

THE MOST USEFUL PIECE

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Some of you who are familiar with Oxford University may know that it's the world's oldest university. The building that I lived in as a student was built in 1410—beautiful to look at, uncomfortable to live in. When I arrived at Oxford, I realized it was going to be difficult to be an active member of the Church. The Rhodes Scholarship Trust, which had given me my scholarship, had a lot of activities for the recipients of the scholarship.

As I looked at the extent to which I wanted to be involved in church, I realized that I didn't know the Book of Mormon was true. I had read it several times but usually as an assignment—from my parents or a Brigham Young University instructor. But this time I desperately needed to know if the Book of Mormon was true. So I decided that I would commit every evening from 11:00 to 12:00 to reading the Book of Mormon to find out if it was true.

I wondered if I dared spend that much time because I was in a very demanding academic program, studying applied econometrics. I was going to try to finish the program in two years, whereas most people in the program finished it in three. I didn't know if I could afford allocating an hour a day to this effort.

But nonetheless I did. I began at 11:00 by kneeling in prayer near a little heater in the stone wall, and I prayed out loud. I told God how desperate I was to find out if the Book of Mormon was true. I told Him that if He would reveal to me that it was true, I then



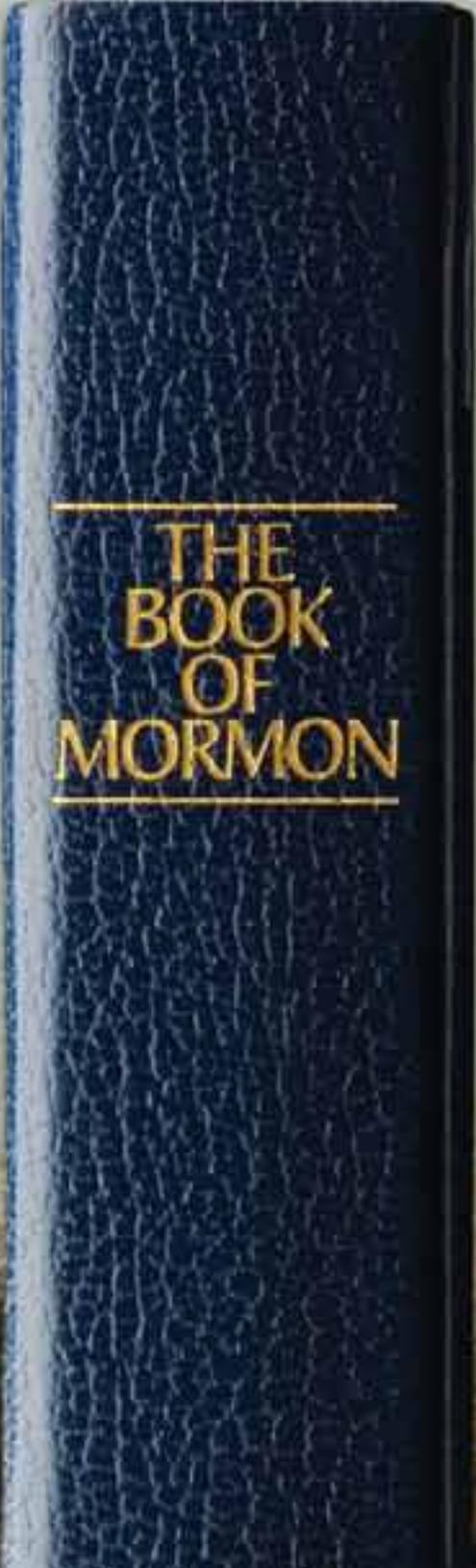
OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the most valuable things you can learn as you pursue your education is to find out for yourself that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.

intended to dedicate my life to building His kingdom. I told Him that if it wasn't true, I needed to know that for certain too because then I would dedicate my life to finding out what was true.

I read the first page of the Book of Mormon. When I got down to the bottom of the page, I stopped. I thought about what I had read on that page, and I asked myself, "Could this have been written by a charlatan who was trying to deceive people, or was this really written by a prophet of God? And what did it mean for me in my life?" Then I put the book down and knelt in prayer and asked God again, "Please tell me if this is a true book." Then I sat in the chair, picked up the book, turned the page, read it, paused at the bottom, and did the same thing. I did this for an hour every night, night after night, in that cold, damp room at Oxford.

One evening, by the time I got to the chapters at the end of 2 Nephi, I said my prayer, sat in my chair, and opened the book. All of a sudden there came into that room a beautiful, warm, loving Spirit that surrounded me and permeated my soul, enveloping me in a feeling of love that I had not imagined I could feel. I began to cry. As I looked through my tears at the words in the Book of Mormon, I could see truth in those words that I never imagined I could comprehend before. I could see the glories of eternity, and I could see what God had in store for me as one of His sons. That Spirit stayed with me the whole hour and every other evening as I prayed and read the Book of Mormon in my room. That same Spirit



THE
BOOK
OF
MORMON

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would always return, and it changed my heart and my life forever.

I look back at the conflict I had experienced, wondering whether I could afford to spend an hour every day apart from the study of applied econometrics to find out if the Book of Mormon was true. I use applied econometrics maybe once a year, but I use my knowledge that the Book of Mormon is the word of God many times every day of my life. Of all the education I have ever pursued, that is the single most useful piece of knowledge I ever gained.

For those of you who may still be living on the testimonies of others, I invite you to set aside an hour every day and find out

for yourself if the Book of Mormon is true, because it will change your heart as it has changed mine. Then someday you'll be able to go to the place where you lived at the time that God revealed this to you and point at it for your children and spouse and say, "That's a sacred place because that's where I learned that Jesus is the Christ."

As I have sought to magnify my calling and to know Jesus Christ, I can testify that I know with a surety that He is the Son of God, that He lives. I know of a surety that He knows and loves every one of us. **NE**

From a Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional address given on June 8, 2004. For the full text of the address, visit www.byui.edu/Presentations/transcripts/devotionals/2004_06_08_christensen.htm.