

There Is Power in the Book

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Of the Seventy

The greatest power of the Book of Mormon is its impact in bringing us closer to Jesus Christ.

On June 14, 1989, due to some misinformation about the Church, the government of Ghana banned all activities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints within that African country. The government seized all Church property, and all missionary activity stopped. The members of the Church, who refer to this period as “the freeze,” did their best to live the gospel without branch meetings or the support of missionaries. There are many inspiring stories about how the members kept the light of the gospel shining by worshipping in their homes and looking after each other as home and visiting teachers.

Eventually the misunderstanding was resolved, and on November 30, 1990, the freeze ended and normal Church activities resumed.¹ Since then there has been an excellent relationship between the Church and the government of Ghana.

Members who lived through the freeze are quick to point out the blessings that came from that unusual period. The faith of many was strengthened through the adversity that they faced. But one blessing of the freeze came in an unusual way.

Nicholas Ofofu-Hene was a young policeman assigned to guard an LDS meetinghouse during the freeze. His duty was to watch over the building at night. When Nicholas first arrived at the meetinghouse, he saw that things had been scattered around, with papers, books, and furniture in disarray. In the midst of this disorder, he saw a copy of the Book of Mormon. He tried ignoring the book because he had been told that it was evil. But he felt strangely attracted to it. Finally, Nicholas could ignore the book no longer. He picked it up. He felt impelled to start reading it. He read through the night, tears running down his cheeks as he read.

The first time he picked it up, he read all of 1 Nephi. The second time, he read all of 2 Nephi. When he got to 2 Nephi chapter 25, he read the following: “And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”²

At that point, Nicholas felt the Spirit so strongly that he started sobbing. He realized that in the course of his reading he had received several spiritual promptings that this book was scripture, the most correct he had ever read. He realized that the Latter-day

Saints, contrary to what he had heard, strongly believe in Jesus Christ. After the freeze ended and missionaries returned to Ghana, Nicholas, his wife, and his children joined the Church. When I saw him last year, he was a police commander and was serving as the president of the Tamale Ghana District of the Church. He says: "The Church has transformed my life. ... I thank the Almighty God for leading me into this gospel."³

Alibert Davies, another Ghanaian, accompanied a friend to one of our meetinghouses, where the friend had a presidency meeting. While he waited for his friend, Alibert read a book he found nearby. When the meeting ended, Alibert wanted to take the book home. He was given permission to take not only that book but also a copy of the Book of Mormon. When he got home, he started reading the Book of Mormon. He could not put it down. He read by candlelight until 3:00 a.m. He did that for several nights, overwhelmed by what he read and what he felt. Alibert is now a member of the Church.

Angelo Scarpulla started his theological studies in his native Italy when he was 10. He eventually became a priest and served his church with devotion. At a certain point his faith started to waver, and he sought and received opportunities for further study. The more he studied, however, the more concerned he became. What he read and felt convinced him that there had been a general apostasy from the true doctrine taught by Jesus and the early Apostles. Angelo searched for God's true religion in various faiths but was left unsatisfied for many years.

One day he encountered two members of the Church who were helping the missionaries find more people to teach. He felt drawn to them and joyfully listened to their message. Angelo willingly accepted a copy of the Book of Mormon.

That evening he started reading the book. He felt overcome with joy. Through the Spirit, God gave Angelo an inner assurance that in the Book of Mormon he would find the truth for which he had been seeking for many years. Sweet feelings flooded through him. What he read and what he learned from the missionaries confirmed his conclusion that there had been a general apostasy, but he also learned that God's true Church had been restored to the earth. A short while later, Angelo was baptized into the Church.⁴ When I first met him, he was the president of the Rimini Branch of our Church in Italy.

What Nicholas, Alibert, and Angelo experienced with the Book of Mormon is reminiscent of Parley P. Pratt's experience:

"I opened [the book] with eagerness. ... I read all day; eating was a burden, I had no desire for food; sleep was a burden when ... night came, for I preferred reading to sleep.

"As I read, the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true, as plainly and manifestly as a man comprehends and knows that he

exists. My joy was now full, as it were, and I rejoiced sufficiently to more than pay me for all the sorrows, sacrifices and toils of my life."⁵

Some people have such a powerful experience with the Book of Mormon the first time they open it, but for others the witness of the truthfulness comes more gradually as they read and pray about it. That was my case. I first read the Book of Mormon as a teenage seminary student. This is the copy of the Book of Mormon that I read. I cannot tell you the exact time or place that it happened, but somewhere during that reading, I started sensing something. There was a warmth and a spirit that came every time I opened the book. The feeling grew as I continued my reading. That feeling continues to this day. Every time I open the Book of Mormon, it is like turning on a switch—the Spirit flows into my heart and soul.

For yet others, a testimony of the Book of Mormon comes more slowly, after much study and prayer. I have a friend who read the Book of Mormon searching to know if it was true. He applied the invitation in Moroni to ask God with a sincere heart, with real intent and faith in Christ, if the Book of Mormon is true.⁶ But he did not immediately get the promised spiritual answer. However, one day as he was deep in thought, driving down the road, the Spirit testified to him of the truth of the Book of Mormon. So happy and overwhelmed was he that he rolled down the car window and yelled, to no one in particular and yet to all the world, "It's true!"

Whether our testimony of the Book of Mormon comes the first time we open it or over a period of time, it will influence us all of our days if we continue to read it and apply its teachings. President Ezra Taft Benson taught: "There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path."⁷

I encourage everyone receiving this message, including the Aaronic Priesthood bearers convened in this meeting tonight, to discover the power of the Book of Mormon. As President Thomas S. Monson has encouraged: "Read the Book of Mormon. Ponder its teachings. Ask Heavenly Father if it is true."⁸ During that process you will feel the Spirit of God in your lives. That Spirit will be part of your testimony that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's true Church on the earth today. That testimony will help you resist temptation.⁹ It will prepare you for "the great call of diligence ... to labor in the vineyards of the Lord."¹⁰ It will stand as a sure anchor when accusations or slanderous statements are used to challenge your faith, and it will be a rock-solid foundation when you are challenged with questions you cannot answer, at least immediately. You will be able to discern truth from error, and you will feel the assurance of the Holy Ghost reconfirming your testimony over and over again as you continue to read the Book of Mormon throughout your life.

I also encourage all parents hearing or reading this message to make the Book of Mormon an important part of your home. As our children were growing, we read the

Book of Mormon as we ate breakfast. This is the bookmark that we used. On the front is a quote from President Benson promising that God would pour out a blessing upon us as we read the Book of Mormon.¹¹ On the back is this promise from President Marion G. Romney, formerly a counselor in the First Presidency: "I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. ... The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness."¹²

Now, many years after our children have left home and are raising their own families, we can see clearly the fulfillment of President Romney's promise. Our family is far from perfect, but we can testify of the power of the Book of Mormon and the blessings that reading it has brought and continues to bring into the lives of our whole family.

The greatest power of the Book of Mormon is its impact in bringing us closer to Jesus Christ. It is a strong witness of Him and His redeeming mission.¹³ Through it we come to understand the majesty and power of His Atonement.¹⁴ It teaches His doctrine clearly.¹⁵ And because of the magnificent chapters describing the visit of the risen Christ to the Nephites, we see and experience Him loving, blessing, and teaching those people and come to understand that He will do the same for us if we come to Him by living His gospel.¹⁶

Brethren, I testify of the power in the Book of Mormon. Whether reading it in English, Italian, or French, in print or on an electronic device, I have found the same wonderful spirit flowing from its chapters and verses into my life. I testify of its ability to draw us closer to Christ. I pray that each of us will take full advantage of the power that is in this wonderful book of scripture. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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