

I Had a **SHIP** to **BUILD**

*Nephi's experience helped me see
how to deal with challenges in my
own life.*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY AXEL RANGEL



**By Elder
Juan Pablo Villar**
Of the Seventy

When I told my parents I wanted to serve a mission, they were not happy. My older brother, Ivan, and I were the only members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in our family. I had joined when I was 18, and now, one year later, I had decided to serve full-time. Although my parents ultimately agreed to let me go, my Dad warned that when I returned, he could not guarantee he would keep paying my college tuition.

However, I knew that if I served, the Lord would help me.

Throughout my mission, I rejoiced as I saw people embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ and progress toward salvation. When I returned home, I started my studies again. But soon my father said, as he had warned, "I cannot pay anymore."

How is this possible? I thought. I served a mission. I did what the Lord wanted me to do. Why is this happening to me?

Study and Work

Then I remembered reading in the Book of Mormon. Nephi, who had kept all the commandments, was commanded to build a ship, something he had never done before (see 1 Nephi 17:8, 49–51). I felt like I had a "ship" to build. It was a huge problem that I didn't know how to solve, so I prayed for inspiration.

Soon Ivan talked to me. "Juan Pablo, I heard our father is not going to pay your tuition," he said.

"That's true," I replied. "I think everything is finished for me!"



Ivan's response was simple, but it inspired me. "Do you know that you can both study and work?" he said. "That way, you'll be able to pay for your tuition." It was the first time I realized I could do both! Soon I found a part-time job that enabled me to continue my studies.

I thought again about Nephi and the boat: "Now I, Nephi, did not . . . build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me" (1 Nephi 18:2).

If I had listened to myself, I would have given up on my education. But the Lord inspired me, through the words of my brother, to continue. Sometimes when we have challenges in our lives, we think the Lord is not blessing us. But I can now clearly see how He blessed me with an opportunity to develop and grow.

Don't Quit!

As a student, I also got married. Then, when I had nearly completed my degree, I realized I didn't really like what I was studying. I wanted to give up. But my wife said, "You cannot quit. You don't know what the Lord has prepared for you, so you have to finish."

I thought of Nephi once again. Despite being mistreated by his older brothers, he didn't quit. Instead, Nephi looked to God and praised Him. "I did not murmur against the Lord because

of mine afflictions," he said. Eventually he was freed, and "it came to pass that I, Nephi, did guide the ship, that we sailed again towards the promised land.

"And it came to pass that after we had sailed for the space of many days, we did arrive at the promised land" (1 Nephi 18:16, 22-23).

Listening to my wife's counsel, I finished my degree. But I began work in a different career field.

A couple of years later, I had the strong impression that I needed to improve my education, and I felt I should go to graduate school. When I started the application process, one of the first things I was asked was whether I had a bachelor's degree. In that moment, my wife's words came quickly to me: "You don't know what the Lord has prepared for you, so you have to finish." If I had not completed my bachelor's degree, it would not have been possible for me to obtain my master's degree.

Prophets Guide Us

Every time I read the Book of Mormon, I ask myself, What does this prophet from thousands of years ago want me to know and apply in my life and in the life of my family? Nephi, for example, has taught me that we need to be prepared when the Lord calls us, to trust Him, and to serve Him faithfully.

I know without any doubt that when the Lord calls you, He will prepare the way, just as He did for Nephi (see 1 Nephi 3:7). ■

