



THE **WITNESS**

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From the President...

Our founding fathers were inspired to begin the preamble of the Constitution of the United States with these simple words: "We the people...". This phrase clearly identifies upon whom the responsibility rests for the future direction of this nation and whether we will choose to serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon proclaims this profound truth:

Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ who hath been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 1:35 RLDS) [Ether 2:12 LDS]

Yea, well did he say, that if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity; that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction. And now I say unto you, that well doth the Lord judge of your iniquities; well doth he cry unto this people, by the voice of his angels, Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Alma 8:28, 29 RLDS) [Alma 10:19, 20 LDS]

We are now engaged in the governing process by which the voice of the people will be heard. We stand on the threshold of deciding whether our nation will receive divine blessings or judgments according to the promises of God. It is our hope that all the people will prayerfully consider our choices and participate in this process by exercising our right to vote.

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Beyond The Election

by Dale Gilmore
Pensacola, FL

INTRODUCTION

When I was asked to write an article for The Witness relevant to the upcoming presidential election, my first inclination was to focus on the election itself, examining the candidates and their platforms. I even thought of doing some subtle campaigning for my candidate. However, I have chosen to go in a different direction for a couple of reasons. First, I don't have a favorite candidate! The original list of candidates reminds me of my cable television service. I have many channels available, but I can seldom find anything worth watching. I am beginning to agree with Jim Hightower. Hightower was the Texas Agricultural Commissioner about 25 years ago, and he has since become a political commentator and writer. He has written a book entitled, If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote They Would Have Given Us Candidates. My second reason is somber. Our country is accumulating more and more problems, and I am afraid the answers are not as simple or easy as electing the right president. Please don't misunderstand – it is important that we choose the best person possible to lead our country, but that in itself will not eliminate the ills in our society.

It is said that human nature does not change. Nor, so it seems, does the nature of civilizations. The stories of various civilizations are amazingly similar when one studies their rise, dominance and fall. Especially in relation to their decline, various empires share the same story line, even though they were very diverse in areas such as time frame, location and race/culture. I would like to focus on two civilizations from the past in order to determine whether or not there are any similarities between them and our society today. I will look at the Roman Empire and the Nephite civilization in an effort to determine where we are and where we are going as a society. I will also look at the implications for and responsibilities of the Restoration Saints in these last days.

THE ROMANS AND THE NEPHITES

Let's take a quiz:

Who said the United States is in a state of decline as the most powerful country in the world because of the following five reasons?

1. The rapid increase in divorce and undermining of the home, which is the basis of human society;
2. Ever-increasing taxes and spending government funds for excessive welfare programs and wasteful projects;
3. Society's mad craze for pleasure, sports becoming every year more riotous and brutal;
4. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy is the decadence of the people; and
5. The decay of religion, faith fading into mere formalism and losing touch with life. Furthermore, if these problems are not soon corrected, our way of life in this country will be in serious jeopardy.

Was it: A) George W. Bush B) Barack Obama C) John McCain D) Bill O'Reilly E) None of the above

I share this question with my 12th grade American Government students each semester. Since I don't give them a list of people to choose from, I receive a wide variety of answers – some are even real possibilities! Actually, you may already realize that this is a trick question. These statements were not even written about our country. They were published in 1787 by historian Edward Gibbon. According to Gibbon, these are the five principle reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. These same five conditions can also be seen in various degrees in our society today.

Any of these five conditions should be cause for concern. It seems that one of the five is especially dangerous because it provides the basis for the other four. The fifth – the decay of religion – tends to be a major cause of the beginning of the end for most empires, as well as the catalyst for the creation of other fatal flaws that lead to their destruction. We will see this with greater clarity when we consider the Nephite and, to a lesser degree, the Jaredite civilizations later in this article.



In his book, Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Republic, Tom Holland writes of two other conditions which existed in Rome that are similar to our society today. First, many of the people who lived in the areas the Roman Empire had conquered relocated to Rome. This influx caused the city to acquire an international flavor. Many of these immigrants were very poor and, eventually, a strain was placed on the government as it tried to care for these unfortunate refugees. Holland concludes that there was no real solution to this problem because such a large number of people had already come into the

land before government leaders realized they were in such a difficult situation. This condition continued until and even beyond the end of the empire. The second condition deals with the military. The Roman legions were once the strongest and most feared military machine in the history of the world up to that time. However, as patriotism waned, there was no longer a feeling among many young men that they had a duty to “serve and defend.” Because of this change in attitude, the legions began to look to the lower economic classes of citizens and to immigrants who were looking for work. Economic incentives took the place of national pride and duty as the primary reason for service. This was not a major problem until the barbaric hordes began to sweep down from the other parts of Europe. These troops who had given up their time were not very excited about giving up their lives. Many simply left the battlefield and went back to homes and families far from the dangers engulfing Rome. Rome became easy prey for the invading tribes to sack and pillage.

Parallel to the fall of political and military Rome was the decline of spiritual Rome. The city, whose people had heard the preaching of the true gospel by men such as Paul, was also the city which became the center of a religious movement which changed the doctrines of the covenant to such an extent that few of the original doctrines remained. I am reminded of Lehi’s vision where he saw “...a straight and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood;” (1 Nephi 2:63 RLDS) [1 Nephi 8:20 LDS] This rod of iron was the Word of God which led people to the tree of life.

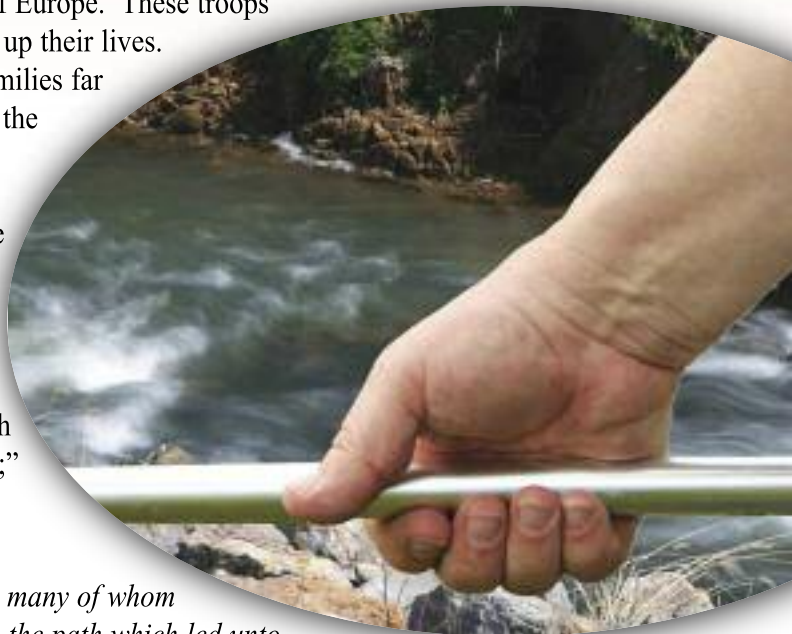


Photo by Dale Godfrey

“And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood. And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.”
 (1 Nephi 2:65, 67 RLDS) [1 Nephi 8:21, 23 LDS]

Nephi later tells us that his father also saw a river which ran beside the straight and narrow path.

That river of water was “...filthiness; And so much was his mind swallowed up in other things, that he beheld not the filthiness of the water.” (1 Nephi 4:44, 45 RLDS)
 [1 Nephi 15:24]

Once off the straight and narrow path, one's slide into the filthy water can be quick and fatal. I remember hearing the story of the Roman emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Supposedly, before a decisive battle at Milvian Bridge, Constantine had a vision of a flaming cross which appeared in the sky with the words "In This Sign Conquer" written over it. He dedicated the battle to the Christian God, and his victory gave him control of the Roman Empire. As I listened to this story, I had a very strong, clear thought

(I can't say for sure that it was inspired, but my family claims if I ever have a strong, clear thought I must have had help!) that at the time of Constantine's vision, the church had evolved so far away from where it should have been that it no longer had the spiritual power to guide the people. The church had released its grip on the rod of iron and was sliding into the filthy river. Because of this condition, Satan no longer felt the need to persecute the church. Instead, he began to support this church in apostasy in order to use it for his malevolent purposes. In other words, once the church lost its spiritual power, Satan realized he would be better served by using this altered church than by destroying it.

It becomes very clear that many of the problems that plagued the Roman Empire and hastened its decline are similar to a number of conditions that concern us in the United States today. Many of the circumstances are different because of the difference between our country today and the waning days of the Roman Empire. However, human nature tends to remain constant. Both of these world powers were built by the hard work and dedication of a devoted people. Both countries achieved the status of THE world power for a time during its existence. Finally, both began a spiritual and moral fall because of gross social sins. Rome eventually fell while the final chapter of the story of the United States has not yet been written (one could argue that it has been written but we haven't been allowed to read it yet). If the idea that human nature tends to be constant throughout the world and throughout the ages, then other empires should show many of the same characteristics that have been noted in the Roman Empire as well as in our country today. Let us now look at the empire of the Nephites, whose history is recorded in The Book of Mormon, in order to determine whether or not there are similar characteristics between it and our country today.

THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

It is interesting to read in The Book of Mormon about how Nephi and his followers separated from first the Jews in Jerusalem and second their brethren, the Lamanites, in order to live in safety and worship as they felt led. They believed that only through this separation would they be able to worship in a way that would be pleasing to God and spiritually uplifting for themselves.

*And it came to pass that the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me. And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord, in all things, according to the law of Moses. (2 Nephi 4:7, 8, 14 RLDS)
[2 Nephi 5:5, 6, 10 LDS]*

The early settlers in this country also left under similar conditions and for similar reasons. The Book of Mormon confirms to us that many Gentiles were led by God's hand to the shores of this Promised Land, beginning with the explorations of Christopher Columbus.

And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters. And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; (1 Nephi 3:147-149 RLDS) [1 Nephi 13:12-14 LDS]

Christopher Columbus ©Aronbrand/Dreamstime.com



God's modus operandi has been to separate and protect those who call upon Him and attempt to live within His laws as they know them. The Israelites, the Jaredites, the Nephites, the Pilgrims, and the inhabitants of Zion are all examples of this. Each group humbled itself (or will humble itself in the case of Zion) and was (or will be) blessed by God. Also, with the exception of Zion, each group fell away by various degrees and lost that spiritual power that was within its grasp.

The Book of Mormon is filled with scriptures pertaining to the blessings God bestowed upon the early inhabitants of this land as the people sought to obey the laws of God. One example is found in the fourth chapter of 2 Nephi. Nephi tells us the condition of his people:

And we did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord, in all things, according to the law of Moses. And the Lord was with us; and we did prosper exceedingly: for we did sow seed, and we did reap again in abundance. And we began to raise flocks, and herds, and animals of every kind. And it came to pass that we began to prosper exceedingly, and to multiply in the land.
(2 Nephi 4:14, 15, 16, 18 RLDS) [2 Nephi 5:10, 11, 13 LDS]

In the Book of Ether, there are few times that the descendants of Jared and his brother existed in a condition of righteousness. However, when they did live according to God's laws, they were blessed.

And it came to pass that Lib also did that which was good in the sight of the Lord. And they built a great city ...And they did preserve the land ... And they did work in all manner of ore...And they did work all manner of fine work. And they did have silks, and fine twined linen; and they did work all manner of cloth, that they might clothe themselves from their nakedness. And they did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash. And they did work all manner of work of exceeding curious workmanship. And never could be a people more blessed than were they, and more prospered by the hand of the Lord.
(Ether 4:65, 68, 69, 71-74, 77, 78 RLDS) [Ether 10:19, 20, 21, 23-25, 27, 28 LDS]

Many of us realize that we should make every effort to follow God's laws because of the spiritual rewards and also simply because God tells us to do so. Physical rewards should not be our objective. In fact, for some individuals, following God's laws brings about negative consequences in the physical realm. However, each of the societies that we have discussed was blessed as a whole with great physical, as well as spiritual, blessings. On the other hand, as societies decline in a spiritual sense, they also decline in a physical sense. Knowing this is true – and seemingly unalterable – it would seem that no nation would allow itself to fall away from the righteous laws of a loving Father. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

The Old Testament is filled with examples of rebellion against God and His commandments. From Adam to the 12 tribes of Israel, God is repeatedly rejected and is replaced with sinful rebellion. Divine punishment is the



result of this rebellion. Beginning with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden and culminating with the scattering of the ten northern tribes by the Assyrians and the defeat of Judah by the Babylonians, people have paid a heavy price for not adhering to God's Word.

The scriptures teach us that God does protect the righteous. The Book of Mormon begins with God's willingness to warn Lehi and his small group that Jerusalem was about to be invaded and conquered. This small group of Israelites is led to a land of promise where they continue the same sequence of events that was so common in the Old Testament:

- 1. God blesses His people**
- 2. The people live in righteousness**
- 3. The people turn away from God**
- 4. God punishes the wicked**
- 5. The people repent**
- 6. God forgives the people – and we return to number 1**

Both the Jaredites and the Nephites continued the unfortunate tradition of their earlier Old World brothers. Both groups continued to live in sin until God finally had to leave them to themselves by withdrawing His spirit from them. The sixth chapter of Ether provides us with some of the details.

...there began to be a great war among the people, for there were many who rose up who were mighty men, and sought to destroy Coriantumr, by their secret plans of wickedness...But he repented not, neither his fair sons nor daughters...and in fine, there was none of the fair sons and daughters upon the face of the whole earth, who repented of their sins; And thus we see that the Lord did visit them in the fullness of his wrath, and their wickedness and abominations, had prepared a way for their everlasting destruction. (Ether 6:16, 18, 61 RLDS) [Ether 13:15, 17, 14:25 LDS]

Actually, the Jaredites had a very poor track record once they arrived at the Promised Land. A reading of the Book of Ether shows their slope became very steep and very slippery very rapidly!

There are more bright spots in the Nephite story, but they too eventually separated themselves from the Lord. Mormon became so frustrated that he resigned from the leadership of the military, but he later agreed to take command of the Nephite armies for a second time in their struggles against the Lamanites.

But behold, I was without hopes, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives, without calling upon that being who created them.

(Mormon 2:27 RLDS) [Mormon 5:10 LDS]

Mormon continued to cry over his people as they died in battle by the tens of thousands.

And my soul was rent with anguish, because of the slain of my people, and I cried, O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!

(Mormon 3:18 RLDS) [Mormon 6:17 LDS]



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All of this destruction and death came about simply because the people refused to follow God's laws. People became proud and began to trust in their own wisdom. They created their own moral standards. They released their grip on the "rod of iron". Even though they lived on God's choice land, they refused to accept the responsibility of being good stewards. Their arrogance caused them to believe they were invincible. I wonder if this type of attitude should be of concern to us today?

CONCLUSION

Because I teach American Government, I was asked to write an article that would be relevant to the upcoming 2008 presidential election. I hope this humble effort will be timely and appropriate (even though I haven't mentioned the election!). I could advise the reader who I think should become president, but that should not be the purpose of this article. I have attempted to show that the United States has followed the pattern of other empires in history – with an emphasis on the Roman Empire and the Nephite civilization. However much we wish to believe our country is somehow immune to the conditions that caused the downfall of other empires, that belief is in vain. The same can be said for the church. History (through secular sources and The Book of Mormon) shows us that when God's people loosen their grip on the rod of iron and shed their humility in order to be able to do things in their own way, the spiritual light of that people dims until they find themselves in total darkness. Very often the decline of government coincides with the decline of the church.

Alexis de Tocqueville, in his book Democracy in America (1835), said America was great because America was good.



I think he was correct.

Unfortunately, we seem to be losing our greatness at the same rate that we are losing our goodness. De Tocqueville was a French aristocrat who toured the United States to observe the American people and their institutions. He wrote, "Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this new state of things...I sought for the keys to the greatness and genius of America in her har-

bors...in her fertile fields, in her boundless forests, in her rich mines and vast world commerce; in her public school systems and institutions of learning. I sought for it in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard from her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power."

Our basketball coach at Tate High School is Joey Murdock. This past fall, Joey went to Russia with a group of fellow Christian basketball coaches to instruct some Russian youths in basketball and to share their testimonies of Jesus Christ. I asked Joey when he returned from his trip if he was able to share his testimony. He said that he was not allowed to share his beliefs to the young people as a group because of government restrictions, but he was able to share with a number of people on an individual basis. I was glad Joey was able to share his beliefs with some of the Russian people, but I also thought it was a shame that he could not stand before a group and share his Christian beliefs. Shame on the Russian government. But wait...as a teacher in a public school system, I am under the same restrictions that had been imposed on Joey.

And we consider ourselves a Christian nation. The religious flame observed by de Tocqueville seems to be more like a flicker today.

After the Greek general, Alexander the Great, had led his army to a major victory, one of his soldiers was brought to him in chains. Alexander was told that the young soldier had fled the field of battle. He was considered a coward. The standard punishment for cowards was death, as the frightened soldier well knew. Alexander asked the soldier why he had fled, and the soldier replied that he was afraid. Alexander then asked the soldier what his name was. "Alexander, sir," the young soldier replied. "Well," said Alexander the Great, "because of our great victory I am going to spare your life, but I am going to give you a word of advice – either change your ways or change your name!" We have taken the name of Christ as both a church and a nation. I fear that there are those among us that Christ wants to tell that we need to change our ways or change our name.

Warnings to the inhabitants of this special land were given even before the arrival of the Nephites. The Book of Ether tells us that an earlier group of people, the Jaredites, were told that "...whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fullness of his wrath should come upon them." (Ether 1:30 RLDS) [Ether 2:8 LDS] Four verses later, though he lived several thousand years ago, Ether talks to us as if he were here in person.

And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you, as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.
(Ether 1:34 RLDS) [Ether 2:11 LDS]

As we have learned from The Book of Mormon, sinful societies on this land must change their ways because they cannot change their name.

As Saints in the latter-day restoration of the gospel, we have a responsibility to give our all to the cause of Zion. Anything less than a total commitment will keep us from attaining a level of spirituality that will allow us to assist in a significant way in the establishment of Zion. In section 6:7a of the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith, Jr. tells us, "...that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."

We have a religion that calls us to make sacrifices so we may be found worthy to be builders of the kingdom. It must be a way of life. It must be a full-time effort, and it goes far beyond the decision of who to vote for in our next presidential election.





Caleb Baumgart

Before our trip to Palmyra, our group had a few classes on witnessing to evangelicals. We also discussed what it was going to be like at the pageant. During class, I also pictured what it would look like and what could happen. I had this image of large crowds of people on two sides of the street shouting at each other with the interns in the midst of this contention. I then saw us crossing the street to have a conversation about our beliefs and The Book of Mormon.

When we arrived, I was happy to see that the situation was much better than my mind had envisioned. There were only about 15 protesters along the road, some had signs and one had a bullhorn but the mood was calm. We said a prayer, divided

up into groups of two and three and went to witness to the evangelicals.

Raeann, Maeanna and I walked up to two evangelicals and because of the power of God we were able to have a very nice conversation for two hours. In the end, I was able to give my Book of Mormon to one of them. They both had open minds and were very nice. It was a great opportunity and a testimony to us how God helps us when we try to do His will.



Angie Cappatocio

This year, we interns had a challenge given to us. As a custom for even numbered years, the interns travel within the United States to see the Hill Cumorah pageant in Palmyra, New York, as well as visit church history sites along the way. Standing outside the grounds where the pageant is held are some very committed souls who feel it is their calling to save the Mormons. Our mission: To talk to them about The Book of Mormon. Now, I am a rather reserved person that doesn't talk much even around acquaintances of like faith let alone strangers who do not believe the same way I do. I'm sure you can imagine the hesitancy I felt when I learned of this challenge. My immediate response was: Ha! I can't do that!

As the trip drew closer, I became very nervous. Even after the many prayers that had poured out by the interns, I still felt incredibly uneasy.



First Row: Crystal Guthrie, Rachel Premoe, Raeann Edson, Maeanna Stahlman
 Second Row: Monica Reed, Angie Cappatocio, Shantelle Cruickshank, Katie Ellis
 Third Row: Jared Lind, Jared Eggenberger, Glenn Wiskur, Caleb Baumgart, Mark Bendorf

Who wouldn't be? After hearing about these protesters with their huge signs and megaphones, I painted a horrible picture of how this was all going to go down.

The first Sunday of our trip, we stopped in Kirtland and had a worship service in the Temple. The Spirit was very strong there. I would compare the atmosphere to the song, "Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this Place." That night an immense peace came over me, and I knew that God was taking care of everything no matter the outcome.

The day we went to the pageant, I was on fire! I was so ready to talk to the protesters! After we approached them our conversations went smoothly. There was no contention, no yelling and no derogatory comments. However, while we were talking to one protester, the Lord revealed to us how the conversation could have gone. A bystander who had been watching us with his family decided to join in on the conversation. He brought a spirit of confrontation, not a desire to find common ground. As a result, there were some very harsh words and a lot of yelling involved on both sides. So much so that I felt uncomfortable standing there. It was an important lesson for all of us. I thank God for blessing us in our positive witness and also revealing to us the power of His love in action.



Shantelle Cruickshank

My junior year of college, I became friends with some kids who liked to include alcohol in many of their activities. They liked to have me around to be a designated driver since they knew I would not drink with them.

After being accepted into the internship, I was convicted that I should distance myself from them so I could be better prepared for the ministry I would bring this summer. In the last few weeks of school, the group was planning to have one last bonfire before we left for the summer. I felt a strong impression that I should not attend the bonfire and was concerned with how to say no.

About this same time, I met a girl and a guy who were both good Christians. The weekend before the bonfire, I was able to make plans with my new friends to go to a music performance on campus and hang out together afterwards. I know that God brought these two people into my life when I needed them. They were an answer to

my prayers to help me remove potential bad influences from my life.



Raeann Edson

Near the end of the trip, I awoke with a terrible stabbing pain in my side. Ignoring it wasn't working so I asked for administration after our morning worship. The pain dulled some and with the help of Tylenol, I got through the day though the pain did not let up. After a restless night, I got up and still wasn't any better. I got dressed and walked over to the other building with the rest of the girls to where we planned to have our worship. On the way the pain spiked again and I doubled over and sat down on the sidewalk. I was helped to the room where I could lay down. I was in pain and couldn't hold back the tears but I heard the interns in the other room praying for me. This brought me great comfort.

The decision was made to go to the hospital, so we dropped the interns off for their scheduled tour of old Nauvoo and the leaders and I headed for the hospital across the river in Iowa. On the way Eldon stopped and administered to me again, which helped calm me. I was able to stop crying.

At the hospital the doctor ruled out several possibilities through tests and an exam before she told us that she thought it might possibly be appendicitis. She wanted to do a CT scan to be sure. After getting permission from my parents to do the scan,



I started drinking the nasty chalky stuff for the scan. There were two large glasses to get down in a specified time period. As Bonnie and I talked during this time, I slowly started feeling better. They had given me pain medication through an IV. By the time they took me to the CT scan I was not feeling any pain. To everyone's surprise, my appendix was fine. As we got ready to leave, the nurse told us that when I came in she was sure I had appendicitis because I had so many of the symptoms. The Lord blessed me and removed the problem so I could continue with the internship.



Jared Eggenberger

I do not like being helpless and dependent on others. When we went to Tucker Institute we did an activity where we all had a piece of pipe. Each piece was different; some had holes in them while others had odd shaped cutouts along the length. Some were short and others were long. We had to line up with our pieces of pipe and get a golf ball to roll through all 13 pieces without stopping or dropping the ball. The pipe represented the unique gifts and talents we each have

and the ball was the person we were to witness to with those gifts. One of the rules was we could not touch anyone else's pipe. After some failed attempts and touching other pipes, several of us were blind folded. This was our consequence for

failing. I couldn't do anything but stand there. Other people had to tell me where to stand and how to hold my pipe. Even though I felt helpless and useless at first, I was able to make suggestions that helped the team. And even though I could only stand there, we still could not have been successful without my piece of pipe and my gifts and talents. Eventually we did succeed.

The Lord knew what I needed to learn that day and was able to show me that I cannot always do everything myself and that I can help even when I think I can't.





Katie Ellis

A couple of weeks before the trip, we were given the challenge and the opportunity to give away a Book of Mormon during the trip.

I had never done this before and this made me nervous. The week of the trip, I was praying that the Lord would guide me to the person that He wanted me to give The Book of Mormon. It weighed heavy on my heart.

Seven days went by and I still had not given away my Book of Mormon. I prayed again that night and again in the morning for God to give me the opportunity to give it away. On the last night of the trip, we went to the Nauvoo pageant and had the chance to witness to a couple of evangelicals. While we were talking, the Spirit impressed on me that I was to give The Book of Mormon to



Crystal Guthrie

On Sunday evening, July 13, 2008, the other interns, staff and I were blessed with the opportunity to worship in the Kirtland Temple. Fifteen of us, along with our Temple guide, David Howlett, spent about

an hour in prayer, song and scripture reading. The Temple was amazing – the Spirit present brought joy and peace to my soul. I sat there in awe taking in all the fine details the saints put into making the Temple so beautiful. I envisioned them sitting in the pews and singing praises. However, as I sat there I realized that my thoughts included 21st century lighting and the sound of air from

the air conditioner. I prayed that I might see the Temple as it would have been on a night like that Sunday night. Try as I might the lights brought me back to the present. The service continued as the sun dropped beyond the horizon.

Outside it was getting dark, the pale orange lights from outside glistening in the windows. But inside the Temple was unchanged. The service ended and we formed a circle for the closing prayer. After the prayer, we all stood for a moment basking

in the Spirit and taking in the feelings of the closeness of the Spirit of the Lord. As we began to consider leaving I silently prayed again: Lord, let me see the Temple as it would have been, lighting and all. Before we could move to leave, David Howlett began telling us how beauti-



the man. I was thinking, "Ok Lord, please open up the conversation for me to ask the question" and immediately the man said he had read parts of The Book of Mormon. I was then able to offer my Book of Mormon and ask him to read all of it and pray about it. Through the help of God and all the teachers that gave us the tools, Monica, Caleb, Crystal and I were able to witness, listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and plant a seed that we hope will grow in this man.



ful the Temple is at night with the moonlight and outside lights shining through the Temple windows casting a glow across the sanctuary. He turned off the lights and I praised the Lord for this unique opportunity we were able to experience. The orange lights from the outside gave off a glow of what could be candles. It gave me an appreciation for things we have today in our homes and churches. I also recognized the faith and ability of the saints to endure harsher conditions, yet still rejoice in what they had and the opportunity to grow closer to one another and their God.



Jared Lind

Two or three years ago, I was probably the farthest away from the Lord as I had ever been. During that time, I had done some things that most people wouldn't mind, but to me they weighed heavily on my heart. From

the beginning of the internship, I have become closer and closer to God and yet I still had not let those past sins go.

About a week before the trip, I wanted to be free and open with the Lord so I finally started to ask for forgiveness. However, I never really felt cleansed of those sins because I wasn't fully letting them go. Then on the third day of the trip, after receiving a number of blessings, I asked for forgiveness again before I went to bed. In my mind I saw John 3:16 scroll by. For some reason I could not remember what that verse said, so I wrote it down and went to bed. The next morning, I awoke feeling more energized than usual and I felt happier. Then I remembered seeing John 3:16 and I looked it up. As soon as I read it I knew that God had taken that sin away from me and that is why I felt so much better. I have felt great and energized ever since.



Rachel Premoe

I had the opportunity to give The Book of Mormon to a few people before the internship started. The people I gave them to were ones I had formed relationships with, so I felt comfortable with sharing it with them. When I found out that we would be giving away a Book of Mormon on our trip, I was a little scared. I wasn't sure how I was going to complete this task with what seemed so little time and moving constantly from one place to another. Unfortunately, a few of us were not able to give our Book of Mormon away to the evangelicals whom we had spoken with on the trip. However, I was constantly looking for people I could give it to. My nervousness caused me to miss several opportunities but prayer enabled me to give it to a man who tended the front desk at one of our hotels. I feel there was a small seed planted in his heart even though he hesitated at first. I thank the Lord for His help and I am praying for the man to open his heart to the truth.





Maeanna Stahlman

We had been praying for safety before we left on our trip. During those times I felt the assurance we would be kept safe. The day we left there was a delay in getting the van from the company, which caused us to leave about 30 minutes later than planned. Later in the day we stopped for supper and while we were eating, it poured down rain. The rain slowed to a drizzle as we left

the restaurant and piled back into the van but it picked up again as we headed east on the freeway.

Soon the traffic slowed down and eventually came to a stop. We knew there had been a

wreck because of the police cars, fire trucks, tow trucks and ambulances that made their way by us on the right shoulder of the highway. We later found out that a semi truck had jackknifed into the trees along the side of the highway and several cars were involved as well.

We were very thankful that the Lord watched over us. We felt that if the timing had been a little different we could have possibly been involved in the accident as well.

Every Wednesday, an elder is invited to lead the interns and staff in a fasting worship service. On the first Wednesday after returning from our trip, I shared this testimony with the interns adding an experience I received before we left. One morning I awoke and a picture came to my mind of a white van skidding on a road. The picture left as soon as it came to me, but it had stuck with me. I do believe that we were kept safe, not only that one day but throughout the entire trip.



Glenn Wiskur

On one of our service days, we planned to go to Odessa Hills campground and paint some of the cabins. The morning before we left, we got a call informing us that a van was

broken down and we had friends in need. Mark Bendorf and I were dispatched to look at the van.

When we arrived, we later found out, the owner of the van was sort of surprised and dismayed at the same time. He thought, "What are these 'kids' going to be able to do to fix my van?"

After the owner explained a little of the history of the van, Mark stated that we should start with a prayer – something we had discussed doing on the trip there. We were able to fix the van, but

probably the real service was in the form of the prayer. The owner had not thought to pray and he realized that it was important that we started off with a prayer. He thought of us differently after that and we were able to get his van running again.



Cleaning Angels Come To Clean



by Lou Church

On July 24, 2008 thirteen young people from The Book of Mormon Foundation Internship descended with cleaning supplies, sponges and buckets in hand, to deep-clean and scrub the Lunch Partners kitchen from top to bottom! These ambitious young people went to work right away and took only a short break for juice and donuts to keep up their strength. It was a joy to hear the laughter that went along with their difficult work – no job seemed too hard for them.

Two young men tackled the double oven (without even being asked), and what a difference it made in how that old stove looked when they were through! Others scrubbed shelves, counter-tops and sinks, and rearranged and filled the spice containers.

The young people who so graciously gave of their time and energy, and who are pictured in the photographs are: Mark Bendorf, Macanna Stahlman, Jared Eggenberger, Jared Lind, Glenn Wiskur, Caleb Baumgart, Shantelle Cruicshank, Angie Cappatocio, Crystal Guthrie, Rachel Premoe, Raeann Edson, Monica Reed and Katie Ellis. They would not leave until they had swept and mopped the kitchen in their final cleaning effort. We appreciate all their hard work, but most of all; we savor the love they showed for the Lord and Savior by graciously doing this “labor of love,” that the Lunch Partners ministry might continue.



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