





THE DEVIL'S CUNNING VS. GOD'S WISDOM: NO CONTEST

You can learn what Joseph Smith learned: God's wisdom will always win in the end.

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AN OFT-REPEATED EVENT from early Church history deals with the loss of the 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. Two reasons we tell the story of this event so frequently are: (1) it's directly related to two revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants (sections 3 and 10), so it comes up regularly in our scripture study; and (2) the lasting lessons Joseph Smith learned from these experiences can help us in many ways today.

One of those lessons was taught by the Lord in these words: "My wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (Doctrine and Covenants 10:43). The Lord wants us to trust in Him. If we do, we will gain greater understanding, strength, and peace.

Joseph Smith's Experience

After the 116 pages were lost, the Lord told Joseph Smith not to translate that portion of the gold plates again, because evil men were plotting to deceive people by showing differences between the two translations. But centuries before, the Lord had told Nephi to make the small plates and had told Mormon to include them in his record. So Joseph was able to restart the translation from there, and we have the Book of Mormon today. (See Doctrine and Covenants 10; 1 Nephi 9; Words of Mormon.)

The devil and those who served his purposes had laid a cunning plan, but the Lord's wisdom thwarted it.

The Devil's Cunning

The cunning of the devil can take many forms, but one basic message behind it seems to be "Don't believe." This was the main thrust of the adversary's very first message to Adam and Eve's children after their parents taught them the plan of salvation (see Moses 5:13). And it's the same message at the heart of his cunning plans today.

What is it that the devil doesn't want you to believe? Well, basically, anything true or good. If he can get you to not believe in the reality of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, the plan of salvation, the scriptures, the commandments, the Restoration, the prophets, then he has succeeded. Then it's easier to get you to give in to various temptations and keep you away from truth, repentance, and exaltation.

And how is it that he gets you not to believe? By planting fear, uncertainty, and doubt in your mind.

An Example for Today

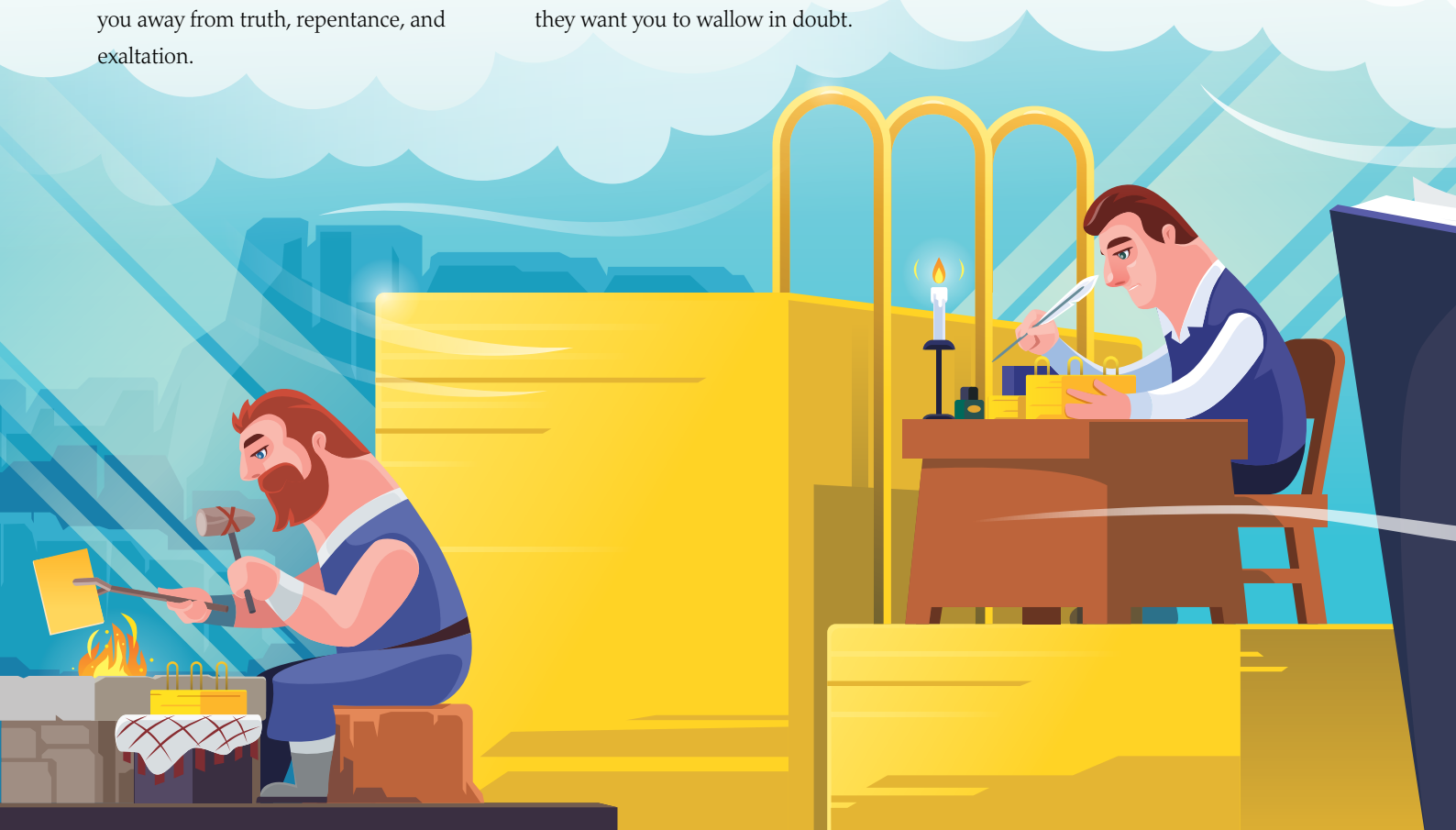
For instance, today (just as in Joseph Smith's day) the devil's message of unbelief focuses a lot on Joseph Smith and his work as the prophet of the Restoration. People will try to convince you that Joseph Smith wasn't a prophet and the Book of Mormon isn't true. If you do an online search, you could get the impression that the evidence is stacked against the Prophet and his work. But this is a cunning deception.

Just as people wanted to discredit Joseph Smith in his day and were willing to lie and deceive to do it, there are those today who would have you focus only on a set of partial or distorted facts about the Prophet or the Book of Mormon. They don't want you to see the whole picture; they want you to wallow in doubt.

Three Pieces of Counsel

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave these three pieces of counsel on studying about the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Be patient, don't be superficial, and don't ignore the Spirit" ("The Prophet Joseph Smith" [devotional address at BYU-Idaho, Sept. 24, 2013], byui.edu/devotionals).

- 1. BE PATIENT.** The Lord will always bless us for our patience and faith. If we're patient and keep believing, what's unclear often becomes clearer over time. And some "evidence" people bring against the Prophet today may be thrown out tomorrow because of new evidence that refutes it.



2. DON'T BE SUPERFICIAL. If we're thorough in our studies, we'll avoid getting stuck with someone else's intentionally limited, negative view and see the bigger picture about the Prophet—the facts and their context. We'll see that the fruits of his work are overwhelmingly good.

3. DON'T IGNORE THE SPIRIT. If we pay attention to the thoughts, promptings, and feelings that come from the Spirit, we'll have a more complete set of tools for obtaining and understanding truth. And we'll be able to move forward and grow spiritually even if we don't have all of the answers to our questions.

The Wisdom of God

The wisdom of God is indeed greater than the devil's cunning. Even if we don't know all the reasons behind the Lord's commands, we can still trust in Him and His prophets.

Nephi didn't know why the Lord asked him to make the small plates. He didn't know about the 116 pages and the plans to discredit Joseph Smith 2,400 years in the future. But Nephi knew it was "for a wise purpose in [the Lord]," and he knew that he could trust in Him (see 1 Nephi 9:5–6).

Today, we can trust in the Lord too, even if we don't know all the reasons behind the counsel He gives us through His prophets. We can keep on believing and having faith in Jesus Christ and His chosen prophet of the Restoration, Joseph Smith, even if we don't have all of our

questions answered. We can trust the Lord's timing. We can continue to have hope, even if our challenges seem scary and overwhelming.

We can do all of this because, no matter what, when the devil's cunning plans are pitted against God's wisdom, there's no contest. God's wisdom will always prevail. 🏰

He Knows the Future Perfectly

"The Lord is leading the Restoration of His gospel and His Church. He goes before us. He knows the future perfectly. He invites you to the work. He joins you in it. He has in place a plan for your service. And even as you sacrifice, you will feel joy as you help others rise to be ready for His coming."

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, "He Goes before Us," Apr. 2020 general conference (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2020, 69).

