



# THE WITNESS

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The Lord spake  
unto them, saying,  
Arise and come  
forth unto me



## Karen Bates | BMF Research and Office Assistant

The board takes great pleasure to welcome Karen Bates to The Book of Mormon Foundation. Karen has already started working part-time as a research/office assistant. Her diverse research, technical and personal skills will enhance our research effort and also support the BMF programs. Karen carries an unwavering love for Christ and a deep passion for the Book of Mormon message. Please join us as we move forward together.

The Book of Mormon is such a treasure because of the beautiful testimony of Jesus Christ (Alma 4:9-10 RLDS) [Alma 6:8 LDS] and the plain and precious promises that lead one into God's Kingdom (1 Nephi 3:168-197 RLDS) [1 Nephi 13:26-41 LDS]. When I was young and first read the Book of Mormon, cover to cover, I could hardly put it down. The Doctrine of Christ, found in 2 Nephi 13 & 14, clarified what I had memorized as a list from Hebrews 6. Now, through the example of Jesus Christ, I could plainly understand the process of receiving Christ, choosing God our father, and loving God and our neighbor. I found that, throughout the Book of Mormon, the Everlasting Gospel of the Kingdom of God (3 Nephi 5:32-43 RLDS) [3 Nephi 11:31-41 LDS] is made plain, and we are led to Christ.

I feel so blessed with the testimony of God's hand in preparing me for this position and placing me in a good place at a good time. The Lord has brought together, in a very powerful way, many groups that work tirelessly so the testimony of Christ in the Book of Mormon will go to as many as people as possible and they can have the joy of the everlasting gospel in their lives. In this new partnership, Shirley Heater felt the call of God to create a study manual which would incorporate past research into current research on the Book of Mormon. I am thankful to be working with Shirley as a research assistant on this new study manual for the essentials of the Book of Mormon and with the faithful team at The Book of Mormon Foundation.

In Gospel Bonds,  
Karen Bates



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Cover Photo Courtesy of Dale Godfrey  
 (3 Nephi 5:14 RLDS) [3 Nephi 11:14 LDS]

# Come and Follow Jesus

By Aaron Smith

"Wherefore, we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation, while the children of Israel were in the wilderness. Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross, and bear the shame of the world; wherefore, I, Jacob, take it upon me to fulfill the commandment of my brother Nephi."

(Jacob 1:7-8 RLDS/LDS)

Jacob had been commissioned by his brother, Nephi, to be the keeper of the most valuable records they possessed. Nephi had also given Jacob specific instruction on what to include and what not to include as he wrote his portion on the plates. The verses quoted above are part of the introduction Jacob uses during his initial time as prophet and scribe. There is no doubt, after having related the command Nephi had given him, that he followed it to the best of his ability. Jacob tells us first, it is Christ who will lead us to God, and our rest is found in Him.

What is so unique to me, however, is that, after his initial recounting of the transfer of the plates from Nephi and recording the command, the first thing Jacob does is lay out the plan of salvation so plainly and succinctly. Without a doubt, this verse (8) is one of the most powerful verses in all scripture. It encapsulates the plan of salvation like few other verses. It does so in a way which is unique, because it sheds light on the process of salvation and what we must endure if we are to be saved. Most other verses laying out the plan of salvation speak of what we must "do." This one lays out what must happen "to us" and squarely places the responsibility of our salvation on God, instead of misplacing our actions as the saving factor.

There are five keys to this verse, and we will examine each one in light of other scriptures. They will illuminate the power and the glory of what Jacob pleads with the reader to understand and know.

First, Jacob wishes all men might not "rebel against God." To rebel against God would be to commit the same

sin Lucifer did in the beginning. He incurred the wrath of God and caused the war which led to his removal from God's presence. He fell to the earth, where he promptly tempted Eve and caused the fall of man. The fall of man led men to be carnal, sensual and devilish. (Genesis 4:13, 6:50 IV) (Alma 19:51, Mosiah 8:75 RLDS) [Alma 40:17, Mosiah 16:3 LDS]

Man was in a lost state. He was cut off and without hope. God, however, held the upper hand, and knew He would interject the Son into the world to save the world. For men to be restored into His presence, men would need to repent of their rebellion and claim hold upon the blood of the atonement that would cleanse them from their sin (Genesis 6:63 IV). We see that Jacob lays repentance out as the first step in this process.

This step was not without the grace of God. God reached out to Adam to restore him. Adam did nothing of himself to gain this favor. Adam didn't create the sacrifice. Adam didn't find God. God found Adam. Adam didn't restore himself to God's presence. God gave Adam the manner and the way back. All Adam had to do was to follow it. This is the same philosophy that King Benjamin lays out to his people in his final speech. (Mosiah 1:52-60 RLDS) [Mosiah 2:20-25 LDS] We are nothing of ourselves, and God is our ultimate salvation.

Jacob then mentions faith and how it stands in opposition to the rebellion just mentioned. Without faith, it is impossible to please God, for by faith all eternal things move and have their existence (Lectures of Faith, Chapter 7).





Faith is the first and foremost principle of the gospel. It is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1-6 IV/KJV). However, our faith isn't in ourselves. Simply to have faith isn't enough. We can have faith in so many things—our technology, our money, our family, our world. Jacob draws a distinction, though, and says that our faith must be in Christ. There is no other saving faith. If there was a different way, a more satisfying object upon which we should place our faith, a more trustworthy source, Jacob surely would have mentioned it here.

This was the very first thing Jacob says to us. It was the pre-eminent item on his mind—this plan of salvation. Surely, if there was another way, if there was a different avenue which led us back to glory and rest with God, he would have mentioned it. Alas, we find there is no other way. There is no other name but Christ. We have no hope. He is our only hope. We have no faith outside of Him. He is our ultimate faith. Jacob lays out plainly, the first two principles that Paul speaks of regarding the doctrine of Christ—repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

Jacob then indicates that he wishes all men might “view His death.” In this one statement, Jacob understands that to know about Christ and His salvation in our head alone is not adequate. It must become personal. We must know Christ died for us. If we don't have this testimony, we will never endure. What better way to view His death than to go “under the wave.” In being baptized, we symbolically see the death of our old self, and we rise up with Christ a new creation. Where else can we “view His death” so poignantly? In what other method or ordinance given to us do we have this opportunity?

In baptism, as we are laid under the water, darkness closes around us. If done properly, the minister will fully immerse you as you bend your knees and lean back. This will make it wholly impossible for you to come back out of that death without his assistance. We cannot come to

Christ on our terms, but we must come to Him on His terms. His terms state that if you want to claim fellowship with Him, you must be baptized. (Hebrews 6:1, Acts 2:41, 47, I Peter 3:21 IV/KJV)

This baptism allows you to “view His death” in your own life. It becomes the lens that finally brings His death into focus. It becomes personal. If you won't relate to Christ in this way, His death and atonement are held locked up, not having any effect in your life. It is not personal, and His sacrifice is simply generic. It wasn't for you, yet, it is for those who “believe.” Baptism is our first act of obedience to His call. (Moroni 8:29 RLDS) [Moroni 8:25 LDS] By allowing this lens to be applied in your life, there is now a sense you are associated with Him. You have chosen a death which will lead to ultimate life. You can “view His death” in a way which is both unique and personal.

Jacob continues this plan of salvation with the concept that we must “suffer His cross.” There is anger in the church over this issue, because the natural man is still alive in the hearts of men and women in the church.

Christ calls us to pick up our cross and follow Him. (Matthew 16:25-26 IV) Matthew 16:24 KJV) (3 Nephi 5:78 RLDS) [3 Nephi 12:30 LDS] Where are we to follow Him? To what “end” are we to travel? To what point along this path He walked are we to stand in lock-step with Him? The answer most assuredly must be the crucifixion. If we walk with Him, like his apostles did, then we will flee Him in the garden. Like Peter, we will deny Him in times of trial, as we seek to save our own life. Jesus said if any man sought to save his own life in this world, he would surely lose it, but if he laid down his life, he would surely find a new life through God (Luke 9:24 IV/KJV).

This crucifixion isn't about providing atonement for our sins. That has been done and accomplished. This crucifixion, in our lives, is about slaying the natural man. It is about denying ourselves all worldly lusts. What greater lust has there been in man than his own life? Esau, the great representation of the natural man in the history of Israel, sold his birthright and all the promises, for a pot of porridge. He sought a physical salvation, and he lost his spiritual salvation.

The natural man is an enemy to God. Just because we are baptized does not mean that this natural man is dead. In fact, quite the contrary, he is alive and well in many in the church. We find him raising his ugly head in our business meetings when we have to “prove our point.” We find him subtly destroying the church when we accept second best instead of God's best. He is found in our laughter at inappropriate comments. He rushes in to “defend the truth” that only helps prove our point.

Our personal nature needs to change. We can repent and be baptized, but this only puts us on the path. It only gets us in the door. We must then learn to be like Christ. To be like Christ requires the death of all we think and claim as dear to us. Christ, being equal to God, took upon Himself the form of a servant. (Philippians 2:6-8 IV/KJV) He picked up the basin and the towel when He should have had His apostles wash His feet. Christ “left His throne of glory and counted it but loss.” He set the example, built the mold and established the pattern. Anything short of total surrender leaves us in rebellion with God. Yet, we still seek to save ourselves.

To “suffer His cross” means to slay the natural man in our lives. Most assuredly, this is impossible on our own. The story of the rich young ruler points this out vividly to us. He approached Jesus, seeking justification for his life. If he had truly approached Him to seek eternal life, he would have done what Jesus asked. He didn’t and, in the process, revealed where his heart truly was. The disciples, seeing this interchange, wondered in their hearts, “Who then can be saved?” Here was a young man, spotless according to the world, rich and a ruler. What more could he have done? From all the outward appearances, he was the epitome of an Israelite. Jesus, reading the thoughts of His disciples, tells them that with man, salvation is impossible! But with God, all things are possible. He lays out simply and purely that it will take the God of creation to reveal to you what you can't see yourself. If you humble yourself during that revelation, He will sanctify you and cleanse you from that sin. However, if your hidden agenda, your corrupt heart and sinful desires, once revealed, are not cast aside, you will not endure to the end, and therefore will not be saved into His ultimate kingdom.



To suffer His cross means we must have the God of the universe search our souls and reveal to us the things we claim more dearly than Him. Without this desire, we remain blinded by our own self-satisfying desires. In the song, *Shine, Jesus, Shine*, the third verse indicates we want Jesus to “search me, try me” and “consume all my darkness.” This requires total faith and trust in the One who can see and save.

Peter provides us an excellent example of this truth. Despite all his failings, Peter understood one thing—he couldn't save himself. After Jesus described the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood to all the disciples, many left Him and followed no more. They couldn't understand what He meant. They didn't want to understand. When pressed with using their own understanding or trusting in the One giving those words, they trusted in their own wisdom and intelligence. However, Peter and the other 11 remained. When questioned by Jesus as to whether they would also leave, Peter's response was, "to whom shall we go? Thou has the words of eternal life."

Peter acknowledged his own lack of understanding. He was humble, and he continued to place his faith in this carpenter from Galilee.

This trust and humility were key steps he later laid out in his own version of the plan of salvation, found in II Peter 1:5-7 (IV/KJV). Trust is developed as you are “tempered” by the “smith that blows the coals.” (Isaiah 54:16 IV/KJV) Humility is a necessary key to unlocking all revelation. If we continue to think that our way, our understanding, our intelligence will save us, then we have denied Christ His rightful place as Savior in our life. Even if it's just one area of our lives we cling to, such as our finances, Jesus remains locked out.





Are there those among us who have started this journey and have fallen away? Are there those among us who haven't heard the call to slay the natural man in your life? Are we still struggling with laying down our lives and finding this new life in Christ alone? In all these things, we can now see why the bride of Christ languishes on the vine, not producing the life-giving sustenance the world needs.

Not much has changed in the church since the 1960s, when Apostle Oakman stated that we already had enough men, enough land and enough money to redeem Zion. The problem isn't an outward one. It's an inward one. There is still too much sin in the church, and that sin remains because we want it to. We don't have the desire to become like Christ. We don't have the will to lay down our own life and trust that He can raise it back up again. We lack the faith necessary to walk our own Via Dolorosa and embrace the cross that Christ lays before us. We keep one foot in the world, and our works have become lukewarm.

God promised to reap a whirlwind upon this world, starting first with the church (D&C 105:9 RLDS) [D&C 112:23-24 LDS], especially among the ministers who have blasphemed against Him. This blaspheme isn't limited to using His name in vain; it is an arrogation of the prerogatives of God. We have "usurped" God of His rightful place in our lives, and we've taken upon us the responsibility and authority that is His alone. In doing so, by seeking to save ourselves using our wisdom, our understanding, our ways, and our works, we have put His counsel to naught. Judgment will begin first upon His house.

John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, also wrote a book entitled: *The Acceptable Sacrifice*. He says:

"The Lord kills before he makes alive,  
he wounds before his hands make whole...  
he wounds because his purpose is to heal...  
He breaketh the heart of every son whom he  
receiveth, and woe be to him whose heart God  
breaketh not!"

Has your heart been broken by God? If not, then woe be unto you, for every attempt we make at breaking our own heart will result in failure, because we can't see all of our sins. Only God can. In His infinite wisdom and way, He seeks to slay the natural man inside of us, because His purpose is to heal. He will break our hearts so He can heal them and fill them up with His love, after all of our self-love is emptied.

Jacob truly understood the plan of salvation and still calls us today from the grave, "Come and follow Jesus."

The final aspect of this plan that Jacob lays before the reader is to "bear the shame of the world." To die to yourself is simply the entrance into the final call, because once you have died to yourself, you will become like Christ. This mind that is in God, is now in you. (Philippians 2:5 IV/KJV) You have been changed into His likeness. In being changed into His likeness, you now share in the burden that He shares, part of which is the "shame of the world."

The author of the Hebrews letter tells us that Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, "endured the cross" and despised the shame of it. The cross was a symbol of death and suffering. Christ came to bring new abundant life and hope. The cross was the antithesis of Jesus' stated purpose. The world viewed the cross as adequate punishment for a sinner. Jesus had neither sin nor any need to be punished. Yet, he still endured it for the joy set before Him.

Has not God borne the shame of the world? Did not Lehi and Nephi see the accusations hurled at the believers as they followed the narrow path along the rod of iron? And weren't there even some, who upon partaking at the tree of life, felt ashamed at what they were doing because of this mocking? Even there, in the midst of glory and perfect love, the natural man still can rise and cause our downfall.

Paul indicates that those who think they stand need to take heed "lest they fall." (I Corinthians 10:12 IV/KJV). This was in reference to the Israelites and their falling away from the great calling God had for them. Their calling was sealed as they left Egypt under the wave and drank of the rock called Christ (I Corinthians 10:1-5 IV/KJV). They failed to trust in the one mighty to save, and instead, much like Esau, desired that which would save their physical soul. A whole generation was rejected and God allowed none of them enter, except Caleb and Joshua. They had demonstrated the necessary faith to be saved and enter into the Promised Land.

# 2015 interns



## NICK CAPPO

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### *Sweet Ideals*

Each time we go to Belize, we hold a Book of Mormon Day, and we teach the children a series of classes. I volunteered for the older youth class, and our theme was Lehi's vision. I wasn't sure how well I would do, considering computer science was the only subject I had experience teaching. I was also concerned about how well the children would be able to speak English. We had prepared what we wanted to share, but I was still a little uneasy on the specifics and started praying about what I should say. The day before the Book of Mormon Day, we did a service project at a school in the next town. I was asked to help hand out *ideals*, which are small pouches of white, creamy, coconut ice cream. As I started passing them out, I tried one and found it to be exceptionally sweet. It gave me lots of joy to be able to go around the school handing out these *ideals* and seeing the happiness it brought to the workers there and my fellow interns. That evening, during devotions, a thought came to me that I believe to be the Spirit likening the *ideals* to the fruit of the tree of life in Lehi's vision. During the class on the Book of Mormon Day, it was very difficult to get through to the children on the meaning behind the vision. I received many blank stares, and many

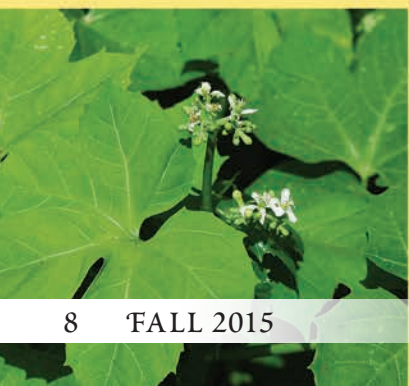
of my questions went unanswered. I was, however, able to get through to them when I brought up *ideals*. They all knew exactly what they were, and I was able to relate them to the fruit of the tree of life. I explained to them that like the sweetness of the *ideals*, we must also see God's love as sweet, insomuch that we want to share it with all of our family and friends. While much of the class may not have been understood or remembered, I am confident that this part of the message, the most important part, was given to them in a way they could truly understand.

## AARON EYERLY

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### *Answered Prayers*

A few weeks after my interview, I received a letter stating I was accepted into the Internship. Included in this letter was the calendar with the dates of our classes, service projects, group nights, etc. I immediately noticed an unfortunate problem. The first day of the Internship was also the first day of my annual training for the Army National Guard. The Guard prefers (to say the least) that all their soldiers are present for the training. At the time, I was running with my squad leader every morning, so



I thought I would ask him if there was any possible way for me to reschedule the training or make up the dates. He briefly explained the complicated process to get approved for switching my training to complete it with a different unit. Because I was running with him every morning, I was able to constantly remind him of this. I really wanted to be a part of the Internship and didn't know what else I could possibly do. Lynn and Sugar told me they had been praying for me. At that time, I was still skeptical of prayer, but I had been around the church long enough to have heard miraculous testimonies from the power of prayer. I reluctantly decided that I needed to pray and, if I prayed and it still didn't happen, then the Internship wasn't meant for me. So that night, I spent the longest time I had ever spent praying and didn't stop until I felt right. A few days after that, I received a phone call from my squad leader. He was in disbelief and told me that my packet for makeup annual training went through and that I could carry on with the Internship. I was speechless. I spent the next few minutes thinking of possible explanations until I came to the only conclusion. God had answered my prayer, and I needed to go on the Internship.

## HEZEKIAH GOULD

### *God Can Do All Things*

When the Internship first began I didn't know if it was what I was supposed to be doing this year. After a while, so many testimonies started flooding in that I could not deny that this was what I was supposed to be doing. A few days before we left for Belize, my passport had not arrived. I called the U.S. Passport office, and they said it hadn't finished processing. Our entire group began to pray about it, and I asked for prayers from all my friends. About a day before we left, I received it. I also received a letter the same day from the US Passport Service saying sorry, but they needed more information to finish processing. Even when the world tells you no, God can do all things if we just ask him diligently!



I started a job five days before the Internship began. I was doing cement work, which I had never done before. I got the job so I could go to a friend's birthday party in Colorado, and for no other reason. When we went down to Belize, however, one of our service projects involved cement work. I never expected to be doing this type of work, but they wanted me to do cement work. So, it was a huge testimony in my life that in all the things you do, God has a plan for you. It all connects and adds up to one master plan!

## Jenna Luedeman

### *Little Paint, Lots of Walls*

The first whole day we were in Belize, we spent doing a service project for one of the schools. The task was to paint a wall that was two to three concrete bricks high. We were given one side to do and about 20 quart size paint jars. The jars contained different colored paint, so we decided to paint the wall in abstract colors with the stipulation that no two bricks of the same color should touch.

As we neared the end of the first wall, we got asked to do another one. This one was also long. We looked into our paint jars and didn't really have a lot left, but we decided we'd go until we ran out of paint. Before we started, we said a prayer asking for enough paint to finish the wall because we really didn't want to leave it partially done. Since there wasn't a lot of paint left, instead of having us all painting, some of us worked on other projects for the school. The rest

of us, started painting each brick alternating colors. Eventually, we neared the end and completed that wall. We never did run out of paint and, not only that, we were able to make sure there were no two bricks with the same color touching. That was truly an answer to our prayers!

## Eva Watson

### *Healing Through Administration*

On the first full day in Belize, I woke up bright and early to a beautiful morning. It was a service project day, so I got dressed in my work clothes and headed downstairs for breakfast. As I waited, my stomach started hurting. It mostly felt like I was hungry, but there was a hint of feeling sick. I assured myself I just needed to eat, but it only got worse. By the time I finally sat down with my food, I grabbed my room key and ran up to the bathroom instead of eating. I was sick after all. Several concerns were running through my mind. "Why do I have to have the immune system that can't handle a third-world country? What if I'm sick all week? Even if I'm not sick all week, I'm sick today. I can't work in the hot sun like this. What if my malaria pills are making me sick, and I go through this every time I take them?" Eventually, Sugar came and checked on me, and I told her what was going on. She told me that she and I would stay at the hotel if I was sick, and she asked if I wanted to be administered to. I said, "Yes, please." I didn't want to miss out on any of the trip.



Sugar left to get Lynn and Eldon and, while she was gone, the girls I was rooming with came up because they had finished breakfast. When they saw I was sick, they offered to pray for me. During the prayer, I could feel my stomach start to settle, and I knew healing was coming my way. While Lynn and Eldon administered to me, I felt better still. I managed to keep down some breakfast, and I told Sugar I would decide what I wanted to do that day based on how I felt after devotions. I was confident that I'd be fine. After devotions, I felt great, and got into the van to face our first day of service projects. I honestly think I felt healthier that day than how I normally feel, and my health held up the whole trip.

## MANDEE MCELWAIN

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### *Crayon Testimony*

We taught a class at the Book of Mormon Day for the church in Corozal. In our class, Austin, Nicole and I taught the youngest age group. Our theme of the day was Lehi's Vision, so all of our activities and lessons were planned around that story. We shared the story of Lehi's Vision, and then we had the children do an activity that showed the importance of holding tight to the rod of iron. After that, we had coloring sheets for all the children. I was in charge of bringing the crayons down. At first I planned on just bringing enough to use in the class, but then I felt I should bring more for the children to keep. I went through my house, and I ended up finding quite a few crayons that I could bring. I packed as many as I could. It was a blessing because I had enough for all of the kids to have about two handfuls of crayons. Right

after I handed out all the crayons, one more child, Kevin joined our class. I really wanted to give him crayons to take home, but I didn't want to take from the children I just gave to. I had a strong feeling that I needed to ask the children to share with our newcomer. I asked them if they would share, so Kevin could also have some crayons. I was very impressed with their responses. They immediately started grabbing crayons out of their bags to share, and they were happy to do so. This moment truly touched my heart. These children had just received a gift, and they were willing to give it away. This experience led me to reflect on my life. Did I carry the same giving and kind spirit as they did? Would I give away a new gift and be happy about it? I was not pleased with most of my answers. This experience has truly helped me grow as a person. It also taught me that I need to be giving always, even when I don't want to be, and I should hold a cheerful spirit in doing so. The children in Belize truly possess God's love and charity and, hopefully, one day I will be able to reach the level they have.

## AUSTIN WALTERS

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### *Kids of Giving & Charity*

We provided a church camp for the congregation and community in Belize. It was quite a success, as we averaged about five participants per age group. This was a pretty strong showing for such a small congregation. The children's energy and enthusiasm to learn gave me great joy. The smiles on their faces were easily contagious. One child, Kevin, who arrived late to our class was very timid. Mande asked if the other children would share some of their crayons we had given them earlier. They all eagerly wanted to give Kevin the crayons they had received, offering him handfuls. As we concluded the service, we handed out goody bags filled with candy and small toys. Netti, a younger boy was playing with me, and I showed him how to use a toy popper (the rubber toy you push inside out and it pops up off the floor). He was fascinated for a bit, then he quickly asked, "Where is your bag?" I replied, "Oh no, I don't get one," and it was so amazing what he did next. He reached into his bag and grabbed a few toys and handed them to me. I was so amazed at the love these children displayed.



And the second is like unto it;  
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as  
thyself. (Matthew 22:38 IV)  
[Matthew 22:39 KJV]

These children were witnessing that to me. After we finished playing soccer, Alex asked about my bandana, and I said, "Here you can have it." I gave him my sweat-drenched bandana, and his face lit up. He showed complete joy from something so small that we take for granted in almost every aspect of our lives.

Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.  
(2 Corinthians 9:11 IV/KJV)

They struck my heart with love and humility, and I am thankful God softened my heart through the charity of my brothers and sisters.

## AUDREY HORN

### *The Music of God's Prompts*

In Belize, the interns get to teach classes to the church community through a Book of Mormon Day. We teach age-level classes, as well as music and craft classes for all ages. As an elementary music teacher, I immediately knew I wanted to teach the music class. However, I did not want to just plan to have an hour-long sing-along. Instead, I wanted to leave the people in Belize with tools and knowledge they could use to create music independently of me and my fellow interns. This desire led James, the other music teacher, and I to come up with the idea to make straw woodwind instruments. While planning this activity, a thought crossed my mind, "Wouldn't it be great if I could take recorders to Belize for the children?" I immediately squashed this idea as a ridiculous notion and continued to plan for the class. A few days later, while discussing the class with my parents, my mother reiterated my previous thought, "Wouldn't it be great if you could take recorders to Belize for the





children?” Again, I immediately squashed this as a ridiculous notion. Throughout our preparation, James and I had been praying the Lord would lead us in a manner that would not only minister, but actually teach the children about music and give them the tools and skills to use. Now, fast-forward to the day before our departure, to right before our fasting service. I again began to think, “Wouldn’t it be nice if I could take recorders to Belize?” However, instead of squashing the idea this time, I began to mull over the different ways I could incorporate them into the class. At first, I thought I could take one of my extras and give it as a prize for some contest. Yet, this did not seem fair. I then thought, maybe I could take all my extra recorders and let God tell me which children should receive them. However, this also felt unfair. Then I had an epiphany, I could ask James if he had any recorders he would be willing to donate. Consequently, he had two. But, this still did not seem enough. So I asked the rest of the interns if they had any they could spare. Though none of them did, I still felt the Lord was prompting me to find more to take. We then began our fasting service. During the service, the Elder in charge asked each of us to say a prayer. When it was my turn, I felt prompted to pray for recorders. Thus followed one of the most ineloquent prayers I have ever prayed. “Lord, I feel like you are telling me to pray for recorders to take to Belize. I don’t know why, but here it goes. Lord, please bring me recorders.” Following the service, I immediately called a local music store and asked if they would be willing to donate recorders to take to Belize. To my utter amazement, they donated 15. This was followed shortly by 12 more from another donor. Between these two donations and my recorders and my mom’s recorders, God was able to help me gather 34 recorders within the course of three hours following my prayer. Only He could do that. Thus, the next day we all flew to Belize where the interns and the

recorders all arrived safe and sound. Several days later, we put on our Book of Mormon Day with the children. When the time came during the music class to hand out the instruments, the children's faces immediately lit up. One boy couldn't stop playing his recorder for hours. At the time, I felt that seeing their joy was the reason I was to bring and give recorders. However, the testimony does not end there. The following day, as we were visiting in a local woman's house, I decided I would share my testimony with her daughter. Upon sharing it, she informed me that in Belize, they are required to either take a recorder class or home economics class. Once she shared this, I immediately saw it as additional evidence toward God's plan in having me bring recorders. It was so the children would be able to have the choice between the two classes without having to worry about the cost of a recorder. I truly felt this was the end of my testimony of why God had prompted me to complete this task. However, there was still one last piece of evidence to the puzzle that the Lord wanted me to know. The night before our flight home, I stayed up to talk with the hotel owner's son. Through the course of our conversation, I felt prompted to inquire about the price of recorders in Belize. He told me that, more often than not, a recorder can cost about 200 Belizean dollars or, in other words, \$100 US. I was shocked. The recorders that were donated were only \$1.75 each. It was right then that I truly understood the power of God and His plan in having me bring recorders. In His greatness, He knew that these children whose clothes were torn and dirty would be faced with choice in school in which they would have to choose home economics due to the steep recorder prices. But, in God's infinite wisdom, he planned for a way in which these beautiful children could receive a gift which would enable them to have a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the recorder past the little song I taught them. I feel truly blessed that the Lord chose to use me as his instrument to bring to pass this blessing in a way that my human mind could not have possibly fathomed. God truly loves all his children, and there is nothing I or anyone else could do that can change His plan to bless his children in Belize with a future that would otherwise have been impossible.



## JAMES TANDY

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### *Music class*

In Belize, Audrey Horn and I taught a music class for the Book of Mormon Day for the children from the church and surrounding neighborhood. Our theme for the Book of Mormon Day was Lehi's Vision. Audrey thought I should say a few words right before we taught the last song, in order to tie in the music class to the classes about Lehi's Vision. When I sat down to write the outline, it came to me rather quickly. I wrote that the tree of life is the love of God, and His love will give us great joy when we reach His presence. We must learn to have that joy in God's presence even while on the journey, and music is one way of learning to enjoy and praise Him (see D&C 119:6d). When it came time to give the talk, I felt like the Lord gave me extra words that tied in the class even better. If we're singing His praises loud enough, we won't be able to hear the mocking voices from the great and spacious building trying to knock us off the path. The next day, we attended the Restoration Branch in Corozal, and the Spirit was very strong, as we sang praises to God. It was a pleasure to worship God with the saints in Belize.

## NICOLE ROBINSON

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### *The gift of Spanish*

I was raised with a Spanish and American heritage. My mother was born in Honduras, and she spoke both Spanish and English to us. My dad was born in the United States and spoke English and Spanish also. With this history, I grew to be bilingual. After moving out of my mother's house, I didn't speak Spanish as often, and I

forgot some of the language. When I had my interview for the Book of Mormon Internship, they asked if I would be able to translate in Belize, and I said I would. As the time for departure came closer, I began to get nervous that my Spanish would be different from the Belizeans. I was also afraid that because I hadn't spoken Spanish as often, I would not be able to carry on a conversation as well. Before the trip, I prayed God would help me remember the words I needed to and that my own lack of practice would not hinder the communication there. When we got to Belize, I was immediately greeted with Spanish, and I could understand almost everything the people were saying. They did have strong accents, but they understood me, and I understood them. I was even given the chance to translate a conversation between the pastor of the branch there and Lynn Baumgart (one of our foundation directors). On the way home, I started to see all the various situations where God had helped me recall the words I needed to communicate. I felt very blessed that He was able to use me and help me be an instrument in His hands, despite my own weakness.

When our group of interns was in Belize, we were waiting on dinner at the hotel. I was standing in the dining area, and I looked toward the kitchen, and saw a woman folding napkins. I immediately felt prompted to go talk to her. I asked if I could help her fold. She said it was ok, and we started to converse. She soon told me (in Spanish) that her name was Marley and she had three children and was working at the hotel to pay for them to go to school. She said school in Belize is very expensive. While she was talking, I could clearly see the burden she carried and also the love she had for her kids. After more conversing, I offered a Book of Mormon to her, and she accepted it. The next night, as she was walking out the hotel gate, the Spirit came over me, and I immediately felt prompted to give her the remaining souvenir money I had. It would be the last time I saw her. At first I was reluctant, because I wanted to use the money for my family. Then I realized how selfish I was being and immediately called out her name. I ran to her and told her I felt like I should give her this money for her

children's schooling. I told her God loved her and gave her a hug. She teared up and told me that I didn't have to, but I told her that I wanted to. The money that was left over was not very much, and I was humbled when I saw how overwhelmed she was when I gave it to her. I was given a better understanding of how blessed I am, and it humbled me and made me more grateful for the position God placed me in so I could reach out and help the people in Belize and hopefully be a positive influence in their lives.

## ABRAM THOMAS

### *Witnessing Opportunity*

While in Belize, the 2015 Book of Mormon interns had the opportunity to witness to many different people. We witnessed wherever we went, whether it was on a football field (soccer field) with a 100 degree heat index, or a quiet moment in the work day. We particularly liked sharing in the hotel lobby with the attendant, Ishmael. The night before we left to fly home, we shared testimonies with a mission team from South Carolina. They hoped to get on the same flight we were on, but the flight was completely booked. We offered to pray with them that night, and we also prayed with them in the morning. At the airport the next day, we found the flight was full. We began praying in our hearts for the team from South Carolina. Shortly afterward, we heard the PA system call for this party of two! They filled our hearts with joy and praise to the Lord when they gave us the thumbs-up. They had made it onto a completely filled flight. The Lord also opened up flights for them once they got back into the U.S., so they could make it all the way home.



# PROPHECY WATCH

Some historians believe the Roman Empire, at the time of Christ, was the most powerful empire in history prior to America's global rise during the 20th century. Biblical scholars have made comparisons between them, attaching the rapid decline of America today with the same reasons causing the fall of the Roman Empire. Popular historical writer, Bill Federer, lists some of these parallels in his publication: *American Minute: America's eerie parallels to the downfall of Rome*.<sup>1</sup> Some abbreviated quotes are:

The fall of Rome was a culmination of several external and internal factors.

**The great wall of China:** By 220 A.D., the Later Eastern Han Dynasty had extended sections of the Great Wall of China along its Mongolian border. This resulted in the Northern Huns attacking west instead of east. This caused a domino effect of tribes migrating west across Central Asia, and overrunning the Western Roman Empire.

**Open borders:** Illegal immigrants poured across the Roman borders: Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Franks, Anglos, Saxons, Alemanni, Thuringians, Rugians, Jutes, Picts, Burgundians, Lombards, Alans, Vandals as well as African Berbers and Arab raiders. Will and Ariel Durant wrote in "The Story of Civilization" (Vol. 3 – Caesar and Christ, Simon & Schuster, 1944, p. 366): "If Rome had not engulfed so many men of alien blood in so brief a time, if she had passed all these newcomers through her schools instead of her slums, if she had treated them as men with a hundred potential excellences, if she had occasionally closed her gates to let assimilation catch up with infiltration, she might have gained new racial and literary vitality from the infusion, and might have remained a Roman Rome, the voice and citadel of the West."

**Loss of common language:** At first immigrants assimilated and learned the Latin language. They worked as servants, with many rising to leadership. But then they came so fast they did not learn Latin, but instead created a mix of Latin with their own Germanic, Frankish and Anglo tribal tongues. The unity of the Roman Empire began to dissolve.

**The welfare state:** "Bread and the Circus!" Starting in 123 B.C., the immensely powerful Roman politician Gaius Gracchus began appeasing citizens with welfare, a monthly handout of a free dole of grain. Roman poet Juvenal (circa 100 A.D.) described how Roman emperors controlled the masses by keeping them ignorant and obsessed with self-indulgence, so that they would be distracted and not throw

them out of office, which they might do if they realized the true condition of the Empire.

**Class warfare:** City centers were abandoned by the upper class...The Roman landowner disappeared now that ownership was concentrated in a few families...Inner cities were destabilized...The value of human life was low. Slavery and sex-trafficking abounded, especially of captured peoples from Eastern Europe.

**Taxes:** Taxes became unbearable, as "collectors became greedy functionaries in a bureaucracy so huge and corrupt." Tax collectors were described by the historian Salvian as "more terrible than the enemy." ("Great Ages," p. 20). There was a loss of patriotism, wealth began to flee the empire, and with it, the spirit of liberty.

**Outsourcing:** Rome's economy stagnated from a large trade deficit, as grain production was outsourced to North Africa.

**Debt preceded fall:** Choking taxes and personal debt caused many to abandon their mortgaged property and flee as ex-pats to live amongst the barbarians, renouncing their Roman citizenship. The Durants wrote in "The Lessons of History" (p. 92): "Huge bureaucratic machinery was unable to govern the empire effectively with the enormous, out-of-control debt."

**Self-promoting and corrupt politicians:** The Durants wrote in "The Lessons of History" (p. 92): "The educated and skilled pursued business and financial success to the neglect of their involvement in politics." Richard A. Todd wrote in "The Fall of the Roman Empire" (Eerdmans' "Handbook to the History of Christianity," Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1977, p. 184): "The church, while preaching against abuses, contributed to the decline by discouraging good Christians from holding public office."

**Violent entertainment:** The Circus Maximus and Coliseum were packed with crowds of Romans engrossed

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wnd.com/2015/09/americas-eerie-parallels-to-downfall-of-rome/>

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with violent entertainment, games, chariot races, and until 404 A.D., gladiators fighting to the death. Gerald Simons wrote in "Great Ages of Man – Barbarian Europe" (NY: Time-Life Books, 1968, p. 20): "In the casual brutality of its public spectacles, in a rampant immorality that even Christianity could not check."

**Exposure of unwanted infants:** Roman demographics changed as families had fewer children. Some would sell unwanted children into slavery or leave them outside exposed to the weather to die, as was the practice till 374 A.D.

**Immorality:** Rome was corrupted with court favoritism, the patronage system, injustice in the legal system, infidelity, perverted bathhouses, sexual immorality, gluttony and gymnasiums ("gym" being the Greek word for "naked"). Samuel Adams wrote to John Scollay of Boston, April 30, 1776: "The diminution of public virtue is usually attended with that of public happiness, and the public liberty will not long survive the total extinction of morals. 'The Roman Empire,' says the historian, 'must

have sunk, though the Goths had not invaded it. Why? Because the Roman virtue was sunk.'"

**Military cuts:** Though militarily superior and marching on advanced road systems, the highly-trained Roman legions were strained fighting conflicts from the Rhine River to the Sassanid Persian Empire. Roman borders were over-extended and the military defending them was cut back to dangerously low ranks. The Durants wrote in "The Story of Civilization" (Vol. 3 – Caesar and Christ, Simon & Schuster, 1944, p.90): "The new generation, having inherited world mastery, had no time or inclination to defend it; that readiness for war which had characterized the Roman landowner disappeared."

**Terrorist attacks:** Called the "Scourge of God," Attila the Hun was thought to be the anti-Christ, as he devastated Europe with his half-million warriors. Aquileia, one of the largest cities in the world at the time, was so completely destroyed that inhabitants ran into the ocean, hammered down logs and lived on platforms which grew into the city of Venice.

This list matches our own experience and observations today. Recent events in our nation remind us again how history is destined to repeat itself without constant diligence from those who have learned from it. In the Restoration, we should have also learned from the Book of Mormon prophets and the ministry of Jesus Christ in the Americas, who prophesied of these things. They have clearly spoken of the prophetic signs pointing to this iniquitous demise and the ultimate consequences for our rebellion against God.

The indifference of the larger Christian church, including the Restoration, has resulted in a divided, ineffective and complacent church which contributes to the decline of our nation and the world. It causes this profound question to be asked: have we learned from history and the words of the prophets or will the fall of Rome be repeated in America? The signs of the times are among us! Watch, therefore, and pray always!

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**The purpose of Prophecy Watch** is to assist in looking for and knowing the signs of the times and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. The perspectives it contains are not presented as the "only, best or final answer" to their meaning, but rather "to the intent that ye might believe on his name" and more fully participate in their fulfillment. We hope Prophecy Watch will provide a brief glimpse into specific prophetic subjects that will encourage each person to diligently pray, study, fast and seek the will of God concerning them.