

# Seek Ye Out of the Best Books

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Of the Seventy

As we study from the best books, we protect ourselves against the menacing jaws of those that seek to gnaw at our spiritual roots.

Early one morning, I saw a hungry and well-camouflaged caterpillar on a beautiful rosebush. From the look of some of the leafless shoots, it was obvious to even the casual observer that it had been gnawing its way through the tender leaves with its menacing jaws. Allegorically, I could not help but think that there are some people who are like this caterpillar; they are found throughout the world, and some are so cleverly disguised that we may allow them into our lives, and before we know it, they have eaten away at our spiritual roots and those of our family members and friends.

We live in a day in which misinformation about our beliefs abounds. In times such as these, a failure to protect and deepen our spiritual roots is an invitation to have them gnawed at by those who seek to destroy our faith in Christ and our belief in His restored Church. In Book of Mormon times, it was Zeezrom who sought to destroy the faith of the believers.

His actions and words were “a snare of the adversary, which he ... laid to catch [the] people, that he might bring [them] into subjection unto him, that he might encircle [them] about with his chains” (Alma 12:6). Those same snares exist today, and unless we are spiritually vigilant and build a sure foundation on our Redeemer (see Helaman 5:12), we may find ourselves bound with Satan’s chains and being led carefully down the forbidden paths spoken of in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 8:28).

The Apostle Paul sounded a warning in his day that is applicable to our day: “For I know this, ... of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30).

His warning and those of our prophets and apostles remind us that we must do all we can to fortify ourselves spiritually against words of opposition and deception. As I visit wards and stakes of the Church, I am uplifted by what I see, hear, and feel as Saints positively and faithfully respond to the teachings of the Savior and His servants.

The increase in Sabbath day observance is but one example of members spiritually fortifying themselves by heeding prophetic invitations. Further strengthening is evidenced in the increase in temple and family history work as families gather their ancestors through temple ordinances. Our spiritual roots go deeper as sincere

personal and family prayer become bastions of our faith and as we repent daily, seek the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and learn of our Savior and His attributes and strive to become like Him (see 3 Nephi 27:27).

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the Light of the World, and He beckons us to follow Him. We must look to Him at all times and especially so if there are dark and stormy nights when the tempest of doubt and uncertainty, like a rolling fog, creeps in. Should the pointed fingers “from the other side of the river of water, [where] a great and spacious building [stands]” (1 Nephi 8:26) appear to be directed at you in the attitude of mocking, demeaning, and beckoning, I ask that you immediately turn away so that you are not persuaded by cunning and devious means to separate yourself from truth and its blessings.

However, this alone will not be enough in this day when perverse things are being spoken, written, and portrayed. Elder Robert D. Hales taught us, “Unless you are fully engaged in living the gospel—living it with all of your ‘heart, might, mind and strength’—you cannot generate enough spiritual light to push back the darkness” (“Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 71; *Liahona*, July 2002, 78). Surely, our desire to follow Christ, who is the Light of the World (see John 8:12), means we must act on His teachings. We are spiritually strengthened, fortified, and protected as we act on the word of God.

The greater the light in our lives, the fewer the shadows. However, even in an abundance of light, we are exposed to people and comments that misrepresent our beliefs and try our faith. The Apostle James wrote that “the trying of [our] faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). With this insight, Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, “A patient disciple ... will not be surprised nor undone when the Church is misrepresented” (“Patience” [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 27, 1979], speeches.byu.edu).

Questions about our Church history and beliefs do arise. Where we turn to find the correct answers requires great care. There is nothing to be gained in exploring the views and opinions of the less informed or disenchanted. The best counsel was given by the Apostle James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5).

Asking of God is to be preceded by careful study, for we are under scriptural mandate to seek “out of the best books words of wisdom” and to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). There is a rich abundance of these books, written by heaven-inspired Church leaders and recognized, safe, and reliable Church history and doctrine scholars. With that said, none surpass the majesty of the revealed word of God in canonized scripture. From those thin pages thick with spiritual insights, we learn truth through the Holy Ghost and thereby increase in light.

President Thomas S. Monson has implored us “to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day” (“The Power of the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 87).

Several years ago, while I was serving as president of the Fiji Suva Mission, some missionaries had an experience which reinforced in them the converting power of the Book of Mormon. On a hot and humid day, two elders arrived at a home in a small settlement in Labasa.

The knock on the door was answered by a weathered man who listened as the missionaries testified of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. They gave him a copy and invited him to read and to pray to know, like them, that it is the word of God. His reply was brief: "Tomorrow I return to fishing. I will read it while at sea, and when I return, you may visit me again."

While he was away, transfers were made, and a few weeks later, a new companionship of elders returned to visit the fisherman. By this time he had read the entire Book of Mormon, had received confirmation of its truthfulness, and was eager to learn more.

This man had been converted by the Holy Ghost, who witnessed of the truth of the precious words on every page of events and doctrine taught long ago and preserved for our day in the Book of Mormon. That same blessing is available to each of us.

The home is an ideal place for families to study and share valuable insights from the scriptures and the words of the prophets and to access Church material at LDS.org. There you will find an abundance of information about gospel topics such as the First Vision accounts. As we study from the best books, we protect ourselves against the menacing jaws of those that seek to gnaw at our spiritual roots.

With all our prayer, study, and pondering, there may still remain some yet-to-be-answered questions, but we must not let that extinguish the flame of faith that flickers within us. Such questions are an invitation to build our faith and should not fuel a passing moment of deceiving doubt. It is the very essence of religion not to have a sure answer to every question, for this is one of the purposes of faith. In that regard, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has taught us that "when those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes*" ("Lord, I Believe," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 94).

We see around us the joy of so many who are standing strong by continually nourishing their spiritual roots. Their faith and obedience is sufficient to give them great hope in their Savior, and from that stems great happiness. They don't profess to know all things, but they have paid the price to know enough to have peace and to live with patience as they seek to know more. Line upon line, their faith is cemented in Christ, and they stand strong as fellow citizens with the Saints.

Let each of us live so that the menacing jaws of camouflaged caterpillars find no place, not now or ever, in our lives so that we will remain "firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end" (Alma 27:27). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

