

It Is Wisdom in the Lord That We Should Have the Book of Mormon

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It is my prayer that reading the Book of Mormon this year will be a joy and a blessing for each of us.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are so grateful for your efforts in reading the scriptures with *Come, Follow Me*. Thank you for all you are doing. Your daily connection with God and His word has profound consequences. “Ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”¹

Reading the Savior’s teachings in the scriptures helps us transform our homes into sanctuaries of faith and centers of gospel learning.² It invites the Spirit into our homes. The Holy Ghost fills our souls with joy³ and converts us into lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

Over these last several years, while reading the books of holy scripture, we have observed the panorama of God’s teachings to His children in all the major gospel dispensations.⁴

In every dispensation, we have seen a familiar pattern. God restores or reveals the gospel of Jesus Christ through His prophets. The people follow the prophets and are greatly blessed. However, over time, some people stop heeding the words of the prophets and distance themselves from the Lord and His gospel. This is what we call apostasy. The gospel was first revealed to Adam, but some of the children of Adam and Eve turned away from the Lord in apostasy.⁵ We see a pattern of restoration and apostasy repeated in the dispensations of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others.

Now, today, we live in the dispensation of the fulness of times.⁶ This is the only dispensation that will not end in an apostasy.⁷ It is this dispensation that will usher in the Second Coming of the Savior Jesus Christ and His millennial reign.

So, what’s different about this dispensation? What has the Lord provided us today, especially for our time, that will help us draw near to the Savior and never leave Him?

One answer that comes to my mind is the scriptures—and particularly the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

While God has promised there will never be another *general* apostasy, we need to be mindful and careful to avoid a *personal* apostasy—remembering, as President Russell M. Nelson has taught, “We are each responsible for our individual spiritual growth.”⁸ Studying the Book of Mormon, as we are doing this year, always brings us closer to the Savior—and helps us stay close to Him.

We call it “study,” and that’s good because it implies effort. But we don’t always need to learn some new fact. Sometimes reading the Book of Mormon is just about feeling connected to God today—nourishing the soul, being strengthened spiritually before heading out to face the world, or finding healing *after* a rough day out in the world.

We study the scriptures so the Holy Ghost, the great teacher, can deepen our conversion to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and help us become more like Them.⁹

With these thoughts in mind, we could consider, “What has the Holy Ghost taught us this week during our study of the Book of Mormon?” and “How does this bring us closer to the Savior?”

These are good questions for our scripture study at home. They are also excellent questions to start a Sunday class at church. We improve our teaching at church on Sunday by improving our learning at home during the week. Thus, in our Sunday classes, “he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.”¹⁰

Here are a few verses the Spirit has impressed upon my mind from this week’s Book of Mormon study:

- Nephi instructed Jacob to “preserve these plates and hand them down ... from generation to generation. And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation ... , or prophesying,” Jacob should “engraven ... them upon these plates ... for the sake of [their] people.”¹¹
- Jacob later testified, “We search the [scriptures], ... and having all these witnesses we obtain a hope, and our faith becometh unshaken.”¹²

Now, these verses caused me to remember what Nephi had said previously about the brass plates:

“We had obtained the records ... and searched them and found that they were ... of great worth unto us, insomuch that we could preserve the commandments of the Lord unto our children.

“Wherefore, it was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry them with us, as we journeyed in the wilderness towards the land of promise.”¹³

Now, if it was wisdom for Lehi and his family to have the scriptures, it is just as wise for us today. The great worth and spiritual power of the scriptures continue undimmed in our lives today.

There has never been a people in history with the access to the Book of Mormon and other scriptures that we enjoy today.¹⁴ Yes, Lehi and his family were blessed to carry the brass plates with them, but they didn’t have a copy for every tent! The most important copy of the Book of Mormon is our personal copy. It is the copy that we read.

In Lehi’s vision of the tree of life, Lehi taught us the importance of personal experience with the love of God. After he partook of the fruit, Lehi saw his wife, Sariah, and his sons Nephi and Sam a little way off.

“They stood as if they knew not whither they should go.

“... I beckoned unto them,” Lehi said, “and I also did say unto them with a *loud voice* that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit.

“And ... they did come unto me and partake of the fruit.”¹⁵

I love Lehi’s example of intentional parenting. Sariah, Nephi, and Sam were living good, righteous lives. But the Lord had something better, something sweeter for them. They didn’t know where to find it, but Lehi did. So he called to them “with a loud voice” to come to the tree of life and partake of the fruit for themselves. His direction was clear. There could be no misunderstanding.

I am the product of a similar kind of intentional parenting.¹⁶ When I was a young boy, maybe 11 or 12 years old, my mother asked me, “Mark, do you know for yourself, by the Holy Ghost, that the gospel is true?”

Her question surprised me. I had always tried to be a “good boy,” and I thought that was enough. But my mother, like Lehi, knew that something more was needed. I needed to act and know for myself.

I replied that I had not yet had that experience. And she didn’t seem surprised at all by my answer.

She then said something I have never forgotten. I remember her words to this day: “Heavenly Father wants you to know for yourself. But you must put in the effort. You need to read the Book of Mormon and pray to know by the Holy Ghost. Heavenly Father will answer your prayers.”

Well, I had never read the Book of Mormon before. I didn’t think I was old enough to do that. But my mother knew better.

Her question ignited in me a desire to know for myself.

So, each night, in the bedroom I shared with two of my brothers, I turned on the light above my bed and read a chapter in the Book of Mormon. Then, turning off the light, I slipped out of my bed onto my knees and prayed. I prayed more sincerely and with greater desire than I ever had before. I asked Heavenly Father to please let me know of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

From the time I started reading the Book of Mormon, I felt that Heavenly Father was aware of my efforts. And I felt that I mattered to Him. As I read and prayed, comfortable, peaceful feelings rested upon me. Chapter by chapter, the light of faith was growing brighter inside my soul. In time, I realized that these feelings were confirmations of truth from the Holy Ghost.¹⁷ I came to know for myself that the Book of Mormon is true and that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. How grateful I am for my mother’s inspired invitation.

This experience reading the Book of Mormon as a boy started a pattern of scripture study that continues to bless me to this day. I still read the Book of Mormon and kneel in prayer. And the Holy Ghost confirms its truths over and over again.

Nephi said it right. It was wisdom in the Lord that we should carry the scriptures with us throughout our lives. The Book of Mormon is the “keystone” that makes this dispensation different from all previous dispensations. As we study the Book of Mormon and follow the living prophet, there will be no personal apostasy in our lives.¹⁸

The invitation to come to the tree of life by holding fast to the word of God is not just an invitation from Lehi to his family, and it is not just an invitation from my mother for me to read and pray about the Book of Mormon. It is also an invitation from our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, to each one of us.

“I promise,” he said, “that as you prayerfully study the Book of Mormon *every day*, you will make better decisions—*every day*. I promise that as you ponder what you study, the windows of heaven will open, and you will receive answers to your own questions and direction for your own life.”¹⁹

It is my prayer that reading the Book of Mormon this year will be a joy and a blessing for each of us and will draw us ever nearer to the Savior.

Heavenly Father lives. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. The Book of Mormon contains His words and conveys His love. President Russell M. Nelson is the Lord’s living prophet on the earth today. I know these things to be true because of the confirming witness of the Holy Ghost, which witness I first received while reading the Book of Mormon as a boy. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.
2. “The new home-centered, Church-supported integrated curriculum has the potential to unleash the power of families, as each family follows through conscientiously and carefully to transform their home into a sanctuary of faith. I promise that as you diligently work to remodel your home into a center of gospel learning, over time *your* Sabbath days will truly be a delight. *Your* children will be excited to learn and to live the Savior’s teachings, and the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in *your* home will decrease. Changes in your family will be dramatic and sustaining” (Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 113).
3. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy” (Doctrine and Covenants 11:13).
4. “Dispensations are time periods in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and the keys, and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth” (Topics and Questions, “Dispensations,” Gospel Library).
5. See Moses 5:12–16.
6. The prophet Daniel saw our day, our dispensation, when he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the stone in that dream, cut out of the mountain without hands, rolling forward to fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:34–35, 44–45; Doctrine and Covenants 65:2).

7. “God the Father and Jesus Christ called upon the Prophet Joseph Smith to be the prophet of this dispensation. All divine powers of previous dispensations were to be restored through him. This dispensation of the fulness of times would not be limited in time or in location. It would not end in apostasy, and it would fill the world” (Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 79–80).
8. Russell M. Nelson, “Opening Remarks,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 8.
9. See “Conversion Is Our Goal,” *Come Follow Me—For Home and Church: Book of Mormon 2024*, v.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 50:22; see also verses 17–21.
11. Jacob 1:3–4.
12. Jacob 4:6.
13. 1 Nephi 5:21–22.
14. It was recently announced that 200 million copies of the Book of Mormon have been distributed in this dispensation. That is truly remarkable. The Book of Mormon has now been translated into 113 languages, with 17 new translations in process. What a blessing to have the Book of Mormon in print, digital, audio, video, and other formats. (See Ryan Jensen, “Church Distributes 200 Millionth Copy of the Book of Mormon,” *Church News*, Dec. 29, 2023, thechurchnews.com.)
15. 1 Nephi 8:14–16; emphasis added.
16. “The most powerful spiritual influence in the life of a child is the righteous example of loving parents and grandparents who faithfully keep their own sacred covenants. Intentional parents teach their children faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so that they too ‘may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins’ [2 Nephi 25:26]. Casual and inconsistent covenant keeping leads to spiritual casualty. The spiritual damage is often greatest on our children and grandchildren” (Kevin W. Pearson, “Are You Still Willing?,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2022, 69).
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–24.
18. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (in the introduction to the Book of Mormon).
19. Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 62–63.