the Book of Mormon “by the gift and power of God.” The Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses see the plates and testify of their truthfulness.

**1830** The Book of Mormon is published at Palmyra, New York, USA.



**1830** The Church is formally organized on April 6 at Fayette, New York, USA.

**1830** Samuel Smith, the Prophet’s brother, begins a mission in New York, USA. Oliver Cowdery, Parley Pratt, and others serve a mission to Indian Territory.

## 1830

**1836** Kirtland Temple, the first in this dispensation, dedicated by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

**1836** Jesus Christ appears in the Kirtland Temple and accepts it. Moses, Elias, and Elijah appear and commit priesthood keys.



**1837** Apostles Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde and other elders organize the British Mission, the first mission in the Church. Within the first year there are 2,000 members in England.

**1838** *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* is given by revelation as the name of the Church.

## 1840

**1844** Joseph and Hyrum Smith killed by a mob at Carthage, Illinois, USA.



**1844** Speaking in a Church meeting in Nauvoo, Brigham Young teaches that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles holds the keys to lead the Church. To many, Brigham appears and sounds like Joseph Smith. He is unanimously sustained to lead the Church.

**1846** Nauvoo Temple dedicated.



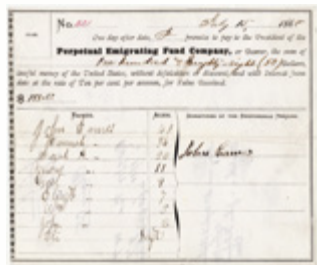
PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH SMITH, BY KENNETH A. CORBETT; JOSEPH RECEIVES THE PLATES FROM MORONI, BY GARY L. KAPP; PORTRAIT OF EMMA HALE SMITH, BY LEE GREENE RICHARDS

JOSEPH SMITH’S FIRST VISION, BY GREG K. OLSEN; JESUS CHRIST APPEARS TO THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH AND OLIVER COWDERY, BY WALTER RANE; MARTYRDOM OF JOSEPH AND HYRUM, BY GARY E. SMITH



**1846–68** Over 70,000 Latter-day Saints travel by ship, wagon, handcart, and train to gather to Utah. The first company reaches the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847.

**1849** The first Latter-day Saint Sunday School is organized.



**1849–87** The Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company helps about 30,000 Church members gather to Utah.

**1870** Young Ladies Retrenchment Society organized, later renamed the Young Women Organization. The Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association follows in 1875.

**1870** Siegfried Marcus builds a prototype vehicle with a gasoline-powered internal combustion engine.

**1872** *Woman's Exponent* newspaper published in Salt Lake City.

**1876** Alexander Graham Bell granted a U.S. patent for a working telephone device.



**1876** At Brigham Young's request, the Relief Society organizes a grain storage program led by Emmeline Wells.

**1880** The Pearl of Great Price accepted as scripture.

**1880** Church membership: 133,628; missionaries called: 459; stakes: 23

**1884** Logan Utah Temple dedicated.

**1888** Manti Utah Temple dedicated.

**1890** The Church announces the end of the practice of plural marriage.



**1893** Salt Lake Temple dedicated.

**1903** Orville and Wilbur Wright make the first sustained, controlled, heavier-than-air flight. International passenger flights follow in 1919.

**1907** The First Presidency publishes instructions to members to build up the Church in their own lands rather than gather to Utah.

**1912** The Church's seminary program for weekday religious instruction of youth begins.

**1915** The First Presidency invites all families to participate in a weekly home evening.

## 1850

**1851** Book of Mormon published in Danish, the first of many non-English editions.

**1863–65** Abolition of slavery in the U.S.



**1866** The Church begins publishing the *Juvenile Instructor*.

**1869** The U.S. transcontinental railroad completed at Promontory Summit, Utah.

**1869, 1870** The Wyoming and Utah Territorial Legislatures grant women the right to vote, 50 years earlier than the rest of the nation.



## 1870

**1877** Thomas Edison creates the phonograph, the first device for recording and reproducing sound.

**1877** St. George Temple dedicated—the first in the Great Basin. Endowments for the dead begin.

**1878** Aurelia Rogers called to establish the first Primary.



**1879** Jean Joseph Henri Toussaint and Louis Pasteur develop vaccines using artificially weakened bacteria.

**1879** Thomas Edison demonstrates a prototype of the first electric light bulb.



## 1890

**1894** President Wilford Woodruff announces a revelation instructing “the Latter-day Saints . . . to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers.”

**1897** Guglielmo Marconi receives a British patent for a radio communication device.



**1897** The Church begins publishing the *Improvement Era* magazine and magazines for youth.

**1898** Inez Knight and Jennie Brimhall serve as the first single female proselyting missionaries in the Church and are called to serve in Great Britain.



## 1900

**1915** The Relief Society publishes the *Relief Society Magazine*.



**1918** President Joseph F. Smith receives a vision of the redemption of the dead. It is canonized in 1976 and in 1979 placed in the Doctrine and Covenants as section 138.

**1919** Laie Hawaii Temple dedicated—the first outside North America.





**1919** Amy Brown Lyman called to organize a Relief Society Social Services department, initially focused on improving maternal and newborn mortality rates.



**1924** General conference first broadcast over the radio.

**1925** A patent is issued for microfilm document preservation.



**1938** The Church purchases a microfilm camera and begins filming genealogical records.

**1944** The first electronic, general-purpose computer begins operating at Bletchley Park, England.



**1947** Scientists at Bell Labs invent and implement the transistor, the fundamental building block of digital computers and modern electronic devices.

**1958** London England Temple dedicated.

**1961** The Church adopts a structured set of six missionary lessons for use in every mission.

**1963** The Church introduces a new program of home teaching, replacing ward teaching.



**1964** The U.S. Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a key milestone establishing civil rights in practice as well as in principle.

**1973** First handheld cellular mobile phone patented.

**1977** Personal computers become commercially available.



**1978** The First Presidency announces a revelation extending priesthood blessings, allowing worthy members of every race to participate in temple ordinances.



**1978** First baptisms performed for converts who waited faithfully for years in West Africa.

## 1920

**1926–33** Several inventors, including Philo Farnsworth, demonstrate prototypes of working television systems.



**1930** Church membership: 670,017; missionaries called: 2,527; stakes: 104

**1936** The Church creates the Church Security Plan, later renamed the Church Welfare Program, to provide temporal assistance in times of need.

**1936** Alan Turing describes the essential elements of a computer.

## 1940

**1947** India secures independence from Great Britain, a milestone in the often bloody decline of European colonial rule in the 20th century, increasing chances for democratic government around the world.

**1949** General conference receives its first film recording and public television broadcast.



**1955** Bern Switzerland Temple dedicated—the first in Europe.

**1957** Ghana gains independence from Great Britain, heralding the decline of colonial rule in sub-Saharan Africa.

**1958** Hamilton New Zealand Temple dedicated—the first in the South Pacific.

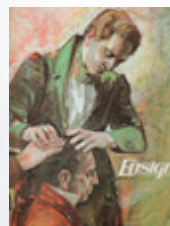
## 1960

**1966** Anthony Obinna, a Nigerian man, sees the Salt Lake Temple in a dream, a building he had never before seen. Several years later he recognizes it in a magazine article and begins petitioning Church authorities to send missionaries.



**1967** First satellite broadcast of general conference (audio only, via the Lani Bird satellite to the Pacific). First color television broadcast of general conference.

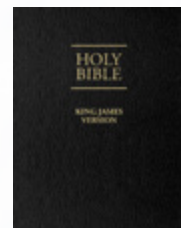
**1971** The Church begins publishing the correlated *Ensign*, *New Era*, and *Friend* magazines, replacing several previous magazines. The *Liahona* follows in 1977.



## 1980

**1978** São Paulo Brazil Temple dedicated—the first in South America.

**1979** The Church publishes a new edition of the King James Version of the Bible with extensive notes and study aids. A companion edition of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price is published in 1981.



**1980** Tokyo Japan Temple dedicated—the first in Asia.

**1980** Church membership: 4,639,822; missionaries called: 16,600; stakes: 1,218

**1982** The Internet Protocol Suite is standardized, permitting worldwide proliferation of interconnected computer networks.



**1983** Mexico City Mexico Temple dedicated—the first in Mexico.

**1984** Sydney Australia Temple dedicated—the first in Australia.

**1985** The Church funds famine relief in Ethiopia, beginning worldwide humanitarian relief efforts. Latter-day Saint Charities is officially established in 1996.

**1985** Freiberg Germany Temple dedicated—the first in eastern Europe.

**1985** Johannesburg South Africa Temple dedicated—the first in Africa.

**1995** The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issue “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”



**1997** President Gordon B. Hinckley announces plans to build smaller temples.

**2001** The Church establishes the Perpetual Education Fund to help members in developing areas receive an education and rise out of poverty.

**2004** *Preach My Gospel* is published.



**2004** Accra Ghana Temple dedicated—the first in West Africa.



**2008** The Church publishes the first volume of the Joseph Smith Papers.

**2017** Book of Mormon published in Nepali, the 111th translation. Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price available in 62 languages.



**2017** Nairobi Kenya Temple announced.

**2018** President Russell M. Nelson announces ministering “in a higher and holier way” to replace home and visiting teaching, as well as restructuring of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums.

**2018** Volume 1 of *Saints*, a multi-volume history of the Church, is published.

## 1990

**1988** Digital editions of the scriptures available for personal computers.

**1989** The Berlin Wall falls as democratic movements in eastern Europe reshape decades of totalitarian rule.



**1990** The Church begins paying for building construction and maintenance exclusively from tithing, ending local fundraising.

**1992** Relief Society members worldwide record histories and carry out service honoring the organization’s 150th anniversary.

**1994** South Africa ends apartheid and extends voting rights to all adults regardless of race or gender, electing Nelson Mandela the country’s first black president.

## 2000

**1997** General conference audio is broadcast over the internet for the first time. Video follows in 1999.



**1999** The Church launches FamilySearch website.

**2000** The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles publish their sacred witnesses of Jesus Christ in a document titled “The Living Christ.”



**2000** The Church publishes the scriptures online.

## 2010

**2010** The Church releases the Gospel Library mobile app.



**2012** President Thomas S. Monson announces age change for missionary eligibility: 18 for young men, 19 for young women.



## 2020

**2019** Home-centered, Church-supported gospel living is emphasized, with reduced Sunday schedules and *Come, Follow Me* study materials for all members.



**2019** Church membership: 16,313,735; missionaries serving: 65,137; stakes: 3,383

**2020** Church implements *Children and Youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*.

### AN ONGOING PROCESS

“Sometimes we think of the Restoration of the gospel as something that is complete, already behind us. . . . In reality, the Restoration is an ongoing process; we are living in it right now. . . . The exciting developments of today are part of that long-foretold period of preparation that will culminate in the glorious Second Coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, “Are You Sleeping through the Restoration?” *Ensign*, May 2014, 59.





# HAVE THE GREATEST YEAR WITH THE GREATEST BOOK



By **Onnastasia Cole**  
Church Magazines

“New year, new you.” Sound familiar? Yes, it’s January again, which means you’re likely setting goals to become your best self. Well, there’s one goal this year that you and your family can’t afford to miss: diving into the Book of Mormon and filling your hearts and homes with all the blessings that will result.

President Russell M. Nelson taught: “Something powerful happens when a child of God seeks to know more about Him and His Beloved Son. Nowhere are those truths taught more clearly and powerfully than in the Book of Mormon.”<sup>1</sup>

Need more convincing?

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: “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. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, what individual or home doesn’t want that?

## A New Home-Centered Curriculum

With the new *Come, Follow Me* manual for individuals and families in our hands (or pockets), guidance from Church leaders, and a slew of new videos, app reminders, and study resources, it’s never been easier to make gospel study an edifying and Spirit-filled experience for the whole family.

Here are a few ways to help you get started.

### Create a study plan in the *Gospel Library* app

Do you sometimes forget to study? No worries. Open the *Gospel Library* app, select “Study Plans,” and create a schedule with digital reminders.

- Set daily, weekly, or monthly schedules for your scripture-reading goals.
- Receive notifications and reminders for individual or family study.
- Keep track of how much you should read each week to meet your and your family’s goals.



Decide now to make 2020 the year you and your family immerse yourselves in the Book of Mormon.

### Check out “Family Study Fun” in the Ensign

If you have young children or teens, our “Family Study Fun” series (see page 12) can take some of the planning pressure off your shoulders. Each week we propose a simple, engaging activity that requires little to no preparation, based on the scripture lesson being studied that week. After you read the scriptures together, discuss and have fun.

### Watch the new Book of Mormon video series

Hosted in the Gospel Library app and online at [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://ChurchofJesusChrist.org), these new cinematic videos bring the scripture stories to life. Bonus idea: share the videos on social media to introduce others to the book that’s changed your life.

### Study every day

President Nelson taught, “Nothing opens the heavens quite like the combination of increased purity, exact obedience, earnest seeking, daily feasting on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon, and regular time committed to temple and family history work.”<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the *Come, Follow Me* curriculum and other study resources can certainly enrich your experience, but they can’t replace the scriptures. That’s the real curriculum. If you sincerely desire to open the windows of heaven in your home, build faith, and draw your family closer to Christ, immerse yourselves in the Book of Mormon every day.

### Don’t overthink it; don’t give up

Family study shouldn’t be complicated. You know your family’s circumstances and individual needs, so prayerfully consider what will work best for you and try different approaches. If one week doesn’t go as planned, try not to get discouraged! Simply seek Heavenly Father’s guidance on what adjustments to make. Then try again and watch the blessings flow. ■

### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 61.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 141.
3. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 95.



What Church  
Leaders Are Saying

# about The Book of Mormon

“**W**hen I think of the Book of Mormon, I think of the word *power*,” said President Russell M. Nelson.

***“The truths of the Book of Mormon have the power to heal, comfort, restore, succor, strengthen, console, and cheer our souls.”<sup>1</sup>***

As another testament of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon is a witness to the divinity and majesty of the Savior. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>2</sup>

As we prayerfully study the Book of Mormon this year, blessings will pour into our lives and into our homes. The testimonies of General Authorities and General Officers of the Church herein stand as witness.



*The testimonies of Church leaders can remind us of the great blessings that come from this miraculous book of scripture.*



### A Fifty-Year Habit of Daily Study

“Since I was a young boy, *I have felt the witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God*, that the Father and the Son appeared and spoke with Joseph Smith, and that ancient Apostles came to the Prophet Joseph to restore priesthood keys to the Lord’s Church.

“With that testimony, I have read the Book of Mormon everyday for more than 50 years.”<sup>3</sup>

—President Henry B. Eyring, Second Counselor in the First Presidency

### Serious Study Invites Revelation

“Scripture is a source of truth, and it fosters personal revelation. You have probably had the same experience that I have had when pondering a verse. Sometimes new light comes with greater understanding of what I am reading, and at other times a little burst of truth springs forth that is quite unrelated to the words on the page. Either way, being in the scriptures, especially *the Book of Mormon, puts us in a condition to receive gifts of greater light and knowledge.*”<sup>4</sup>

—Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



### A Testimony Comes by Study and Prayer

“The beginning of my testimony occurred when I lived in Göteborg, Sweden. I was 11 years old. The mission president issued an invitation to all the young people to read the Book of Mormon. I accepted that challenge and started to read it. Somewhere in my reading, one of the mission president’s counselors told us that we should pray about what we read. I remember very well the evening that I acted on that invitation. I knelt at the bedside, and I began a very simple prayer to know whether the Book of Mormon is true.

*“I did not hear a voice, but it was as if God told me, ‘I have been telling you all along that it is true.’* That experience changed me; it changed my life. It began a process of belief, a process of being on the covenant path and trying to do more and trying to do better.”<sup>5</sup>

—Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### Joseph Smith Couldn't Have Written It

“I was a business professor for almost 20 years. As a part of my work, I wrote books. . . . [One of the books I wrote with a colleague] is 650 pages long, it contains 17 chapters, and it took us two years to write. The colleague with whom I wrote this book also has a Ph.D., which means that we each went to college for eight years or more—a total of more than 16 years of formal higher education between the two of us. It is a remarkable experience to receive a box of these brand-new books from the publisher. . . . I opened up the box and thumbed through one of the books. As I did so, I looked out the window of my office and asked myself the question, ‘Why did you write this book?’ When you really think about it, investing so much time and effort in a project that so quickly becomes obsolete is rather foolish. As I posed that question to myself and as I was pondering, ***the thought came to me, ‘Because now you know by experience that Joseph Smith could not have written the Book of Mormon.’***”<sup>6</sup>

—Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

### Scripture Study: A Positive Habit

“If you have not begun a lifelong commitment to study daily from the scriptures, I invite you to begin today. . . . I plead with you to ***make the Book of Mormon a large part of that daily commitment.***

“When you slip, start again. Don’t let one missed day turn into two and then three and four. This will be a blessing to you, and it will also bless your children.”<sup>7</sup>

—Elder Michael T. Ringwood of the Seventy

### The Voice of Christ

“Our Savior told His New Testament disciples, ‘Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold’ [John 10:16]. In the Americas, the resurrected Lord testified to Lehi’s covenant children, ‘Ye are my sheep’ [3 Nephi 15:24]. And Jesus said yet other sheep would hear His voice [see 3 Nephi 16:1, 3]. What a blessing ***the Book of Mormon is as another testament witnessing the voice of Jesus Christ!***”<sup>8</sup>

—Elder Gerrit W. Gong of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



## A Personal Relationship with Christ

“I have read the powerful messages within the Book of Mormon many times throughout my life. However, recently I listened to the audio version of the Book of Mormon for the first time. I had a remarkable experience listening to the words of the recorded voices of the various prophets’ messages. I had a specific experience as I listened to the final writings of the prophet Nephi in 2 Nephi 33. After listening to the powerful witness Nephi shares throughout his writings, I was struck at his declaration, ‘I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell’ [2 Nephi 33:6]. I was so deeply touched by his declaration that I stopped to rewind to be certain I heard the words correctly. . . . ***Like Nephi, I testify of the opportunity we have to receive a personal witness and have a very personal relationship with Jesus Christ.***”<sup>9</sup>

—Lisa L. Harkness, First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 62.
2. Introduction to the Book of Mormon.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “Fear Not to Do Good,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 100.
4. D. Todd Christofferson, “For He That Is Mighty Hath Done To Me Great Things” (address given at BYU Women’s Conference, May 3, 2019).
5. Dale G. Renlund, “Doubt Not, but Be Believing” (worldwide devotional for young adults, Jan. 13, 2019), [broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://broadcasts.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
6. David A. Bednar, “Come unto Christ,” (address given at Brigham Young University–Idaho religion symposium, Jan. 29, 2000), [byui.edu](http://byui.edu).
7. Michael T. Ringwood, “You Can Know for Yourself,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2017, 69.
8. Gerrit W. Gong, “Good Shepherd, Lamb of God,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 98.
9. Lisa L. Harkness, Facebook post, May 27, 2018.
10. Michelle Craig, Facebook post, Jan. 28, 2019.
11. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 90.

## Another Testament of Jesus Christ

“I finished reading the Book of Mormon in December [2018] along with so many of you [in response to President Russell M. Nelson’s challenge]. . . .

“My testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon as another testament of Jesus Christ has been strengthened. As I marked every reference to the Savior, I was honestly quite surprised at how many times I had to sharpen my red pencil! As I have started to read the Book of Mormon again, ***I find myself drawn once more to every mention of Jesus Christ within the pages of this book.*** . . . I know that Jesus Christ is my advocate with the Father, my Prince of Peace, and my light in the wilderness. He is for you as well.”<sup>10</sup>

—Michelle Craig, First Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency

## A Book That Brings Happiness and Hope

“I ask that my testimony of the Book of Mormon and all that it implies, given today under my own oath and office, be recorded by men on earth and angels in heaven. . . . ***I want it absolutely clear when I stand before the judgment bar of God that I declared to the world, in the most straightforward language I could summon, that the Book of Mormon is true,*** that it came forth the way Joseph said it came forth and was given to bring happiness and hope to the faithful in the travail of the latter days.”<sup>11</sup>

—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles



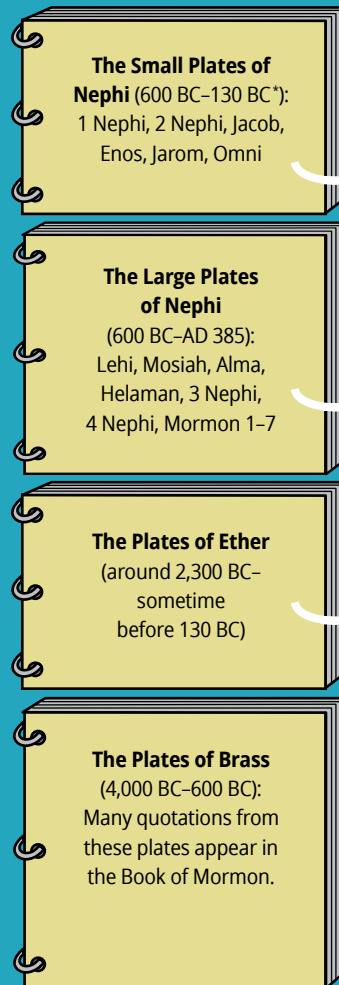
# Which Plates Did the Book of Mormon Come From?

The Book of Mormon was written by many ancient prophets who recorded their words on different sets of metal plates. These records were later abridged to create the plates of Mormon, or the gold plates that Joseph Smith translated.

## DISCUSSION

Compared to all that could have been recorded on the gold plates, Mormon and others were inspired to choose only a small portion for the Book of Mormon (see Words of Mormon 1:5 and 3 Nephi 26:6). How can knowing this influence your perspective of the chapters we have today? ■

Some of the sources for the plates of Mormon



\* Dates represent the approximate time period covered by each set of plates.

The plates of Mormon given to the Prophet Joseph Smith

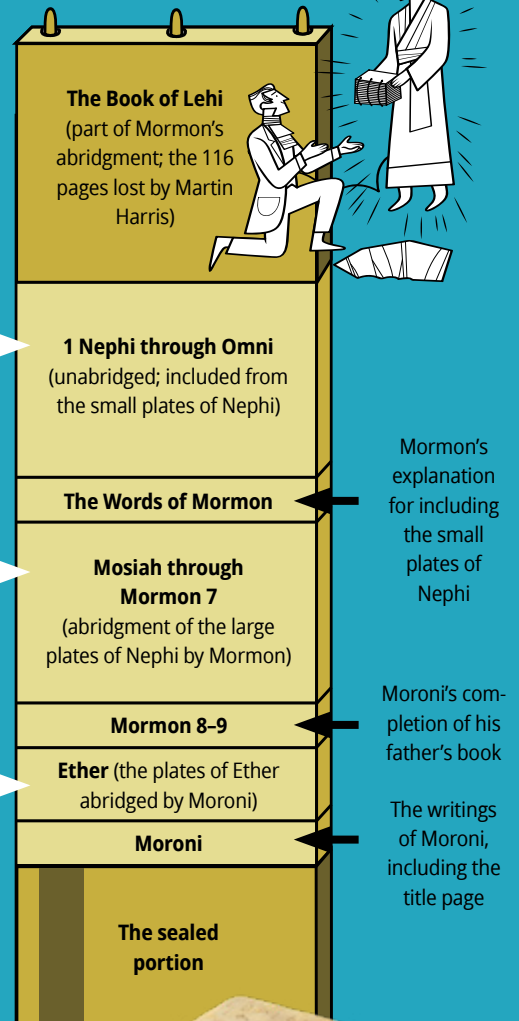


ILLUSTRATION OF JOSEPH SMITH AND ANGEL MORONI BY BRYAN BEACH



January 6–12  
1 NEPHI 1–7

# What Was Jerusalem Like in Lehi's Time?

Jerusalem, 600 BC. The capital city of the kingdom of Judah is filled with political intrigue and wickedness. The past decade has been especially calamitous. Judah's kings have been killed or captured; Jews have been marched off to Babylon; prophets, such as Jeremiah, have been threatened and imprisoned. It's no wonder the Lord tells Lehi to flee (see 1 Nephi 2:1–2).

- POPULATION: **25,000**  
(big by ancient standards)
- TERRAIN: desert, fertile valleys, sloping hills
- CURRENCY: **money by weight** (silver, copper, gold; no coins)
- LANGUAGE: **Hebrew**
- WORKFORCE: craftsmen, merchants, slaves (considered members of the family); **most also farm**
- FOOD: fruit, bread, olives, figs, stew
- CLOTHING: **coarse wool, sandals**; white robes for priests



- RELIGION: **corrupt, idolatrous**; false prophets proclaim peace; a trumpeting ram's horn announces daily prayer
- SOCIAL STRUCTURE: **patriarchal**, including *elders* of the city, *chiefs* of the families, and the *excellent*, or "men of good birth"
- FAMILIES: households consist of multiple **homes surrounding a courtyard**, led by the father. Includes sons' families, unmarried daughters and aunts, and aging relatives.
- MILITARY: **none at present**. Any soldiers are Babylonians, to whom Judah pays tribute. ■

IMAGES OF JERUSALEM, SHEEP, AND FRUIT FROM GETTY IMAGES

WEEK

2

January 2020

35



January 13–19  
1 NEPHI 8–10

# What Does the Fruit in Lehi’s Vision Symbolize?



In Lehi’s vision, what does the fruit, which is “desirable above all other fruit,” symbolize? (1 Nephi 8:12).

“The fruit on the tree is a symbol for the blessings of [Jesus Christ’s] Atonement. Partaking of the fruit of the tree represents the receiving of ordinances and covenants whereby the Atonement can become fully efficacious in our lives” (David A. Bednar, “Lehi’s Dream: Holding Fast to the Rod,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2011, 34).

These ordinances include baptism, confirmation, the sacrament, priesthood ordination for men, and temple ordinances.

## Finding the Fruit

The iron rod, or the word of God, leads us to Jesus Christ because scriptures and modern prophets invite us to participate in ordinances and covenants and help us understand Jesus Christ’s teachings, mission, and sacrifice.

- What words from the scriptures or from modern prophets have led you to Jesus Christ?

## Staying with the Fruit

Some people in Lehi’s vision abandoned the fruit because of the scoffing and ridicule of others. To remain with the fruit is to stay true to our covenants and to frequent those places where covenants are made.

## Sharing the Fruit

After Lehi ate the fruit, he wanted to share it with his family so they could feel of the “exceedingly great joy” he felt (1 Nephi 8:12).

- How can you share your love of Jesus Christ and help others participate in ordinances? ■



January 20–26

1 Nephi 11–15

# What Plain and Precious Truths Were Restored by the Book of Mormon?

In a vision, Nephi saw that many of the teachings in the Bible would be changed over time but that God would prepare a way for those truths to be restored (see 1 Nephi 13:26–40).

2

We existed as spirits before this life, learning and preparing for mortality (see Alma 13:3).



4

Baptism is not needed for infants because they are not yet accountable (see Moroni 8:10). ■

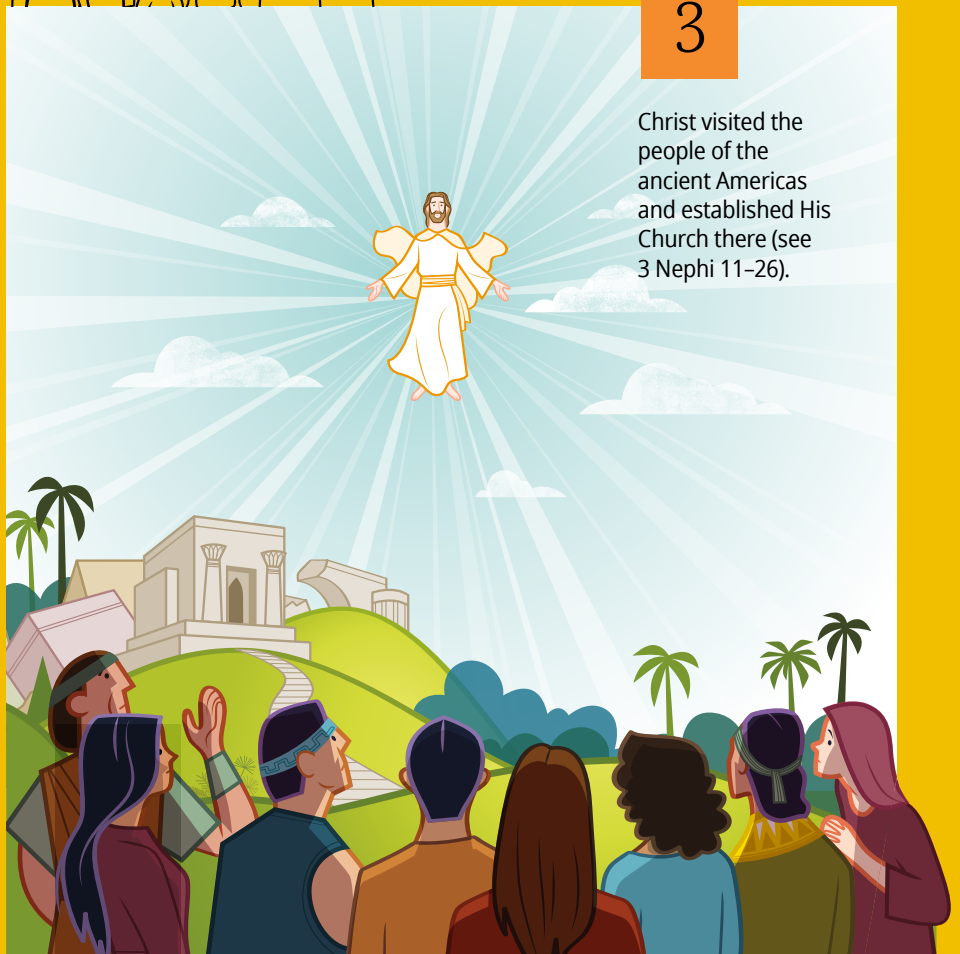
1

The Fall of Adam and Eve was a part of Heavenly Father's plan (see 2 Nephi 2:22–25).



3

Christ visited the people of the ancient Americas and established His Church there (see 3 Nephi 11–26).





THE  
**Translation**  
 OF THE  
**Book of Mormon:**  
 A  
*Marvel*  
 AND A  
*Wonder*



**By Elder  
 LeGrand R.  
 Curtis Jr.**

General Authority  
 Seventy and  
 Church Historian  
 and Recorder

**I**n the Book of Mormon, Nephi quotes Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet, concerning the coming forth of a book. The book will come forth “in the last days, or in the days of the Gentiles,” will contain revelations from God, some of its words will be sealed for a time, and witnesses will help establish the words of the book (see 2 Nephi 27:1, 7, 10, 13–14).

That book is the Book of Mormon. Its coming forth is an important part of the “marvelous work and a wonder,” the Restoration of the gospel prophesied by both Isaiah and Nephi (see Isaiah 29:14, 2 Nephi 27:26). The Book of Mormon is a marvel to all of us who have the blessing of reading it. No wonder President Russell M. Nelson has called it a “miraculous miracle.”<sup>1</sup>





The coming forth of this miraculous scripture was accomplished only by the gift and power of God.

### To Come Forth in Our Day

The Book of Mormon contains the teachings of ancient prophets that were written on gold plates and preserved to come forth in our day. The story of its preservation and translation fills us with wonder at the faith and perseverance of Joseph Smith and his associates and with gratitude for their devoted effort.

Moroni, the last of the prophets to write on the plates, appeared to Joseph in 1823 and showed him where the plates were located. For the next four years the angel Moroni tutored Joseph, preparing him for the work of translation and other work God had for him to do. Ultimately, Moroni gave the plates to Joseph, promising that if he “would use all [his] endeavors to preserve them,” the plates would be protected. That promise was fulfilled. Although “strenuous exertions” were made by wicked people to take the plates from Joseph, and “every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose,” the plates remained safely in Joseph’s hands until the translation was completed and the plates were delivered back to Moroni. (See Joseph Smith—History 1:30–54, 59, 60.)

### By the Gift and Power of God

But how was that translation accomplished? When Joseph received the plates, he could read and write no language other than English. In fact, he had little education. His wife Emma recalled that he “could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter; let alone dictat[e] a book like the Book of Mormon. And, though I was an active participant in the scenes that transpired, . . . it is marvelous to me, ‘a marvel and a wonder.’”<sup>2</sup>

Joseph Smith explained repeatedly that he translated the Book of Mormon “by the gift and power of God.”<sup>3</sup> Those closest to the translation described the process in remarkably similar terms:

- “The Testimony of Three Witnesses,” which was published in the first edition of the Book of Mormon and has appeared in every edition since, uses the same phrase.
- Oliver Cowdery, Joseph’s principal scribe during the translation process, used that phrase,<sup>4</sup> as did David Whitmer, who joined Oliver

# “BY THE *gift* AND *power* of God”

Cowdery and Martin Harris as one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.<sup>5</sup>

- Other early Church writers also used that phrase, as does the introduction to the Book of Mormon in the current edition.<sup>6</sup>

## The Process of Translation

Joseph himself did not elaborate about the process of translation, but Oliver, David, and Emma provided some additional information. Oliver said: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from [Joseph’s] mouth, as he translated with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, ‘Interpreters,’ the history or record called ‘The Book of Mormon’” (Joseph Smith—History 1:71, note).

The “interpreters” used by Joseph during the translation process included the “two stones in silver bows” that were deposited by Moroni with the plates (see Joseph Smith—History 1:35). In addition to these two seer stones, Joseph used at least one other seer stone that the Lord had provided.<sup>7</sup>

David Whitmer, whose family provided a place for Joseph and Oliver to complete the work of translation, provided this additional information: “Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation

in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.”<sup>8</sup>

All of us who have tried to read illuminated words on a screen can understand why Joseph would have used a hat or something else to screen out extraneous light when he was reading the words on the seer stone.

Emma Smith recollected:

“When my husband was translating the Book of Mormon, I wrote a part of it, as he dictated each sentence, word for word, and when he came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out, and while I was writing them, if I made any mistake in spelling, he would stop me and correct my spelling, although it was impossible for him to see how I was writing them down at the time. . . .

“When he stopped for any purpose at any time he would, when he commenced again, begin where he left off without any hesitation.”<sup>9</sup>

## The Power of the Holy Ghost

The result of this miraculous translation is that we have the marvelous words of the Book of Mormon. Because of that, we can experience the power of the Holy Ghost as we read those inspired words (see Moroni 10:3–5).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles describes his early encounter with the Book of Mormon: “In [my] role as witness I wish to declare that the spiritual experiences and holy affirmations I have had regarding the Savior and his restored church *first* came to me as a young man when I read the Book of Mormon. It was while reading this sacred record that I felt—again and again—the undeniable





For more information on the translation of the Book of Mormon, see *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (2018), chapters 5–7, and the Gospel Library topic “Book of Mormon Translation.”

whispering of the Holy Ghost declaring to my soul the truthfulness of its message. To those first convictions have been added, one way or another, all of the other quickening moments and sanctifying manifestations that now give meaning to my days and purpose to my life.”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, my first recognition of the Spirit came when I read the Book of Mormon as a young man. As a 14-year-old seminary student, I started reading that marvelous book. As I read, I felt something. The feeling was good; it was warm; and I could tell that it came from God. I loved the stories in the Book of Mormon, and I loved the wonderful teachings. But most of all, I loved how I felt when I read it.

That was 53 years ago. I have felt that feeling over and over in the intervening years as I have opened the book (or electronic device in recent years) and let the words and the Spirit envelop me. I have also felt that Spirit as I have pondered, memorized, or prayed about the words of the Book of Mormon. I have been even more blessed as I have tried to live its teachings.

I am extremely grateful for the blessing of the miraculous translation of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith. I am thankful for Joseph, Emma,

Oliver, the Whitmer family, and everyone else who helped in that process. Now, more than 190 years later, I am also grateful for the marvelous Spirit I feel when I open the Book of Mormon. ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: A Miraculous Miracle” (address at the seminar for new mission presidents, June 23, 2016).
2. Emma Smith, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Herald*, Oct. 1, 1879, 290.
3. Preface to the Book of Mormon (1830 ed.). For additional instances when Joseph explained the process in these terms, see John W. Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens* (2005), 121–29.
4. See Oliver Cowdery, in Reuben Miller, *Journal*, Oct. 21, 1848, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
5. See David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (1887), 12.
6. See “The Book of Mormon,” *The Evening and the Morning Star*, Jan. 1833, [2]; Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
7. See Richard E. Turley Jr., Robin S. Jensen, and Mark Ashurst-McGee, “Joseph the Seer,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2015, 48–55.
8. Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 12.
9. Emma Smith, in Edmund C. Briggs, “A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,” *Journal of History*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Oct. 1916), 454.
10. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), 343.

# The Power of Deliverance: Why Nephi Killed Laban

By **Clyde J. Williams**  
Correlation Department

**F**or some people, especially those new to the Book of Mormon, a most challenging or unsettling story is Nephi’s slaying of Laban (see 1 Nephi 3–4). Couldn’t Nephi have just taken Laban’s clothes, retrieved the plates, and then left with Zoram?

## Nephi Chose to Include the Story

In the many times I have studied and taught this account, I have pondered why Nephi included it. Surely he understood how hard this would be for others to understand. Couldn’t he have skipped the difficult detail about killing Laban and just said that by the power of God he and his brothers were eventually able to get the plates from him?

The point is that he did not. Nephi felt impressed by the Spirit to write this detailed account of how he obtained the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 19:6; 2 Nephi 5:30–32).

It’s important to note that when Nephi began this record, he wrote with hindsight. He had had

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**What appears to be the breaking of a commandment is actually an example of God’s great mercy.**

more than 30 years to ponder the encounter with Laban, and its importance became ever more significant to him. He saw clearly what the Lord had done for his family and why. (See 2 Nephi 5:28.)

In 1 Nephi 1, with a perfect perspective of where he was leading his readers, Nephi explained a major theme for what he was about to write: “But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto *the power of deliverance*” (verse 20; emphasis added).

Ultimately, the particular deliverance I am focusing on was not merely of the plates or of Nephi’s life. Nor was it the deliverance of the Nephite nation alone. Instead, the outcome was something much greater—it was intended to assist in the deliverance of all mankind.

## Context Is Crucial

To put this story in context, we need to review the events that led up to it.



The Lord had commanded Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass (see 1 Nephi 3:2–4). It would not be easy. The deliverance of these plates would be a true test of their faith.

When Nephi and his brothers arrived outside Jerusalem, they cast lots to determine who would approach Laban first.<sup>1</sup> The lot fell to Laman, who went to Laban's house and asked for the plates. But Laban called Laman a robber and threatened to kill him. Laman fled and told his brothers what Laban had done. Despite the setback, Nephi persuaded them to continue their mission. (See 1 Nephi 3:10–21.)

For their second attempt, they decided to retrieve their father's riches to bargain for the plates. When they arrived at Laban's house, he again showed his corrupt nature by stealing their precious things and trying to kill them. The brothers fled and hid. (See 1 Nephi 3:22–27.)

Angry and full of unbelief, Laman and Lemuel, in spite of an angel's rebuke (see 1 Nephi 3:29–31), refused to try again to get the plates. So Nephi went alone, being "led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do" (1 Nephi 4:6). That night, alone in the streets of Jerusalem, Nephi found Laban on the ground in a drunken stupor.

As Nephi looked upon this man who had sought their lives, the Spirit constrained him to slay Laban.

The idea was abhorrent to Nephi, and he resisted. The Spirit prompted him twice more, reminding him, “The Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes” (1 Nephi 4:13; see also 1 Nephi 4:7–12; Deuteronomy 7:2). While Nephi’s reluctance reflected his respect for life, this experience ultimately demonstrated his deep reverence for obeying the will of the Lord.

*While Nephi’s reluctance reflected his respect for life, this experience ultimately demonstrated his deep reverence for obeying the will of the Lord.*

### **One Life Lost versus Many**

Nephi recognized that the record would help preserve his people’s language and that his posterity would need to know the commandments in order to keep them (see 1 Nephi 3:19; 4:15–16). Without the brass plates, they would not have the prophets’ words. Nephi also knew by the Spirit that the Lord had delivered Laban into his hands and that it was “better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief” (1 Nephi 4:13).

The Lord was directing Nephi in a way that would result in the least loss of life. The Lord had given Laban two opportunities to part with the plates. While we do not know from the record, it is likely that the Lord would have given promptings or warnings to Laban,<sup>2</sup> who ignored them. The Lord also knew these sacred records would soon be destroyed in the upcoming invasion by the

Babylonians if they were not removed (in a related vein, see 2 Nephi 26:17; Enos 1:14; Mormon 6:6).

Leaving Laban alive would have likely led to more deaths and suffering. It’s possible that he or others would have followed Nephi and his brothers into the wilderness and killed their entire family. (See 1 Nephi 4:36.)<sup>3</sup>

### **More Miracles**

Nephi obeyed the Lord. After slaying Laban, he dressed in Laban’s clothing and armor and went toward the treasury, where he met Zoram, Laban’s servant. Because of the power of God upon Nephi, it appears Zoram had no suspicions. To him, Nephi looked and sounded like Laban—another part of the miraculous deliverance. Zoram retrieved the brass plates and followed Nephi out of the city. (See 1 Nephi 4:19–26.)

Nephi’s brothers saw him from a distance and began to flee, mistaking him for Laban. Nephi called to them in his own voice, and they stopped. Zoram, however, feared for his life. Nephi made a solemn oath that if Zoram would go with them, they would spare his life and he would be a free man. Zoram—who became a critical second witness of this powerful deliverance—took courage from Nephi’s words and swore his own oath that he would stay with them. (See 1 Nephi 4:28–35.)

It would be hard for any of the brothers to think that anything but the power of God had delivered the plates into their hands. But they could not have known why this record was so critical that it required the life of the wicked Laban.

### **How Visions Expanded Nephi’s Perspective**

Sometime later, following Lehi’s important vision of the tree of life, Nephi was shown a

*When God delivered Laban and the brass plates to Nephi, He was ultimately delivering precious gospel truths to all who would eventually read the Book of Mormon.*



similar vision of the Savior’s ministry among the Jews, the history of his people, and a view of the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles in the latter days (see 1 Nephi 11–14). In each case he saw that the outcome for all these people hinged on their acceptance of Jesus Christ. It must have become clear to Nephi that without the word of God on the brass plates, his posterity would not have been prepared to meet Christ (see Mosiah 1:3–4).

Consider the example of the Mulekites, a group who left Jerusalem after Lehi. They had no sacred record. When they were found by the Nephites years later, their language had become corrupted and they denied their Creator. (See Omni 1:15–17.) That is what would have likely happened to Lehi’s family if they had not retrieved the brass plates.

Another truth that underscored the future importance of the brass plates for Nephi was his vision of plain and precious truths being taken from the record of the Jews (see 1 Nephi 13:23–29). This loss would cause many in the latter days to stumble spiritually, and Satan would gain great power over them (see 1 Nephi 13:29, 34).

The ultimate solution to this dilemma was the Book of Mormon. It contains many of the plain and precious truths that were on the brass plates and were once in the original record of the Jews, the Bible.<sup>4</sup> The brass plates became a source of inspiration for generations of Nephite prophets. Without them, they “would have dwindled in unbelief, and . . . should have [become] like unto . . . the Lamanites” (Mosiah 1:5). There would have been no righteous Nephite record to bring forth in the latter days to help the world understand Christ’s true doctrine. There would have been no Book of Mormon as we know it.

### **Deliverance for All**

With this precise perspective of revelation, Nephi came to understand why he was required to obtain the plates in the way he did. When God delivered Laban and the brass plates to Nephi, He was ultimately delivering precious gospel truths to all who would eventually read the Book of Mormon. These truths are centered in the Savior and Deliverer, Jesus Christ. It is Christ who offers the most profound deliverance to all people—deliverance from sin and death—through His atoning sacrifice and eternal life in the world to come. ■

### **NOTES**

1. Casting lots was an ancient practice whereby the Lord could make known His will (see Proverbs 16:33).
2. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), taught: “The Lord has never condemned nor permitted destruction to any people until he has warned them” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 114).
3. See Jeremiah 26:20–23 for a clear example of a prophet who fled and was hunted down, brought back to Jerusalem, and put to death.
4. For examples of the plain and precious truths restored in the Book of Mormon, see Clyde J. Williams, “Plain and Precious Truths Restored,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2006, 50–54.

# Sariah

Sariah’s perseverance through  
incredible hardship is a testament  
to her great faith.

By Heather B. Moore

For Sariah, and for some others, following a prophet is not always the easiest path. But as Sariah’s experience attests, the Lord’s hand is loving and tender, even in the most trying and difficult moments of our lives.

## A Goodly Mother

Our first introduction to Sariah comes in the very first verse of the Book of Mormon when Nephi acknowledges that he was “born of goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1).

Sariah’s days in Jerusalem were perhaps more comfortable than they were for most people. Her husband, Lehi, had “gold and silver, and all manner of riches” (1 Nephi 3:16). When Lehi was commanded by the Lord to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2:1–3), Sariah chose to leave these comforts and take her children—over whom we can imagine she felt protective—into the dangerous wilderness.

## Trials in the Wilderness

With her material wealth left behind, Sariah’s devotion to her husband and her trust in his ability to receive revelation were severely tested. She underwent a particularly challenging trial of faith at the valley of Lemuel, where her husband, Lehi, received the revelation for their sons to return to Jerusalem to retrieve the brass plates (see 1 Nephi 3:4).

Sariah knew this would be no easy task, since she was no stranger to the perils of desert travel. Her sons might run into

hostile tribesmen.<sup>1</sup> They’d be exposed to the harsh elements. And even if they safely reached Jerusalem, they could potentially become targets of those who had sought “to take away [Lehi’s] life” (1 Nephi 2:1).

It was during the distressing days that followed, as Sariah waited for her sons’ return, that her confidence faltered. Fearing that her sons had died, she “complained against [Lehi]” and called him “a visionary man; saying: Behold thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 5:2).

When her sons returned, safe and alive, it’s no wonder that Sariah’s “joy was full” and that she “was comforted” (1 Nephi 5:7).

## Fortified in Her Faith

Humbled perhaps by her momentary doubts, Sariah shared her newly strengthened testimony: “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them” (1 Nephi 5:8).

But hardships continued. Starvation was a grave possibility as the family navigated the barren wastelands and relied



on the Liahona to guide them to “the more fertile parts of the wilderness” (1 Nephi 16:16). For Sariah and Lehi to bring two more sons into the world during their travails was no small matter either (see 1 Nephi 18:7). Plus, there were grandchildren born on the journey (see 1 Nephi 17:1) and all the challenges that come with providing for young children and an expanding family.

In addition to these and other physical challenges, Sariah endured what many mothers fear: deep conflict within her family. Her eldest sons continually abused their younger brother Nephi and even attempted to kill him more than once (see 1 Nephi 3:28–29; 7:16; 16:37; 17:48; 18:11).

When Ishmael died, mourning turned to bitterness, and Sariah’s eldest sons plotted with Ishmael’s sons against Lehi and Nephi. It was the power of the Lord’s voice that stopped the plan. (See 1 Nephi 16:34–39.)

Yet, Sariah appears to have persevered, relying on her

expression of faith in the valley of Lemuel to sustain her during many days of darkness.

### An Example of Perseverance

Although Sariah’s challenges were difficult and at times even devastating, through her diligence she witnessed the Lord’s eternal love and compassion. Her family was fed when hungry. Her sons’ and husband’s lives were spared multiple times. The family was guided to the promised land to begin anew. And today, her testimony blesses the lives of countless men, women, and children. As we look to the Lord as Sariah did and take upon us Christ’s yoke, we’ve been promised that our burdens will be light and that we’ll likewise “find rest unto [our] souls” (Matthew 11:29). ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

#### NOTE

1. See Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (1988), 241–43.



ILLUSTRATION BY ROSE DATOC DALL



*Joseph Smith*



*Samuel Smith*



*Lucy Mack Smith*



*Hyrum Smith*



*Hiram Page*



*The Three Witnesses*  
*Martin Harris David Whitmer Oliver Cowdery*



*Rhoda Greene*  
*(Brigham Young's sister)*



*Sally Parker*



*William McLellin*



*Rebecca Williams*



# Knowing Is Nice but Not Enough

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Here are some accounts of early Church members who heard testimonies from the Book of Mormon witnesses.

**By Steven C. Harper**

Professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University

**H**earing the testimony of a Book of Mormon witness could be the next best thing to seeing the gold plates or an angel. Many early Church members had that opportunity.

What follows are the accounts of several members who spoke with the Book of Mormon witnesses. We will see, however, as President Russell M. Nelson taught, that gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon is “nice, but it is not enough!”<sup>1</sup>

## **Rebecca Williams: “Their Word Is Believed”**

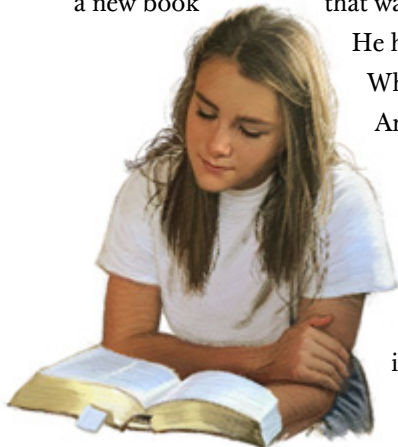
Rebecca Swain Williams heard several Book of Mormon witnesses in Ohio beginning in 1830. She bore her testimony to her father and brothers: “I have heard the same story from several of the [Smith] family and from the three witnesses themselves. I heard them declare in public meeting that they saw a Holy Angel come down from heaven and brought the plates and laid them before their eyes.”

When her family members rejected her testimony, Rebecca did not cower. She continued to love them, pray for them, and value her father’s good counsel. She also continued to testify to him that the Book of Mormon witnesses told the truth: “They are men of good character and their word is believed. . . . They have seen an angel of God and conversed with him.”<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1830s, a period of widespread dissent in the Church, Rebecca remained faithful, choosing to abide by the precepts of the Book of Mormon.<sup>3</sup>

### William McLellin: “Bound . . . to Acknowledge the Truth”

One morning in 1831 a young schoolteacher named William McLellin heard that some men on their way to Missouri would be preaching about a new book that was described as “a Revelation from God.”



He hurried to hear them. He listened to David Whitmer testify that he had “seen an Holy Angel who made known the truth of this record to him.” He deeply desired to know whether their testimonies were true. He followed them 400 miles (644 km) to Independence, Missouri, where he met and interviewed other witnesses, including Martin Harris and Hyrum Smith.<sup>4</sup>

William interviewed Hyrum for hours. “I inquired into the particulars of the coming forth of the record,” William recorded. The next morning, after praying to be directed to the truth, he realized that he was “bound as an honest man to acknowledge the truth and validity of the Book of Mormon.”<sup>5</sup>

In the following years, William’s faith was tested and strengthened by his choices and by the persecution the Latter-day Saints suffered. When Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, were attacked, William’s friend Hiram Page, one of the Eight Witnesses, was clubbed and whipped by men who said they would let him go if he would deny the Book of Mormon. “How can I deny what I know to be true?” Hiram said, and they beat him again.

William was strengthened by Hiram’s testimony—and understandably terrified of being beaten. When William heard that men in the area were offering a reward for the capture of him and Oliver Cowdery, they left town to hide in the woods with David Whitmer. There William interviewed two of the Three Witnesses. “I have never seen an open vision in my life,” he said, “but you men say you have, and therefore you positively know. Now you know that our lives are in danger every hour, if the mob can only catch us. Tell me in the fear of God, is that Book of Mormon true?”

“Brother William,” Oliver said, “God sent his holy angel to declare the truth of the translation of it to us, and therefore we know. And though the mob kill us, yet we must die declaring its truth.”

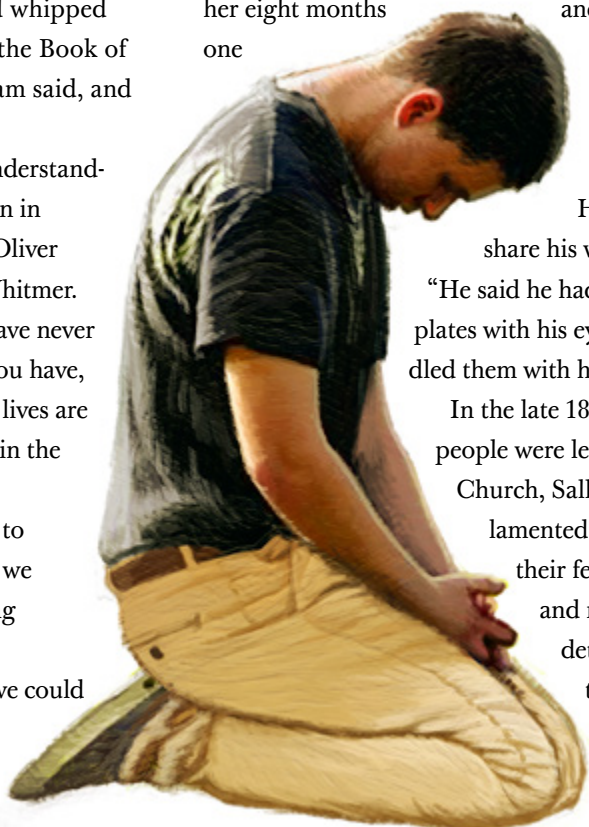
David added, “Oliver has told you the solemn truth, for we could not be deceived. I most truly declare to you its truth!”<sup>6</sup>

David, Martin, Hiram, Oliver, and William each came to know that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by the power of God. They knew that the gospel written on the gold plates was true. But later they let frustrations with Joseph fester until they stopped living by the teachings of the Book of Mormon.

Having witnessed their choices, the Prophet Joseph testified not only that the Book of Mormon was true—“the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion”—but that we “would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>7</sup>

### Sally Parker: “Strong in the Faith”

Sally Parker was a neighbor of Lucy Mack Smith in Kirtland, Ohio. “She told me the whole story,” Sally wrote. When she asked Lucy if she had seen the plates, “[Lucy] said no, it was not for her to see them, but she hefted and handled them and I believed all she said for I lived by her eight months and she was one of the best



of women.”  
In 1838, Sally heard Hyrum Smith

share his witness too:

“He said he had seen the plates with his eyes and handled them with his hands.”<sup>8</sup>

In the late 1830s, as many people were leaving the Church, Sally Parker

lamented the loss of their fellowship and renewed her determination to abide by the

precepts of the Book of Mormon. “I mean to hold on to that faith which is like a grain of mustard seed,” Sally wrote. “I feel the power of it in my heart now. I am as strong in the faith as I was when we were baptized and my mind is the same. I mean to hold on by the gospel till death.”<sup>9</sup>



### Rhoda Greene: “He Had the Spirit of God”

Lucy Mack Smith spoke in general conference in 1845, after all of the Book of Mormon witnesses in her family had died of illness or been killed. She told a story from her son Samuel’s first mission.

Samuel, one of the Eight Witnesses, visited the home of Rhoda Greene, whose husband was on a mission for another church. Samuel asked Rhoda if she would like a book. “It is a Book of Mormon that my Brother Joseph translated from plates out of the ground,” he explained.

Rhoda accepted a copy of the book to read and show her husband. When Samuel returned later, Rhoda told him her husband had no interest, and she could not buy the book. Sad, Samuel took the book and began to leave. Rhoda later told Lucy that Samuel then paused and looked at her. “She never saw a man look so,” Lucy said in her conference talk. “She knew that he had the Spirit of God.”

“The Spirit forbids me taking this book,” Samuel told Rhoda, who knelt and asked Samuel to pray with her. She kept the book, read it, and received a testimony of it. So, eventually, did her husband. They chose to abide by its precepts throughout their lives.

“And thus the work began,” Lucy testified, “and then it spread like a mustard seed.”<sup>10</sup>

Rhoda Greene is my ancestor. I am edified by her testimony of the Book of Mormon and by the recorded testimonies of the witnesses and

those who heard them. I am strengthened by their choices to abide by what the Book of Mormon teaches.

Each of us can be modern-day witnesses of the Book of Mormon, when the Holy Ghost confirms to us the truth of the book. Shortly before leaving for my mission, I finished reading the Book of Mormon, then knelt and prayed simply but with real intent, a sincere heart, and faith in Jesus Christ (see Moroni 10:3–4). I felt a powerful impression that conveyed, “You already know it’s true.” It came with peace I have never desired to resist. I have known since then that the Book of Mormon is true.

That is not enough, however. President Russell M. Nelson taught: “Whenever I hear anyone, including myself, say, ‘I know the Book of Mormon is true,’ I want to exclaim, ‘That’s nice, but it is not enough!’ We need to feel, deep in ‘the inmost part’ of our hearts, that the Book of Mormon *is* unequivocally the word of God. We must feel it so deeply that we would never want to live even one day without it.”<sup>11</sup> President Nelson’s teachings are true. My ongoing effort to live by the teachings of the Book of Mormon has brought me closer to God than anything else. ■

#### NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2017, 63.
2. Rebecca Swain Williams to Isaac Swain, Youngstown, New York, June 12, 1834, spelling standardized. See transcription and photographs of the letter in Janiece Johnson, “Give Up All and Follow Your Lord,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2002), 97–102.
3. See also Janiece Lyn Johnson, “Rebecca Swain Williams: Steadfast and Immobile,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2011, 38–41.
4. See *The Journals of William E. McLellin: 1831–1836*, ed. Jan Shipp and John W. Welch (1994), 29–33.
5. *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, 33, capitalization standardized.
6. In *William E. McLellin’s Lost Manuscript*, ed. Mitchell K. Schaefer (2012), 165–67.
7. Joseph Smith, in introduction to the Book of Mormon. For an analysis of this teaching, see Scott C. Esplin, “Getting ‘Nearer to God’: A History of Joseph Smith’s Statement,” in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (2007), 40–54.
8. In Janiece L. Johnson, “‘The Scriptures Is a Fulfilling’: Sally Parker’s Weave,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2005), 116, 115.
9. In Johnson, “‘The Scriptures Is a Fulfilling,’” 117.
10. Lucy Mack Smith, “This Gospel of Glad Tidings to All People,” in Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook, eds., *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (2017), 24.
11. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” 63.



# CHILDREN AND YOUTH: Starting Strong

Church leaders share how parents and wards can help children become like the Savior.

**W**hether you're excited or a little bit anxious about the Church's new effort—Children and Youth—you probably have some questions: “How will it help my children?” “How do we do this?” “What is my role in it?”

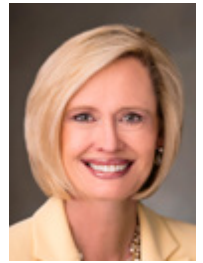
Church leaders provide some answers.

## Why is the Church making this change?

**Sister Bonnie H. Cordon:** As President Russell M. Nelson has taught, we all need to increase our capacity to receive revelation.<sup>1</sup> Children and Youth is set up to invite individuals and families to seek inspiration from the Spirit on how to progress and find joy on the covenant path. It's a wonderful parallel to what the prophet is envisioning for each one of us.

**Brother Stephen W. Owen:** President Nelson is also teaching us that we are a home-centered Church, no matter what our homes look like.<sup>2</sup> We're not a program-centered Church. Church leaders and teachers can help our children and youth learn and live the doctrine, but that responsibility begins in the home, and it's a daily responsibility.

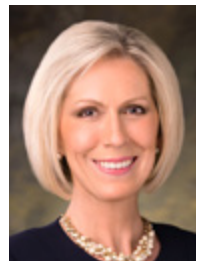
As the prophet has taught, we need to seek revelation and follow the Spirit, and Children and Youth will help us do that—partly because it's a simplification. In the past, there have been hundreds of requirements for parents to track and understand in Personal Progress, Duty to God, Faith in God, and other Church programs as their children progressed through



**Bonnie H. Cordon**  
Young Women  
General President



**Stephen W. Owen**  
Young Men  
General President



**Joy D. Jones**  
Primary General  
President

their teens. This new approach invites youth and children to seek inspiration as they set goals according to their needs and interests.

**Sister Joy D. Jones:** This is an exciting opportunity for our children and youth, the rising generation, to deepen their faith in Jesus Christ. As they learn to seek and respond to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, they will better understand their eternal identity and purpose and how they can progress and feel Heavenly Father's love for them. The Children and Youth focus can bless and strengthen our youth and their families in establishing and nurturing relationships in their homes, at church, and with their Heavenly Father.

### What are the first steps families can take to start applying Children and Youth?

**Sister Jones:** Pray together for the guidance of the Spirit. Parents can begin by talking with their family about the three areas of application in Children and Youth: gospel learning, service and activities, and personal development. What are they currently doing? How can they grow as individuals and as a family in these three areas? How will focusing on Luke 2:52 help guide their plans and goal setting to remember and follow the Savior? What a wonderful opportunity to strengthen youth, home, and family in very simple, consistent, and meaningful ways.

**Sister Cordon:** We start with a little bit at a time. Walking on the covenant path really is just placing one foot in front of the other. Make one goal. Start simply. The guidebooks for youth and children will give us a wonderful pattern to follow.

**Brother Owen:** We shouldn't make this too complicated. This is very simple. Read Luke 2:52. Start there. A parent can then sit down with their child or youth at home and talk about it. "How





are we going to help you grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man?” “What could we learn or do together?” “What goals can you set?” Just make it simple.

### **If there was one thing you wanted children and youth to know as this rolls out, what would that be?**

**Sister Cordon:** This is an amazing opportunity to grow as the Savior did! If we’re wondering, “What do I focus on?” we can remember that we are already doing many things to become like Him. Gospel learning is happening in many homes and at church. We’re serving and participating in activities. This new effort is simply a way for us to be intentional and accountable about acting on what we are learning—and to focus that growth in the four areas that the Savior grew: spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually (see Luke 2:52). This will bring joy, peace, and lasting happiness to us all as we follow the Savior!

**Sister Jones:** Development is focused on the Savior, centered in the family, and supported by the Church. This is simplification and personalization as we step away from past programs. Growth will come individually. I hope children, youth, leaders, and their families will understand that this is an attainable, adaptable way for all of Heavenly Father’s children around the globe to progress together and experience enduring joy on the covenant path. This won’t be a big change or a difficult learning curve. It is doing more of what we are already doing, as we are guided by the Spirit, so that our sincere efforts can expand our ability to lovingly and effectively follow the Savior.

### **Why is it important for youth and children to develop like the Savior?**

**Sister Jones:** First and foremost, they have made covenants to always follow Him. They have made covenants “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places” (Mosiah 18:9). So they need to develop as He did: spiritually, socially, physically, intellectually. Their covenants are not only the *reason* they should do so, but they also provide the empowering *ability* to help them accomplish their goals.

**Brother Owen:** Our whole purpose in life is to follow and become like our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We want to be like Them. We start practicing this at a young age, so we have a pattern for the rest of our lives. And we are really following the Savior when we do the things He did.

**Sister Cordon:** The Savior is our example in all things. We study His life and mission and teachings because He is everything we aspire to become. But since each of us is unique, we each have attributes and skills that we need to develop to become like Him. This new approach gives children and youth a customized opportunity to grow in those unique ways, to develop their individual gifts, and to identify those things they feel prompted to do to become more like the Savior. That’s what makes this so personal. There is not a set checklist. The goals we each set to move forward on the covenant path will be different, but together we will be learning and growing and drawing closer to our Savior.

### **What do you hope children and youth will feel when they participate?**

**Sister Cordon:** I hope they gain a deeper understanding of their eternal identity and feel that they belong. When we know who we are and Whose we are, we act differently. They’ll learn to recognize that what some social media says is not true, because they have experienced how the Spirit speaks to them. They’ll gain confidence in themselves and in their divine potential as daughters and sons of God.

**Sister Jones:** We want them to feel faith and hope in Jesus Christ, to feel the peace that comes from keeping the commandments, to experience healthy relationships, to learn resilience, to feel the joy of service to others, and to feel the happiness and fulfillment of participating in the work of salvation.

**Brother Owen:** I hope that children will understand the gospel in a way that will get from their head down into their heart. This is not about checking things off. It’s a process of learning and becoming like the Savior. I would

really hope that our children and those we minister to will feel confident enough in their gospel understanding to teach it to others. For example, I would hope that we could ask our children a question about the gospel and we would hear a very profound response because they have learned it and it's part of who they are.

### **How will parents know if Children and Youth is successful in their home?**

**Brother Owen:** I would be looking for the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5, such as more peace at home. I think their children will be more kind, more loving. Their children will want to be with the family. They'll be more likely to pray and seek answers. They'll see improvement not just spiritually but also socially, physically, and intellectually.

**Sister Jones:** They will know it is successful as relationships are strengthened, as family members experience realistic improvement and keep trying even when they struggle, as they demonstrate mutual support and caring for one another, and as the influence of the Holy Ghost is actively sought after and present in their home. Family members might see a clearer connection between what they are doing every day and the life of Christ. Perhaps there will be greater appreciation of agency and repentance, improved attitudes, increased confidence, efforts to reach outward rather than turning inward, and a greater appreciation for the Savior, His life, His teachings, His example, and His Atonement.

### **What counsel would you give to parents who might feel a little anxious about leaving behind the previous Church programs?**

**Sister Cordon:** Of course we love the previous programs, because each one of us developed and had an opportunity to see others develop within those programs. They were inspired for their time. But aren't we grateful for continuing revelation? The Lord needs us to continue to progress and change, and He needs our programs to progress and change to meet the needs of members worldwide. We are always striving to improve and to become the Church and people our Heavenly Father knows and needs us to be.

**Sister Jones:** We have been very blessed by the programs of the past and can be grateful for all that we have learned and experienced. This is a wonderful new season, and it is an opportunity to seek the Lord's guidance to learn and grow in new and inspired ways.

### **How can leaders help children and youth grow in personal development?**

**Brother Owen:** First of all, I think the adult leader needs to see that child or that young man or young woman as God sees them, meaning who that person can become, not just who they are now. Start with the end in mind. Have the long view. This is going to take time. See what children and youth can become. Develop enough of a relationship that when you need to speak to the youth, they respect you enough to listen.

Also, get to know the parents. Find out from them how you can help. Respect their role as parents.

**Sister Jones:** Primary doesn't have the structure of quorum and class presidencies that young men and young women have. Primary leaders and teachers, as well as ministering brothers and sisters, provide help for children who don't have gospel support in their homes. It's important, however, that we always honor the relationship between children, youth, and their parents, whatever the home situation might be. Children and Youth can provide a way to invite the entire family to come and see and come and help. It could be a means of strengthening the entire family, whether or not they are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Sister Cordon:** We have many children and youth without their parents at church on Sunday but who still have loving parents. I would encourage leaders to get to know the parents and find out what dreams and aspirations they have for their children. We can help. As we work in tandem with parents, we'll strengthen the individuals *and* their homes and also encourage the children and youth to strengthen each other's homes.



## What would you say to overwhelmed parents who fear that they won't be able to help their children succeed in Children and Youth?

**Sister Cordon:** The great thing is that we're already doing most of it. Families are already learning the gospel together. We're already doing service and activities. We have always had a personal development effort; now we're just focusing on the ways that Christ grew.

As we sit down with our children, I think we're going to really enjoy it. You can just listen to the heart of your child in a normal, natural way. Our Heavenly Father wants your child to grow, find joy, and return to live with Him. You will feel the Holy Ghost guide you as *together* you strive to make the gospel and our Savior Jesus Christ part of every aspect of your life.

**Sister Jones:** Begin in the way it works for your family. Trust that you will have heaven's help. Seek the Spirit's guidance. Children and Youth will be a valuable parenting tool. There are many demands on parents today as they guide and nurture their families. It is easy to sometimes feel overburdened. Children and Youth will help parents distill what is essential from what is important. Helping our families learn how to follow the Savior through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is vital for all of us and will bring the Lord's love and blessings.

**Brother Owen:** I think you're going to really be able to help your children and youth. You don't have to do some great thing. It comes down to being faithful and prayerful and creating some holy habits and righteous routines in your family. Start with some basic, simple, righteous habits, and you will see miracles happen in the lives of your children. ■

### NOTES

1. See Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign*, May 2018, 93–96.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Ensign*, Nov. 2018, 6–8.

### RESOURCES TO HELP

In Church magazines:

- Wendy Ulrich, "Motivating the Rising Generation," *Ensign*, Jan. 2020, 58.
- Heather Bergeson and Amanda Dunn, "Children and Youth: A Focus for Everyday Life," *New Era*, Jan. 2020, 6.
- Joy D. Jones, "A Little Better Every Day," *Friend*, Jan. 2020, 20.
- Brittany Beattie, "Ministering to Children and Youth," *Ensign*, Oct. 2019, 28.

Online: [childrenandyouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://childrenandyouth.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)





# Motivating the Rising Generation

Here are four ways to help your children set and achieve meaningful goals to grow as the Savior did.

By Wendy Ulrich, PhD

As parents and leaders, we want to help children and youth become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ who are motivated from within to serve the Lord and fulfill their personal missions.

Children and Youth is a simple but powerful set of resources to help children and youth grow spiritually, socially, physically, and intellectually, as the Savior did (see Luke 2:52). This can happen as they learn and live the gospel of Jesus Christ, participate in meaningful and exciting service and activities, and set and achieve their own goals. Like the parents in the story below, however, we may already feel overburdened without adding someone else's goals to our list. Or we may worry that our children won't grow unless pushed.

### Goal-Setting Conversation, Example 1:

*Alana, 15, sat with her mother, Rachel, scanning a list they had made of potential goals that Alana could work on. Alana's dad, Jeff, walked by. "Which of these should I do, Dad?" Alana asked.*

*Jeff looked at his watch, grimacing a little, and glanced at the list. "Um, this one looks easy. How about 'Memorize a hymn'? You can get that one checked off pretty fast. What else looks easy?"*

*Rachel jumped in, remembering how reluctant Alana had been to try out for the school track team. "Actually, maybe you need to try something hard! How about something with exercise?" she suggested.*

*"Ugh," mumbled Alana, reaching for her phone. "I think I'm done."*

### How Can Parents and Leaders Help?

Parents and leaders can do a lot to help children and youth be motivated from within to adopt good values, make good choices, and enjoy both their progress and their accomplishments.

Think of a time when you were highly motivated to work toward a goal. What motivated you? Chances are you saw an opportunity or skill you really wanted or a problem you needed to solve. The example and support of others inspired you to try.

Likewise, children and youth will be more motivated from within when they (1) prayerfully decide what they want (not just what others want for them), (2) create a plan for getting it, (3) aren't overly influenced by rewards or punishments, and (4) feel parents and leaders are on their side.

### 1. Help youth figure out what they want most

Everyone wants something: to make the team, get more sleep, feel less lonely, be closer to God. The Lord and His messengers often ask people, "What do you want?" (see Mark 11:24; 1 Nephi 11:1–2; Alma 18:15; 3 Nephi 27:1–2; Ether 2:23–25). But knowing what we want most, not just what we want right now, takes experience and self-reflection.

As you think of a child or youth you want to help, ask yourself:

- How could I introduce them to new experiences, values, and ideas in a context of positive relationships and fun?
- Do I let them experience the consequences of poor choices so they want to make better ones?
- When can I ask them about what they believe and value? (See the accompanying list, "Helpful Discovery Questions.")
- How can I point out their strengths? (Try: "I see you being really good at \_\_\_\_\_. How could you use that to serve the Lord?")

### 2. Help youth create a plan

Once they settle on a goal, youth are often pretty good at figuring out a plan. Younger children may need more ideas.



Add your suggestions only when they are stuck. But be excited, not defensive, if they like their ideas better than yours!

To help others create a plan, you could ask:

- What's your goal? (Abstract goals like "Be nicer" are hard to define unless they include specific actions like "Compliment someone every day" or "Apologize when I get mad.")
- Why is this goal important to you? (How will it help them live their values or become more like the Savior?)
- Is this a good time to work on this goal? (Why or why not?)
- What is a small, easy step you could take to get started? (Remind them that action creates motivation. Help them start, or start again, with something small and simple.)
- How could you set things up to support your plan? (Consider creating reminders, posting words of encouragement, making a chart or timetable to track progress, removing temptations, getting the right tools, or asking for help.)
- What obstacles might get in your way? How could you handle them? (Help them remember their plan, get curious about what went wrong, practice the hard parts more, try a new strategy, or adjust the goal.)



To help others through setbacks, you could share experiences from your life or family about people facing trials and being resilient. Also try asking:

- What have you tried? What else could you try?
- Who can help? How can I help?
- What ideas come to mind as you pray about this?

### 3. *Be cautious with rewards or punishments*

Small rewards can help people try something new, make a hard task more fun, or celebrate success. When overdone, however, rewards can actually undermine motivation. People who already enjoy a task will often do it less, not more, if they are paid for doing it, concluding that it isn't worth doing just for the reward. And while children need to experience the consequences of poor choices, they

learn to fear and avoid people who punish them rather than learning to internalize good values.

Of course, people expect to be paid at work, where bonuses or recognition can also provide helpful feedback. But when it comes to living the gospel and achieving personal goals, internal rewards are the most motivating in the long run. Internal rewards include:

- Feeling the Spirit.
- Feeling connected with parents, leaders, and friends.
- Living their values.
- Learning, trying new things, and solving problems.
- Having fun.
- Making a difference for good.

Help young people recognize and value these internal rewards. And occasionally provide a small related reward to celebrate a job well done!

### 4. *Help youth feel your love*

Loving relationships are one of the most important ways to influence others' values, goals, and motivation. How have people communicated to you that they truly love and cherish you? How do you decide who is safe to be honest with about your mistakes or struggles? If you didn't really feel loved at home, what do you think you needed that you didn't get?

Your answers can help you know how to communicate to young people that they are cherished and safe with you.

With practice and heaven's help, we can help motivate and influence the rising generation.

### Goal-Setting Conversation, Example 2:

*Alana, 15, sat with her mother, Rachel, scanning a list of goals Alana could work on when Alana's dad, Jeff, walked by. "Which of these should I do, Dad?" Alana asked.*

*Jeff looked at his watch, grimacing a little, and glanced at the list. "Um, this one looks easy. How about 'Memorize a hymn'? You can get that one checked off fast. What else looks easy?"*

*Jeff paused. Something didn't feel right, so he took the time to think about what it was.*

*I'm late, he thought. I just want to get this over with. I'm not very good at this parenting stuff. Hmmm. He looked at his daughter and then realized he felt other feelings too. Hope. Delight. This was not just about checking things off. This was about her growth. And this was a chance to connect with her. A smile spread across his face.*

*"Let's stop and think about this," he said. "What if we each write*

*down what we have felt prompted to work on lately?"*

*"Um, OK," said Alana. Rachel found pencils and paper, and they spent a few minutes thinking and writing.*

*"OK," said Rachel. "Now what?"*

*Alana remembered, "I think we're supposed to pray about it and then choose a goal and make a plan. But Dad, do you really think*

*Heavenly Father cares about what goal I choose?"*

*Jeff reflected. "You have lots of good ideas, so maybe Heavenly Father just wants you to choose one to start with. But I am absolutely sure of one thing. Heavenly Father cares about you."*

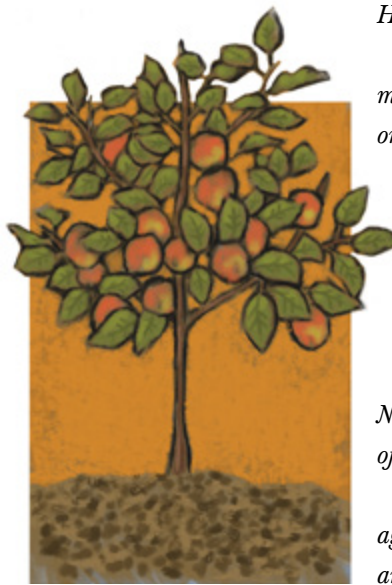
*"I know you want to use your gifts to make a difference," added Rachel, "so if one of these is more important, I'm sure Heavenly Father will help you feel that."*

*Alana smiled, then remembered, "President Nelson asked the youth to do a thorough assessment of our lives. Can I go get what I wrote?"*

*"Sure!" said Jeff, smiling. He looked at his watch again. "Oops, I've got to run. Find what you wrote and let's talk at dinner, OK? I have some questions that might help."*

*"Great!" said Alana, smiling. "And, Dad? Mom? Thanks." ■*

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*



## HELPFUL DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

To help children and youth find what they want most, discuss some of these questions with them:

Whom do you admire? Why?

How do you like to be treated? How do you want to treat others?

What promises in the scriptures, teachings of prophets, or your patriarchal blessing seem important to your future?

What would you like more or less of in your life?

When are you happy and engaged with life? Doing what?

What would you do with your life if you weren't afraid to fail?

What problem is bugging you these days?

What do you think the Lord wants for you and from you?

What would you like to try or learn this year? Why?

What are your goals this week? Why might they matter to the Lord?

As we talk, I hear you saying you want \_\_\_\_\_. Is that right? What else?



## 8 New Temples Announced

President Russell M. Nelson announced plans to build eight new temples in the following locations:

- Freetown, Sierra Leone**
- Orem, Utah, USA**
- Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea**
- Bentonville, Arkansas, USA**
- Bacolod, Philippines**
- McAllen, Texas, USA**
- Cobán, Guatemala**
- Taylorsville, Utah, USA**

“Greater happiness comes from greater personal holiness.”

President Henry B. Eyring, “Holiness and the Plan of Happiness,” 100.



### Temple Worthiness

“Individual worthiness to enter the Lord’s house requires much individual spiritual preparation. But with the Lord’s help, nothing is impossible. . . . Individual worthiness requires a total conversion of mind and heart to be more like the Lord, to be an honest citizen, to be a better example, and to be a holier person.”

President Russell M. Nelson, “Closing Remarks,” 121, 122.

### PONDER THIS . . .

#### What does it mean to take up your cross?

“Taking upon yourselves your crosses and following [the Savior] means continuing with faith on the Lord’s path, maintaining a pattern of dignity, and not indulging in worldly habits that will eventually take away our hope in God’s love and mercy,” said Elder Ulisses Soares (“Take Up Our Cross,” 114). If you need help taking up your cross, consider watching or reading Elder Soares’s conference talk or any of the following:

- D. Todd Christofferson, “The Joy of the Saints,” 15.
- Neil L. Andersen, “Fruit,” 116.
- Reyna I. Aburto, “Thru Cloud and Sunshine, Lord, Abide with Me!” 57.
- L. Todd Budge, “Consistent and Resilient Trust,” 47.
- Jorge M. Alvarado, “After the Trial of Our Faith,” 50.

*All quotations come from the November 2019 Ensign.*



## YOU'RE INVITED

Nephi declared that **the Lord invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness”** (2 Nephi 26:33). During general conference, Church leaders extended similar invitations to the Saints. Here are a few of them:

- “I invite you to commit to a lifelong process of discipleship” (Dale G. Renlund, “Unwavering Commitment to Jesus Christ,” 25).
- “I invite you to consider the promises and covenants you make with the Lord, and with others, with great integrity, knowing that your word is your bond” (Ronald A. Rasband, “Standing by Our Promises and Covenants,” 56).
- “No matter who you are or what you’re dealing with, you are invited to the Lord’s table” (Michelle Craig, “Spiritual Capacity,” 21).
- “I invite you to study and ponder these words [the revised Young Women theme]. I know that as you do, you will gain a testimony of their truthfulness” (Bonnie H. Cordon, “Beloved Daughters,” 67).

## “I AM YOUR FRIEND”

“I attended the women’s session of general conference in October 2019. I had invited my Relief Society ministering companion and one of the ladies we visit to the session, but neither of them was able to go with me. When I arrived in the chapel, I sat down and began to cry a little, sad that I was alone. I thought, ‘I wish I had a good friend who could come here with me and lift me up.’ Almost immediately, the Holy Ghost clearly yet softly whispered to me, ‘I am your friend, and I can lift you up.’ The message comforted me throughout the meeting. I received even more messages during that meeting as the Spirit testified to me that He is my friend and He *does* lift me up.”

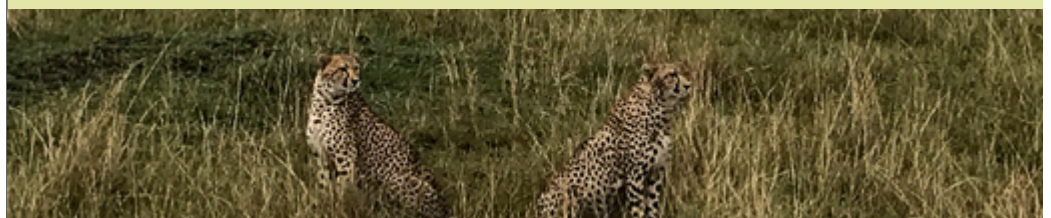
—Connie Davis, Utah, USA

## Watchful unto Prayer

“I promise that the blessings of effective preparation and spiritual protection will flow into your life as you are watchful unto prayer vigilantly and continually,” said Elder David A. Bednar in his memorable talk about topis and cheetahs (“Watchful unto Prayer Continually,” 35). He shared three lessons on vigilance and invited Church members to identify additional lessons:

1. **Beware of evil’s beguiling disguises.**
2. **Stay awake and be alert.**
3. **Understand the intent of the enemy.**

See “Watchful unto Prayer Continually,” 31–35.



## A Reservoir of Testimony

During my freshman year of high school, my parents got divorced. For years, I had watched my dad not take the sacrament. I knew he struggled to keep the commandments, but I did not understand the extent or length of those struggles. It was only when my parents told me about his excommunication that my sister and I finally learned the details.

“I hate you!” I yelled over and over, sobbing. I was furious. *How could he do this to our family?* I thought. *How could he lie to us for so long?*

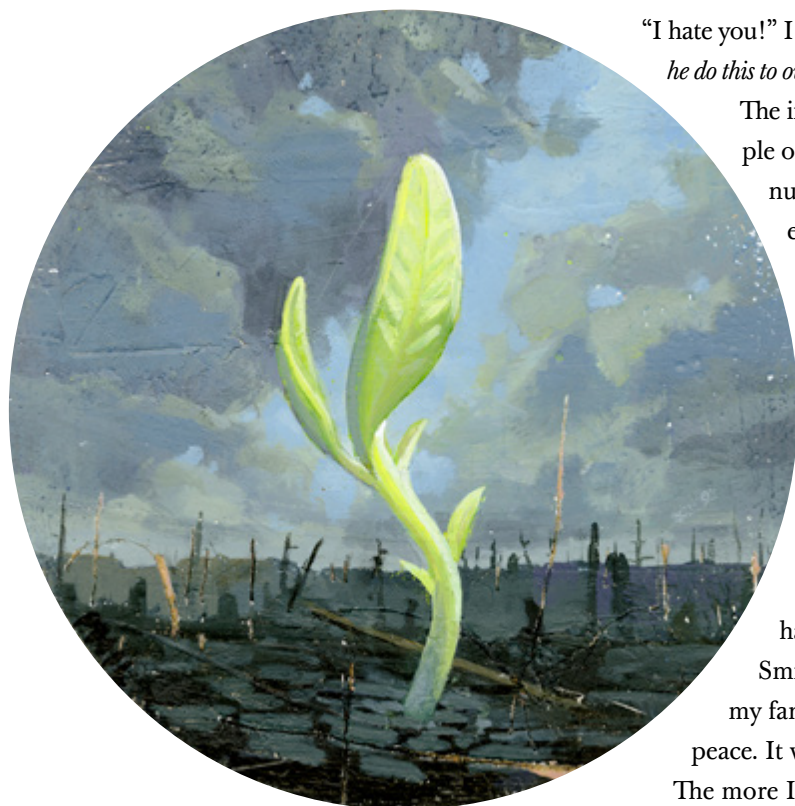
The initial shock and anger didn’t last long. Within a couple of weeks, my anger gave way to numbness. At first, numbness was a relief from the anger and pain I felt, but eventually my relief changed to desperation. I felt my life crashing down around me. More than ever before, I needed to feel connected to heaven. I needed to feel God’s love, guidance, peace, and healing.

Soon, general conference came. During one session, I listened and waited to feel God’s comfort. But it didn’t come. There in the dark chapel, I thought, *I cannot feel the Holy Ghost, but I’m sure He’s here. He has to be here.* As I thought this, I started remembering the many small witnesses I had received that the scriptures were true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, that Heavenly Father had blessed my family, and that keeping the commandments brought peace. It was as if I had a reservoir of testimony.

The more I reflected on my past spiritual witnesses, the more I realized that even though I desperately wanted to feel the Spirit, it really didn’t matter that I could not feel His influence at that exact moment. I already had a store of quiet, constant witnesses that the gospel was true.

That knowledge sustained me and gave me the desire to continue keeping the commandments even when there seemed to be no immediate payoff. Gradually, I felt Heavenly Father’s and the Savior’s love more in my life. Staying close to Them, even when I couldn’t always feel Them near, brought me an undeniable peace and a stronger testimony of the Savior’s gospel. This continues to influence me now when I face uncertainty or heartache. I know I can trust Heavenly Father and the Savior, and that They will heal, uplift, and strengthen me and each one of us. ■

**Name withheld, Utah, USA**



*It really didn’t matter that I could not feel the Spirit at that moment. I already had a store of quiet, constant witnesses.*

# Would He Understand?

In 2005, I gave birth to premature triplets: Milena, Mateo, and Nelson. Milena was born healthy, but my two little boys suffered complications. Mateo died of those complications three months after he was born.

A month after we lost Mateo, Nelson was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and deafness. We were devastated. Doctors told us he would never walk. At that moment, we were grateful for our knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It helped us understand why we experience adversity in this life.

Through faith and hard work, Nelson learned to walk and to communicate through sign language. He has done much better than his doctors ever predicted. He has grown up happy in our family and in the gospel.

Despite his limitations, we have had several goals for Nelson: that he

understand the meaning of baptism before he was baptized, that he receive the Aaronic Priesthood at age 12, and that he go to the temple to do baptisms for the dead.

In 2017, Nelson turned 12. We helped him prepare to do baptisms for the dead. It was a challenge for him to understand that those who have died without baptism need our help. Soon after Nelson's birthday, he, Milena, his older siblings Franco and Brenda, and other youth from our ward went to the Córdoba Argentina Temple. The temple president greeted them and spoke to them about the importance of vicarious baptism. I sat with Nelson and signed for him. Before long, it was his turn. When he stepped into the baptismal font, we wondered, would he truly understand?

As he entered the

water, Nelson became emotional. At that moment, the Holy Ghost manifested to us that he did in fact understand that he was doing something for his deceased ancestors that they could not do for themselves. We knew he understood that family members on the other side of the veil were happy he was helping them. The Spirit also manifested to us that Mateo was there to accompany his brother and sister. When Nelson came out of the water, he was very happy.

Since then, Nelson has been baptized and confirmed for many family members, including my father, who passed away in 2016. We love the temple. Serving there has become one of our family traditions. Each time we go, we remember that special day. ■

**Miriam Rosana Galeano, Córdoba, Argentina**

*Serving in the temple has become one of our family traditions. Each time we go, we remember Nelson's special day.*



# “In the Wisdom of Him Who Knoweth All Things”

When I entered the missionary training center, I found out there was a lot to learn. I did my best to study, to strengthen my testimony, and to build on the foundation I already had. I would pray, ask Heavenly Father a question, and then search for answers. This practice changed my life.

One day while I was serving as a missionary in Peru, a fellow elder received a letter telling him that his best friend’s father had died unexpectedly. He was in tears. “Why would Heavenly Father let this happen?” he cried.

This question penetrated my heart. That night, I knelt and asked Father in Heaven the same question. Then, searching in the Book of Mormon, I read 2 Nephi 2:24: “But behold, all

things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.”

That passage landed in my heart and didn’t leave. I wrote a card to the elder and included that scripture as part of my testimony. I assured him that everything would be OK because Heavenly Father does things in wisdom. We can trust Him because He loves us and knows all things.

About a year and a half later, I was serving in the mountains of Peru when I received an unexpected phone call from my mission president. He told me my father had suffered a stroke and was in critical condition. After a short time, my father passed away. I was devastated, and I felt plagued with questions like, “How can I ever get over this?”

I prayed to Heavenly Father for an answer. Mostly I wanted to know why my father had to be taken away without me even having the chance to say goodbye. I turned to the Book of Mormon, opened it, and read the same words I had shared with that elder many months before: “But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.” Those words covered me with peace like a blanket and gave me grace when I felt lost.

My earthly father was gone, but my Heavenly Father would always be there for me. Heavenly Father does all things in His wisdom, and as we search and do our best to prepare ourselves, we can find precious answers. ■

**Christopher Deaver, California, USA**

*While serving in the mountains of Peru, I received an unexpected call from my mission president.*

## BONUS ARTICLE

Read an additional “Latter-day Saint Voices” article in the digital version of this issue in the Gospel Library app or at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).



**M**y new call to serve confirmed that the Lord had brought me to the right place at the right time.



## A Magnificent New Chapter

I closed one chapter in my life when I became a widow in October 2010. At that time, I worked as an educator in southern France. An accident at work limited my mobility, and I was frustrated that I couldn't quickly regain my health and strength. I had enjoyed a rewarding professional life for 11 years. I loved my work. I had many friends. But I could no longer meet the requirements of my job.

I must admit that, after more than 33 years of practicing the Word of Wisdom, I wondered why I was unable to “run and not be weary” or “walk and not faint” (see Doctrine and Covenants 89:20). Finally, I had to retire earlier than expected, closing

another chapter in my life.

I was living with my daughter when she received notice that her work was transferring her to the Paris area. I decided I should go with her and open a new chapter in my life in a new place.

Shortly after arriving, we were both called to work in the Paris France Temple. My call to serve in the temple confirmed to me that I was in the right place at the right time because the Lord had brought me here. I have found much joy serving on a regular basis in the house of the Lord, and it's fantastic to share moments in the temple with my daughter. It fills my heart with joy!

Today, I see the great blessing that

was at first hidden behind an affliction. Being reduced in my mobility, unable to practice my profession, and having to retire early was difficult. But I know that our Lord Jesus Christ carried me. He has helped me to slow down and find the rest, hope, and peace that are now such a large part of my life.

Every time I walk through the doors of the temple, I feel the Holy Spirit. In difficult times with so much pressure from the world upon us, it is wonderful to know that the Lord has given us holy places where everything is orderly and beautiful. I feel immense gratitude for this new chapter of temple service in my life. It is magnificent! ■

**Sylvie Cornette, Île-de-France, France**

# Young Adults

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## Repentance Is a Gift

I think sometimes it's easy for young adults to believe that repentance is a scary thing. It's true that it can be scary to admit what we've done if we're afraid it means a loss of love from people we care about or from our Heavenly Father. With that view of repentance, we might be tempted to confess "just enough" to pass what feels like a test to move up to the next level. However, I have learned through my experiences that that's not **what true repentance is like**. Repentance isn't always comfortable, but if we understand how much **the Lord loves us and wants to help us**, the fear melts away as we exercise our faith in His ability to make us clean. I've learned that as I exercise my faith in Christ through repentance, **my past mistakes don't have to define my present or my future** (read more in my article on page 70).

In digital-only articles, Evita points out that **true repentance brings us gratitude for the Savior and His Atonement** and gives us strength to resist future temptation. Leah adds that we don't even have to wait for the sacrament on Sunday—**turning to the Lord through repentance each day gives us power** to break even small habits that take us away from Him. And if we do make serious mistakes, Jori's story of her unplanned pregnancy and Jessica's story of coming back to the gospel teach us that **repentance can help us understand the Savior's love** for each one of us.

Repentance is a gift that I'm grateful to have in my life. God knows that we're human and that we make dumb choices sometimes. As imperfect as we are, **there's hope** for us. If we put our trust in the Savior, He will walk with us on the road back to our Father in Heaven—however long it takes.

Cheers,  
Richard Monson



Find these articles and more at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) or in *YA Weekly* (under the Young Adults section in the Gospel Library app).



PHOTOGRAPH FROM GETTY IMAGES

YOUNG ADULTS

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# It's Where I'm Headed, Not Where I've Been

By Richard Monson

**M**y life didn't exactly turn out the way I thought.

At 18, I expected to serve a full-time mission, get married relatively soon thereafter, and start a family by 25. Now I'm 32 years old. I didn't serve a mission, and I was inactive in the Church for most of my adult life. I got married—got divorced—and got married again.

Because I took a path that diverged from the strait and narrow multiple times, I haven't always felt like I fit in at church. However, I've come to realize that there is a place for me. My experiences have taught me that the power of the Savior and His Atonement is real and that what matters most isn't where I've been but which way I'm going now.

I think I initially questioned what I believed because I wasn't confident that my testimony was strong enough for me to go on a mission. I remember around the time I graduated high school thinking something like, *What if my testimony isn't fully mine? What if I've been relying too much on the testimonies of other people?*

That bothered me. I wanted to go on a mission, but I wondered if the spiritual experiences I had had up to that point were enough to make me what I thought a successful missionary was supposed to be—someone who had enough spiritual strength and knew enough about the gospel to teach other people.

I took a path that diverged from the strait and narrow multiple times, but through it all, I've learned that the power of the Savior and His Atonement is real.



I got lost  
in comparing  
my **spiritual**  
**stature** to  
others'.

Looking back, I should have asked God to help me understand the counsel given in Doctrine and Covenants 124:97: “Let him be humble before me, . . . and he shall receive of my Spirit, even the Comforter, which shall manifest unto him the truth of all things, and shall give him, in the very hour, what he shall say.”

But rather than asking God, I got lost in comparing my spiritual stature to others', and I was afraid that my inadequacies would keep people from accepting the gospel.

Out on my own as a young adult, I continued trying to figure out what I believed. I didn't see the harm of what I saw as isolated decisions that didn't redefine who I was as a person. I began to pull away from those that I loved because I knew they would be disappointed in the choices I was making. Instead, I surrounded myself with people who didn't really care what I was doing.

One day I tried an alcoholic drink out of curiosity. Drinking became a part of my life and eventually went from just recreation to something I used as a crutch to cope with difficult experiences. The negative changes in my life during that time weren't necessarily tied to any one choice; they were gradual. It took me two years to realize that the small choices I made over time had led me to a place I didn't want to be.

Now, I'm not saying that in order to learn the truthfulness of the gospel, you should experience the opposite. My actions caused pain not just for me but also for people I loved—much of it unnecessary. I'm grateful that I was able to humble myself enough to realize that (1) I was miserable, and (2) I had been happiest when I was living God's commandments. That was something I knew for myself, something I could stand behind and share with others.

I went to my bishop to make things right, and we met regularly to prepare me to serve a mission. My papers were almost finished when I was prompted to make sure that he understood some of the choices I had made. That conversation wasn't easy, but even more than I wanted to go on a mission, I wanted to be right before God. I was willing to own what I had done wrong and lay it all out before Him so I could be clean.

Soon after, I came before a disciplinary council. It was scary in some ways to admit what I had done in front of people who had been my leaders and mentors for years, but as I looked around the room, I felt peace. I could see that they were there to understand and help me. As I left, I felt the Spirit assure me that no matter what the decision was, I was doing my part and I was going to be OK. God and leaders who loved me would work with me to get me where I needed to be. I walked away feeling the love of the Savior and knowing that I wasn't beyond His redemption.

### **A Place for Imperfection**

Despite the peace I had felt, it was hard to face the questions from people about why I wasn't on a mission. As I continued working through the repentance process with the help of my bishop, it became less and less likely that serving a mission was in my future. I had to figure out how to move forward with my life. At 21, because I didn't fall into the pre-missionary, returned missionary, or married groups of young adults, it was hard to feel like I belonged anywhere.

Dating was tough. Sometimes girls would treat me differently after I would tell them I didn't serve a mission and that I was inactive for a period of time. For one reason or another, most interactions never made it past the first date.

I was happy that I eventually did get married in the temple, but sometimes I still felt like I didn't fit in. I had a testimony, but I couldn't figure out how to share it, and church classrooms felt like tests

where my peers would see me fail. I thought that because most of them had the lives I wanted, they hadn't stumbled as much as I had.

One day the bishop called me in and extended the call to teach elders quorum. I was surprised, since I had only been to elders quorum twice in the last year. Despite feeling incredibly anxious, I accepted the calling. On my first Sunday teaching, I found myself starting out with probably the strangest introduction they had ever heard:

"Hi, brothers, I'm Richard Monson. I never served a mission and I've been inactive most of my adult life. I haven't attended elders quorum pretty much ever because I don't feel like I belong or fit in. I won't be able to answer all your questions, but I'm hoping that you will participate so we can learn together. If you're OK with where I'm coming from, then we'll get started."

I realized that day that I could admit to others—and to myself—that even though I didn't consider myself a "straight arrow" (someone who served a mission, was active all their lives, and hadn't made serious mistakes), I was

I realized that even though I didn't consider myself a "straight arrow," **I was pointed in the same direction** as they were, and that was what mattered.



pointed in the same direction as they were, and that was what mattered. To my amazement, I found that more than one of these men whom I thought led perfect lives had made mistakes too. I think it reinforced the idea to all of us that perfection isn't a requirement to bring value to the class or the Church as a whole.

### **Difficult Times and a Decision**

Unfortunately, my activity in the Church didn't last. My marriage was difficult, and I turned to old vices to escape my pain. Hobbies began to replace church attendance.

Three years passed, and I reached rock bottom. I had to make a choice. Could I live the gospel for myself regardless of what was happening in my life? Or would I just give in to the darkness? I knew that committing to the strait and narrow path meant getting rid of negative influences in my life. Also, my desires to go back to church highlighted that my spouse and I were on different paths. With the state of our marriage at that point, we were headed toward divorce already.

I was scared. There was no guarantee that my efforts would grant me the good things I wanted in this life. But my decision came back to what I had learned years before—that I was happiest living the gospel. I decided to commit fully and put myself in God's hands, come what may. From here on out, it was me and Him.

Once again, I started going back to church and getting my life on track. One of the happiest days of my life was when I received a temple recommend again. I found solace in the temple as my marriage continued to fracture and ultimately came to an end.

### **Finding My Source of Self-Worth**

As scary as that decision felt, through that experience I learned to appreciate God's hand in my path. Even though I had stumbled, the race wasn't lost. I wasn't competing with anyone else. When I relied on the Savior for my self-worth, I could stop spending all my efforts trying to change others' perspective of me.

I found myself at church being OK sitting alone or amidst members who were in different stages of life. I made an effort not to hide and made myself available to talk with people in my ward. I was able to enjoy attending my meetings for their intended purpose.

Having that peace also helped as I got back into dating. I still didn't get a lot of second dates, but I now knew I didn't have to compromise my standards just because I had slipped up in the past. I was living the gospel to the best of my ability, and I was good enough to date those who were living the gospel to the best of theirs too.

I ultimately found a worthy daughter of God who I married in the temple. Her path was very different than mine, but when it came to a love of the Savior

and an understanding of His Atonement, we were on the same page.

Over the years, I have learned not to let my past or other people's approval define my current self-worth. I've let go of the idea that success looks like one set of life experiences. Not everyone has appreciated where I am now because of how I've gotten here, and that's OK. It's not my goal to convince them. It is my goal to keep repenting and coming closer to the Savior. It's because of Him that, like Alma the Younger after his repentance, I can be "harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more" (Alma 36:19). I can be at peace knowing that it's where I'm headed—toward the Savior—that counts. ■



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*development project manager. He and his wife enjoy going on motorcycle rides, traveling, and cooking together in their free time.*

Even though I had stumbled, the race wasn't lost. **I wasn't competing with anyone else.**



# Three Things to Remember **before You Judge**

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Life is difficult enough without this crazy cycle of judgment we often find ourselves in.



**By Chakell Wardleigh**

Church Magazines

I was exhausted. I had just finished shopping, I had college exams to study for, and I just wanted to go home. I was in such a hurry that I didn't even think twice when I opened my car door, set my bag of groceries in the front seat, and buckled my seat belt. But as soon as I went to put my keys in the ignition, I knew something was wrong. I looked around me. And then I froze in terror when reality hit me:

*This isn't my car.*

I don't remember much after that—probably because I was freaking out and silently praying that nobody watched me frantically grab my bag of groceries, throw

open the car door, and all but sprint across the parking lot to my actual car and speed away.

To this day, I hope no one saw me.

Have you ever accidentally stepped into the wrong car? If you haven't, I don't recommend it. It's been a few years, and my friends and family *still* bring that embarrassing moment up! But that mistake, along with other moments in my life where I have made mistakes, has taught me a few things about people. I've realized that we all have struggles, and I hope that I and all of us can be patient with each other's imperfections.

## The Toxic Cycle of Judgment

Guess what. I'm not perfect. None of us are. Surprise! The more I experience in my life, the more I realize we all have imperfections. I realize how truly narrow the strait and narrow path is and how easily worldly distractions can take us off the path. I realize that I don't, in any way, have the right to judge someone else for their past, current, or even future mistakes, sins, or transgressions. And even though my friends and I still wipe away tears of laughter when we talk about our embarrassing moments, sometimes we judge those who have made other kinds of mistakes or bad decisions—we keep bringing up the bad decisions, and we keep judging the people who made them. And in those moments, nobody laughs.

Judging is important for us as humans, and we need to make wise judgments. But we need to be careful that we don't judge or criticize people for their mistakes. It's so very easy to look at someone's lifestyle, appearance, or even their opinions and make assumptions about their entire character, especially if their actions or words differ from our own. I'm guilty of this in so many ways. But it's

not OK. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"This topic of judging others could actually be taught in a two-word sermon. When it comes to hating, gossiping, ignoring, ridiculing, holding grudges, or wanting to cause harm, please apply the following:

"Stop it!"<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, as much as we may unfairly judge others, most of us fear other people's opinions about us! (Honestly, I even hesitated to include my story about getting into the wrong car out of fear of embarrassment!) Judging each other is all just one big cycle that goes around and around without benefiting anybody. We have all been through (or are currently in) the refiner's fire, whether because of our own mistakes, another's actions, or circumstances beyond our control. And as God's children, we all deserve love, understanding, and empathy, not unrighteous judgment, condemnation, and isolation.

So what can we do? How can we break this cycle of judgment when it's so easy to get wrapped into it? Well, there are a few things I've learned that might help.

When it comes to hating, gossiping, ignoring, ridiculing, holding grudges, or wanting to cause harm, please apply the following: Stop it!

—Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

## 1. Confidence is key

When you aren't confident in a particular area of your life, it can make you prone to judge others unfairly in that same area out of shame.<sup>2</sup>

I've definitely seen this play a factor in my life. I've often caught myself judging someone else, or even myself, because I'm feeling insecure or because I'm comparing myself with them, especially regarding things on the path of discipleship. For example, when someone says they make time to read their scriptures every single morning before work, I feel ashamed and judge myself for reading only a verse before bed the night before, all while trying not to fall asleep!

We are taught in Doctrine and Covenants 121:45, "Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God."

And it's true! The fact of the matter is, when we are confident in who we are, in God's love for us, and in our own place on the path of discipleship, we are more able to see ourselves and others as He does. And we're less worried about what other people think. His view is the only one that truly matters.

## 2. Remember that judgment ultimately belongs to the Lord

Have you ever seen someone do something you completely disagree with or something that upsets you? maybe even a member of the Church who isn't living the way a disciple of Christ is taught to live? I have. And during those moments I have to catch myself before I make assumptions about

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When we are confident in who we are, in God's love for us, and in our own place on the path of discipleship, we are more able to see ourselves and others as He does.

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their entire character. Sometimes I don't catch myself in time. It takes *a lot* of effort and practice to withhold judgment.

When I'm upset because of someone else, I try my best to remind myself that nobody is perfect and that truly everybody is probably doing the best they can in life, even if it doesn't always seem like it. As Sister Becky Craven, Second Counselor in the Young Women General Presidency, has said: "I invite each of us to seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost to know what adjustments we need to make in our lives to be more carefully aligned with our covenants. I also plead with you not to be critical of others making this same journey. 'Judgment is mine, saith the Lord' [Mormon 8:20]. We are each in the process of growth and change."<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Jesus Christ's Atonement is for everyone

All in all, Jesus Christ made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us imperfect people. I can't fully comprehend every single thing He suffered in our behalf, no. But just thinking about the fact that my Savior was willing to take upon Him the seemingly unbearable challenges we face—challenges that





are the consequences of our own mistakes or that arise from things out of our control—fills me with gratitude and brings tears to my eyes.

Wherever you are on the path of discipleship—whether you are holding tightly to the iron rod while in the mists of darkness, or you have wandered off the strait and narrow and are trying to find your way back—know that the healing and redeeming power of the Savior is real. Not a single person on this earth has led a perfect life, apart from Him. And because of that, we will all fall short at times. But just like Peter, who began to sink after walking on the sea and cried out to Jesus for help, we can rely on the Savior to lift us up again (see Matthew 14:28–31).

We all need each other's compassion and understanding more than each other's judgment. Life is already difficult enough without such judgment! And when we love others as they are, just as the Savior does, it can change our hearts and theirs for the better. And ultimately, it can help

bring each of us closer to and keep us firmly on that strait and narrow path. ■

#### NOTES

1. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign*, May 2012, 75.
2. See Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (2015), 99.
3. Becky Craven, “Careful versus Casual,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 10.



**Chakell Wardleigh** is a writer for the *Ensign*. You can usually find her smelling flowers, taking a long time to tell stories because she keeps getting sidetracked, getting sucked into books and podcasts, or being distracted by cute dogs. In fact, she's just easily distracted by the beautiful things in life.

# INSIGHTS

from YOUNG ADULTS

*on making mistakes and trying again*



“The best advice I’ve ever received was to **accept the gospel of Jesus Christ** and to partake of the sacrament every Sunday—to renew and remember the covenants I’ve made with God.”

—Ella Yanker, Sierra Leone

“Repent with the **intent to change**—not because of shame or feeling guilty.”

—Jessica Francisco, West Midlands, UK

“Repentance isn’t failure. It might feel like that, but **repentance is wonderful and healing.**”

—Heather Zacher, Washington, USA

from CHURCH LEADERS

“Repentance is not an event; it is a process. . . .

“Whether you are diligently moving along the covenant path, have slipped or stepped from the covenant path, or can’t even see the path from where you are now, I plead with you to repent. Experience the strengthening power of daily repentance—of doing and being a little better each day.

“When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him. When we choose to repent, we choose to become more like Jesus Christ!”

President Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 67.

## SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

What has helped you find hope in your **struggles with mental health**?

Send us your response at [ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://ensign.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) by January 31, 2020.

# Come, Follow Me Shareable Scriptures

Download these picture quotes from January's *Come, Follow Me* readings and share them on social media—or send them to those you minister to, your Sunday School class, or your family: [ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/12081](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/go/12081).

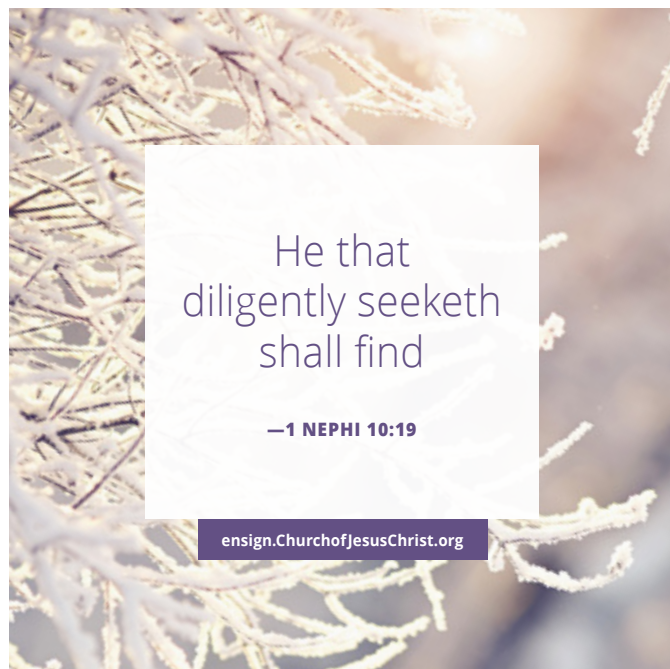
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