

A Sacred Work

By David A. Feitz

One evening my missionary companion and I knocked on the door of a young man who was an international student studying at one of London's many universities. He invited us in, and we explained that we were missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He seemed eager to learn more about the Restoration of the gospel, so we testified of the Prophet Joseph Smith and told him about a sacred book from our Heavenly Father called the Book of Mormon. We emphasized that it was sacred because it testifies of Jesus Christ.

We explained that he could know for himself of its truthfulness and offered to give him a copy. As I handed the Book of Mormon to him, he got up from his chair and left the room without saying a word. I held the Book of Mormon in my hand momentarily, and my companion and I looked at each other in puzzled silence, wondering what to do. I put the book down on the table.

We could see our young friend in the kitchen washing his hands and drying them on a fresh towel. He came back into the room and picked up the Book of Mormon from the table and simply said, "My people always wash their hands before they touch something sacred." Tears came to my eyes as I watched this young man open the Book of Mormon for the first time and turn its sacred pages with his clean hands.

He was receptive to everything we taught. So why wouldn't he take the Book of Mormon when I handed it to him?

Alma taught that the scriptures are sacred and are preserved to bring souls to salvation. He declared to his son Helaman, "God has entrusted you with these things, which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations" (Alma 37:14).

I was sent on a mission to teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, yet I was the one being taught by this young man with his clean hands. In many cultures—including my own—it isn't necessary to wash our hands before reading the scriptures, but his simple gesture of respect was a reverent and powerful reminder of the sacredness of the Book of Mormon. ■

