



Progressing **TOGETHER**

By **Eric B. Murdock and Richard M. Romney**
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Many exciting changes have come to the Church thanks to inspiration received by President Russell M. Nelson. Two of these changes have had a direct impact on the Clarkson brothers from California, USA:

1. Young men can now be ordained to a priesthood office in January of the year they turn 12, 14, and 16.
2. Youth are eligible to obtain a limited-use temple recommend beginning in January of the year they turn 12.

For brothers Matthew (15), Andrew (13), and Isaac (11), these changes have brought new opportunities to serve and progress in the gospel of Jesus Christ—not just on their own but *together*.

A Day of Firsts

In January 2019, Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac all experienced a day of firsts.

Andrew says: “Matthew became a priest, I became a teacher, and Isaac became a deacon at the same time. None of us were at the ages where we would have advanced before.”

“On my first day being a priest,” Matthew says, “I broke the bread for the sacrament and blessed it. I was kind of nervous. My hands were shaking a little bit when I said the prayer, but it was really amazing.”

New to the Aaronic Priesthood, Isaac now has the chance to learn from his older brothers. “It was cool because I was with my brothers and some of their friends,” Isaac says. “I felt the Spirit when I passed the sacrament for the first time.”

“I Baptized My Brother!”

Along with receiving the Aaronic Priesthood and passing the sacrament, Isaac also attended the temple to

perform baptisms. His father baptized him first, but then came a surprise:

“I got to baptize my brother!” Matthew says.

“I never expected Matthew to baptize me,” Isaac says. “But he’s a priest now, so he could. It was really a cool experience. I could feel the Holy Ghost.”

Every Morning before Seminary

Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac aren’t the only brothers in the Clarkson family. There are four more: Levi (9), Eli (7), Sam (4), and Titus (2), and a baby on the way.

When President Nelson invited the women of the Church in October 2018 general conference to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the year, Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac, along with their father and younger brothers, decided to offer Mom their support.



The Clarkson brothers have been blessed by serving in their priesthood quorums and reading the Book of Mormon.

"We'll read it with you!" they said. Every morning before seminary, they woke up to read together.

A Life-Changing Challenge

"When we took on this challenge, I thought it was going to take a lot of time," Andrew says. "I worried that I wouldn't have enough time to do everything I wanted to do, like play the guitar or hang out with my friends. But I realized that it just doesn't work like that. The more I was into reading the Book of Mormon, the more time I actually seemed to have. I realized that if I keep up on reading the scriptures as much as possible, my life is balanced. I have more time in the day."

Matthew was going through a hard time when the family started reading every morning. He says, "I wasn't doing well in school. I struggled with my personal scripture study and my relationship with Heavenly Father, and I kept it all to myself. I didn't talk about it with my parents."

However, as Matthew spent more time reading the Book of Mormon, the gospel began to take first priority in his life. He also put more effort into school. He worked hard and got his grades up.

"I also realized how much Heavenly Father and my parents love me and how much they help me. And I have a greater testimony of Jesus Christ. He has helped me overcome bad habits and helped me get my life headed in the right direction. I'm so glad we took President Nelson's challenge as a family. It changed my life."

"Man, That's a Lot!"

Accepting President Nelson's invitation also strengthened Isaac's testimony. "We circled the words *God, Lord, Redeemer, Savior, and Christ* every time we found them," he says. "On the day we finished, I flipped through the Book of Mormon and saw all the words I had circled. I thought, 'Man, that's a lot!' I had never noticed how many there

were. I felt much more spiritual reading the Book of Mormon. I'm glad we did it."

Life Is So Much Better

Matthew, Andrew, and Isaac are amazed that their family finished the Book of Mormon in just two months. "It usually takes us a year," Isaac says. Together, they discovered the blessings of following the prophet's invitation.

"If you do what you're supposed to do," Andrew says, "like building a relationship with Heavenly Father through prayer, scripture study, and staying fully active in the Church, life is so much better."

These three brothers have helped each other progress in the gospel. They follow the prophet, who has called on members "to increase their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, to . . . [make] and [keep] their covenants with God, and to strengthen . . . their families."¹ ■

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Opening Remarks," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 7.

