
THE

WITNESS

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The Book of Mormon Foundation

*For I had requested it of my Father
who was in heaven:
for he had heard my cry,
and answered my prayer.*

ISSUE 157 / SPRING 2016

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Cover Photo Courtesy of Dale Godfrey
(Jacob 5:37 RLDS) [Jacob 7:22 LDS]

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PRAYER

by Dan Kroesen

**Humble yourselves even in the depths of humility,
calling on the name of the Lord daily.**

(Mosiah 2:21 RLDS) [Mosiah 4:11 LDS]

The Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. observed, “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another.” Prayer, being the primary method of communication between God and man, is a vital part in our worship, our religious thinking, and our daily lives. It is the key that unlocks the storehouse of God’s infinite grace and power. Prayer is communion in which the believer seeks to be at one with God, and a method whereby we seek to give ourselves and our lives, with their joys and their problems, wholly into the hands of God, giving him full control. Ultimately, the quality of our spiritual life is in direct proportion to the time, energy and overall commitment to prayer.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

(James 5:16 IV/KJV)

Prayer does for the mind, the heart, and the soul what breathing does for the blood and nerves and body as a whole. It gives it life. In John 10:10 (IV/KJV), Christ shares, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Life in the fullest sense of the word involves living in response to the Spirit of God; living on a higher plane than the instinctive or habitual.


“If we would pray more frequently, our lives would be richer in spiritual graces,” urged F. Henry Edwards. He added, “The practice of prayer is absolutely necessary if we are to keep our hearts and minds alive to the world of spiritual realities around us. A man who fails to pray becomes selfish, and his better self dies of atrophy.”

To be carnally minded, is death, and to be spiritually minded, is life.

(2 Nephi 6:74 RLDS) [2 Nephi 9:39 LDS]

(see also Romans 8:6 IV/KJV)

We’ve all seen commercials about conditioners for hair. The commercials often show animations of how the conditioner fixes the broken, dry pieces and how it revitalizes the hair to its optimum health. Prayer acts much the same way for our soul. In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis writes, “God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other.”



While prayer is a passionate search for God and the deliverance which He can offer, it reminds us that we are not in control. Through prayer, we are provided an opportunity to explore the will of God if we are willing to truly seek and willing to surrender. Mark 14:40 (IV) [Mark 14:36 KJV] records the words of Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. "Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Christ didn't pray, "God, if you're able to take this from me..." He affirmed that "all things are possible," and then prayed, "God, if it is in your best interest to remove this suffering, please do so. But if it fulfills your purpose, that is what I want, too."

This level of surrender does not come easily. Genuine surrender says, "Father, if this problem, pain, sickness, or circumstance is needed to fulfill your purpose and glory in my life or in another's, please do so."

Prayer is an act of obedience. God calls us to pray, and we must respond. However, communing with God through prayer tends to be abandoned when we transgress. In those moments, we lack the willingness to surrender or submit to the will of the Lord. Our self-will fights against complete surrender, which is ultimately demonstrated in obedience and trust.

If ye would hearken unto the spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray: for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. But behold I say unto you, that ye must pray always, and not faint.

(2 Nephi 14:11-12 RLDS)
[2 Nephi 32:8 LDS]

There are parts of us that are broken because of sin. Until we pray and ask for forgiveness, we will continue in our brokenness. Forgiveness from God is healing for our souls. If we are to be obedient to God's will, prayer must be a part of our life.

When opportunities, which occasionally come in the disguise of problems, arise, it provides the opportunity to ask, "I wonder how the Lord is going to handle this one?" So, we pray to demonstrate our faith in God. We trust He will do as He has promised in scripture and bless our lives abundantly, more than we could ask or hope. In some ways, a lack of prayer demonstrates a lack of faith and a lack of trust in God's Word. Through prayer, we obtain an experiential basis for our faith. "Prayer will not change God's will in moving to do something," wrote Charles Fry, "but it does move Him to do what He desires to do."

Prayer doesn't force God's hand, but it keeps us on the lookout for his intervention. Prayer sensitizes us to subtle changes in the landscape of our circumstances. When He begins to move, we are apt to recognize it.

For I had requested it of my Father who was in heaven: for he had heard my cry, and answered my prayer.

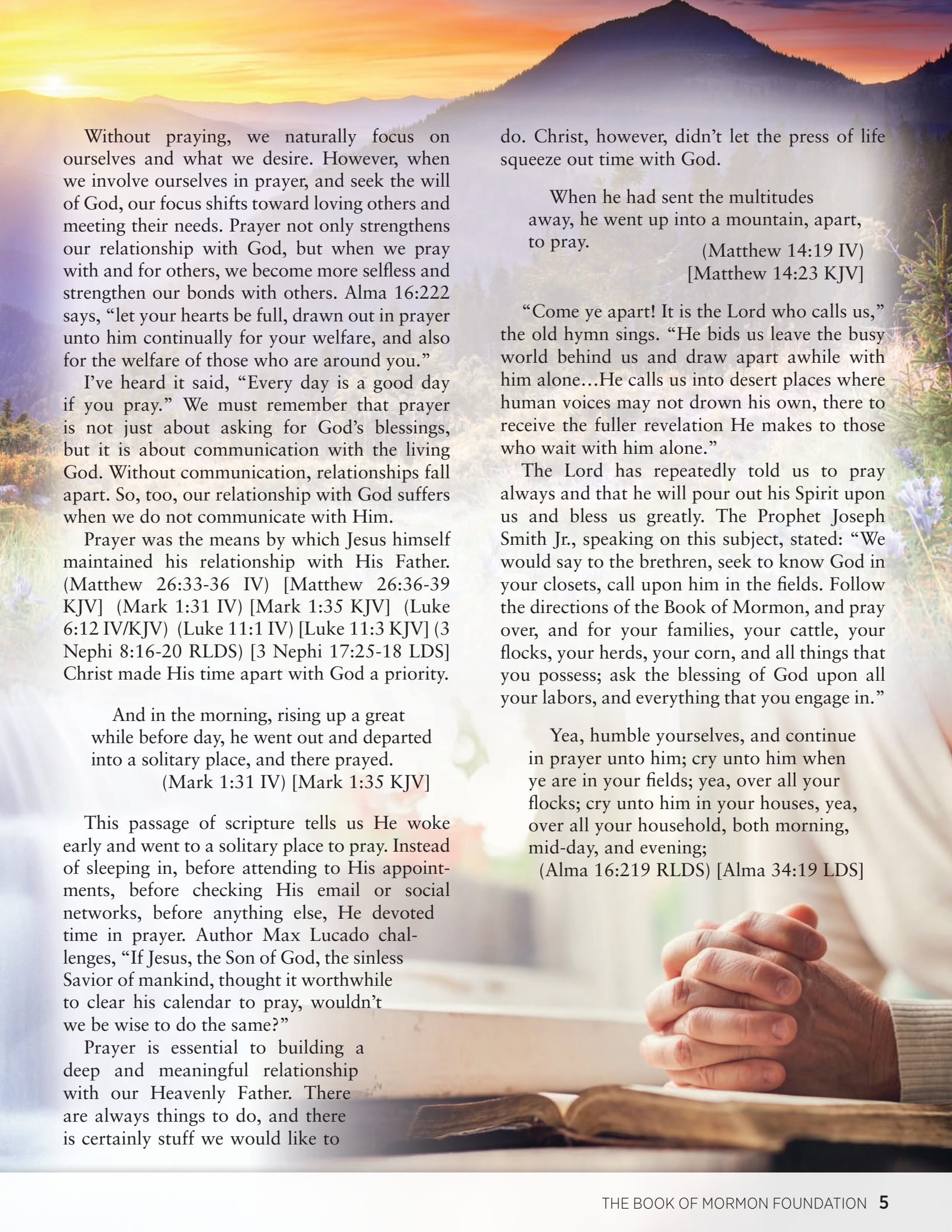
(Jacob 5:37 RLDS) [Jacob 7:22 LDS]

Praying almost ensures we won't miss opportunities. If we have offered a proper prayer, we may trust the promises made in His word, and the Lord hears and will answer.

Sincere and earnest prayer helps us to think of life in larger terms and to approach its problems with an illuminated hope. Prayer takes us beyond human possibilities. Through prayer, we gain courage to meet temptation, resolution to oppose wickedness, and love to meet life graciously.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing but it shall be done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

(John 16:23-24 IV/KJV)



Without praying, we naturally focus on ourselves and what we desire. However, when we involve ourselves in prayer, and seek the will of God, our focus shifts toward loving others and meeting their needs. Prayer not only strengthens our relationship with God, but when we pray with and for others, we become more selfless and strengthen our bonds with others. Alma 16:222 says, “let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.”

I’ve heard it said, “Every day is a good day if you pray.” We must remember that prayer is not just about asking for God’s blessings, but it is about communication with the living God. Without communication, relationships fall apart. So, too, our relationship with God suffers when we do not communicate with Him.

Prayer was the means by which Jesus himself maintained his relationship with His Father. (Matthew 26:33-36 IV) [Matthew 26:36-39 KJV] (Mark 1:31 IV) [Mark 1:35 KJV] (Luke 6:12 IV/KJV) (Luke 11:1 IV) [Luke 11:3 KJV] (3 Nephi 8:16-20 RLDS) [3 Nephi 17:25-18 LDS] Christ made His time apart with God a priority.

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

(Mark 1:31 IV) [Mark 1:35 KJV]

This passage of scripture tells us He woke early and went to a solitary place to pray. Instead of sleeping in, before attending to His appointments, before checking His email or social networks, before anything else, He devoted time in prayer. Author Max Lucado challenges, “If Jesus, the Son of God, the sinless Savior of mankind, thought it worthwhile to clear his calendar to pray, wouldn’t we be wise to do the same?”

Prayer is essential to building a deep and meaningful relationship with our Heavenly Father. There are always things to do, and there is certainly stuff we would like to

do. Christ, however, didn’t let the press of life squeeze out time with God.

When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain, apart, to pray.

(Matthew 14:19 IV)


[Matthew 14:23 KJV]

“Come ye apart! It is the Lord who calls us,” the old hymn sings. “He bids us leave the busy world behind us and draw apart awhile with him alone...He calls us into desert places where human voices may not drown his own, there to receive the fuller revelation He makes to those who wait with him alone.”

The Lord has repeatedly told us to pray always and that he will pour out his Spirit upon us and bless us greatly. The Prophet Joseph Smith Jr., speaking on this subject, stated: “We would say to the brethren, seek to know God in your closets, call upon him in the fields. Follow the directions of the Book of Mormon, and pray over, and for your families, your cattle, your flocks, your herds, your corn, and all things that you possess; ask the blessing of God upon all your labors, and everything that you engage in.”

Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him; cry unto him when ye are in your fields; yea, over all your flocks; cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening;

(Alma 16:219 RLDS) [Alma 34:19 LDS]



The book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, written in the 17th century by a cook in a French monastery, is a collection of letters and other records of his conversations, thoughts, and philosophy, chiefly about his development of an awareness of the presence of God. The author discusses how he was able to turn the most commonplace and menial tasks into acts of praise and communion with God. Conversing with God continually, while he performed everyday tasks, brought a conscious awareness of the ever-presence of God.

Pray without ceasing.

(1 Thessalonians 5:17 IV/KJV)

(see also Mosiah 11:149 RLDS)

[Mosiah 26:39 LDS]

“Nothing makes God so real to the soul as the habit of considering the activities of daily life with him,” offered F. Henry Edwards

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

(Lamentations 3:25 IV/ KJV)

A Christian man labored for 18 years in a Chinese prison camp. The Communist regime rewarded his faith in Christ with sewage duty. The camp kept its waste in pools until it fermented into fertilizer. The pits seethed with stink and disease. Guards and prisoners alike avoided the cesspools and all who worked there.

After he'd spent weeks in the pit, the stench permeated his body. He couldn't scrub it out. Imagine his plight, far from home, and even within the prison, far from people. But somehow, this man found a way to converse with the Lord. "I was thankful for being sent to the cesspool. This was the only place where I was not under severe surveillance. I could pray and sing openly to our Lord. When I was there, the cesspool became my private garden."

I come to the garden alone

While the dew is still on the roses

And the voice so clear whispers in my ear

The Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me

And He talks with me

And He tells me I am His own

And the joy we share as we tarry there

None other has ever known.

Thou art merciful O God, for thou hast heard my prayer, even when I was in the wilderness:

(Alma 16:178 RLDS) [Alma 33:4 LDS]

Prayer allows us to worship and praise the Lord. It also allows us to offer confession of our sins, which should lead to genuine repentance. Moreover, prayer grants us the opportunity to present our requests to God. All of these aspects of prayer involve communication with our Creator. He is personal, cares for us, and wants to communicate through prayer.

C. H. Spurgeon said, “The heart of prayer is the prayer of the heart. Prayer is the address of a poor creature on earth to a great Creator and loving Father in Heaven.” Prayer does not consist simply of words, gestures, forms or eloquence. The great wonder of prayer is that a poor, sinful being can commune with the high and lofty One.

Prayer is more than just a reciting of our concerns to our Creator. Genuine prayer is the prayer of a child to a Father. Prayer should be a dialogue, not simply a monologue with God. We must remember to give the Lord an opportunity to answer our petitions. He desires to reveal himself to us.

The Lord counsels us in 3 Nephi 5:97-99 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 13:5-7 LDS], “When thou prayest, thou shalt not do as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” (see also Matthew 6:5-8 IV/KJV)


Prayer should never be given in self-display. Prayer of this kind degenerates into empty noise; a “sermon prayer.” When we pray earnestly, we cease to be aware of ourselves, and know only God, to Whom we call upon. The form of our prayer, or how many words we use matters little. What matters is the measure of faith in which the prayer is made. Even where prayer is cultivated with discipline and perseverance, it can still be profitless and void of God’s blessings without faith in the One to whom we offer our prayers.

Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith,
believing that ye shall receive in the name
of Christ, ye shall receive it.

(Enos 1:24 RLDS) [Enos 1:15 LDS]

At its essence, prayer is a passionate search for God and for the deliverance which He can offer. It is the central mechanism which God uses to change us.

The will of God in Christ Jesus is this, “If anyone would come after Me (Jesus), let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” (Matthew 16:25 IV) [Matthew 16:24 KJV] Taking up your cross means to literally put to death your sin, as Christ did for you and I on the cross. We must deny ourselves and focus on meeting the needs of the kingdom, wherever they might be. This is why prayer is so crucial. When we set time apart to pray and commune with God, it is then that God hears us and shows us His will. Until we make prayer a priority daily, we will stay on the path of self-fulfillment.



Our God, who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, desires to spend time with us. It is in prayer that we meet the Lord. Prayer is as essential as breathing, and to neglect it must result in weakness and defeat. It is not only important that we as saints should pray, but it is of supreme importance. Exercising the spiritual discipline of prayer is perhaps the only way we as a people and as a church can move past a shallow life (spiritual and otherwise), and seek the will of God.

Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him; cry unto him when ye are in your fields; yea, over all your flocks; cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening; yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies; yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them: cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all: ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness; Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.

(Alma 16:219-222 RLDS)

[Alma 34:19-27 LDS]



MARK AND JAMIE BENDORF

The Book of Mormon Retreat received many blessings this year! We prayed for months in advance about the retreat, for guidance to the theme and classes, and for those who would be attending. This year, the theme was from 2 Nephi.

**AWAKE, MY SONS; PUT ON THE ARMOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.
SHAKE OFF THE CHAINS WITH WHICH YE ARE BOUND,
AND COME FORTH OUT OF OBSCURITY, AND ARISE FROM THE DUST.**

2 NEPHI 1:38-39 RLDS [2 NEPHI 1:23 LDS]

We challenged each camper to find something they wanted to change about their life in order to become closer to God. Starting Friday evening, and continuing for morning and evening devotions throughout the weekend, the campers prayed for each other's challenge in prayer groups. Saturday consisted of two morning classes. The first was taught by David Gilmore and focused on some of the Book of Mormon heroes and how they were just regular people obeying God's commandments. He mentioned these "heroes" had already been living a lifestyle that allowed them to do something heroic in a time of need. We discussed more recent examples and how we could apply this in our lives. The next class, by our retreat pastor, Aaron Rhoads, discussed the importance of "practicing" prayer and study and following God's commandments, as one would practice anything they desire to do better. He also stressed the importance of asking God what He would have us do to change in our lives.

In the afternoon, we decided to try something different. We took the entire group (about 40 people!) to a nearby family's home and helped out with various jobs. When we first began planning the retreat, we decided we wanted to do a service project, but we didn't even stop to think about the weather in January! But God

had it all under control, as we were blessed with beautiful fifty-degree weather for our outdoor service project! We were also blessed with all of the talents needed to cover the tasks—those skilled at organizing, chopping wood, electrical skills, dirt work skills, tractor skills and more! It was enjoyable to be working side-by-side to help a friend and neighbor. Saturday evening, we enjoyed fun and fellowship together with the annual Book of Mormon skits. Sunday morning's service helped to send forth the campers with a charge to continue the challenge for which they had been praying. Aaron provided small cards that each camper could write their challenge on. These were to be kept as a reminder to continue in our challenge to become closer to God. We are so thankful to have had the opportunity to be involved in directing the Book of Mormon retreat. God is good!

NICOLE ROBINSON

I was given the chance to be part of the Book of Mormon Internship last summer. We were each given an assignment called the Anika project, where we were to reach out to someone who seemed lonely or in need and help them in whatever way we could, and possibly even share the gospel with them. I worked with a woman named Xiaoting, who I had brought to church with me a couple of times. During the summer, she told me she was bringing her son from China to live here, and she was afraid he would not be able to make friends. When he finally came, I invited him to come to several church events to meet people. At first, he declined, because he was shy, but then he decided to come and got to be pretty good friends with everyone. Then, when they were looking for what school he should go to, they asked me where I had gone and I mentioned Center Place

Restoration School (CPRS). They researched it and realized it was only a few minutes from them. After visiting the school, they decided to put Derek (Xiaoting's son) in CPRS. Now, he has a lot of friends and has joined the school's basketball team. He also mentioned to me that he has been learning how to pray and is reading the scriptures. I felt very privileged to be able to meet their family and grow close with them and see God's work come to pass in their lives. I hope God will continue to work with them and bless them as they build a relationship with Him, and discover the great love He has for them if they will simply seek Him out and serve Him. His plan is sure, and this experience has shown me how sometimes simply trusting in Him and reaching out to others can truly make a big difference and change.

MANDEE MCELWAIN

The Blessing From the Book of Mormon Internship

Last summer, I learned several things in the Book of Mormon Internship that I will continue to hold on to throughout my life. It strengthened my spiritual walk and my self-image and prompted many changes in my life. It helped me to reflect on my life and see the areas I needed to change. Before the Internship, I knew there were changes I needed to make, but I wasn't aware of exactly what I needed to change. Honestly,





at that point, I didn't know if I wanted to change, because I was comfortable in my current state.

While in the Internship, my way of thinking began to be altered. The closer I grew to God, the more I wanted to change to please Him. I didn't have a very good self-image before, and it was difficult to be happy with myself. I was constantly worried about what others thought of

me. This fear inhibited me from performing the duties I knew God wanted me to do—such as sharing testimonies, witnessing, and speaking up to share my perspective. Throughout the Internship, I learned how to find my voice and how to begin to improve my thoughts toward myself. This has helped me tremendously in my everyday life.

Another great lesson I learned is how to be a part of a team. After spending six weeks as a team, my desire grew to do what was best for the group instead of what was best for me. It taught me to begin to put my selfish ways to the side and focus on others. It is important to take care of yourself, but it is also important to learn how to be there for others and how to work with them to accomplish goals. Learning to work as a team is a very important skill that needs to be developed, because this is how Zion will be established.

There are also many other ways the Internship has been a blessing to me. One of the biggest blessings is the friendships gleaned. During the Internship, I made some great friendships that I know will last a lifetime. Finding true friends who share common beliefs is hard, but I was very blessed to make many great friends last summer. There are so many more blessings I received from the Internship, but I can't share them all now. I encourage anyone who has been thinking about applying for the Internship to apply, because if you are having those thoughts, I believe the Lord has a great plan for you. The Internship will change your life in great ways if you open your mind to what the Lord has for you.



NICHOLAS CAPPO

As the Internship was coming to a close, Sugar and Lynn introduced us to the Anika Project, which is an initiative to reach out to someone who is outside of the crowd and might feel left out. As a spot on my prayer list, it is a constant reminder to think over the many people I come into contact with over the course of my days on campus in Columbia. Each day, I try to meditate on those who might not feel like they are accepted by the general population. This is especially important to me, because I have a position in a student organization tasked with making our community feel whole. One member of the organization has had an especially hard time feeling like she fits in. In our weekly meetings, she has brought up that she hasn't found a place where she feels like she fits in, and she hopes that this organization, with ideals that align with hers, will be the solution.

The organization that I talk about is an international one, with chapters all over the world. This woman had the great opportunity to visit and get to know one of our chapters in India. She describes her experience as inclusive and feeling like a family. She got a glimpse of the culture she wants and needs; an inclusive group that accepts each other and treats each other with respect. However, as we all know, culture changes from place to place, and the culture of one chapter in India is going to change drastically from another chapter of the same organization in a different county. When she decided to join the organization in September last year, she was excited to join a new family. What she found, though, was anything but.

Last fall, our organization had fallen into a bit of turmoil. Our president had recently dropped his responsibilities to us and some vice presidents did the same. Because of this, we had a lack of motivation among members to participate in our activities, and we weren't functioning as one. So, when this young woman walked into our organization, she became dismayed over the state of what she had hoped would be her new family. This became even more prominent during our Thanksgiving party. At some point, she found herself alone on the couch, without anyone talking to her, and I could tell she had been crying. I asked her if there was anything I could get her or if she needed to talk. She didn't really have anything to say to me at the moment, but after a few minutes, she found me and took me up on the offer to talk.

That night, she expressed her frustration to me with the unmet expectations she had of our chapter and how she really hoped this could be a place of refuge—a place where she could rely on a group of friends to support and uplift her. As an outsider, she had been fighting her whole life to be noticed and included. She was tired, after nearly two decades of fighting, and was nearly ready to give up. It's a fight that many of us are familiar with, but sometimes people are born predisposed into this fight. I thought back to when my mother ran a horseback riding program for physically and mentally disabled children. These children were also born predisposed into this fight and needed extra, special attention.

I took this opportunity to ask if she believed in God. While she said she didn't, I gave her the gentle reminder that I did and that I knew there was an unconditional love for her, waiting to be accepted. I also let her know that I was there for her whenever she needed me. It was about all I could do in a situation like that, but I think that when you do all that you can, God makes it enough.

Honestly, if I had not just gone through the Internship, I don't know if I would have gone up to ask how she was doing and, therefore, not have known about the hardships she goes through. I wouldn't have known she struggles with things I take for granted every day. It's not much, but when I can, I'll send her a text or take time to talk to her every time our organization meets and encourage others to do so as well. It's a journey I will only be on a short time, but she will be on for the rest of her life. With that, I ask that you keep this young woman in your prayers, and I give you a gentle reminder to reach out to those around you that may struggle with the things you take for granted.



ROAD TRIP THROUGH LEHI'S DREAM

— BOOK OF MORMON DAY FOR KIDS 2016 —

by Sue Manning



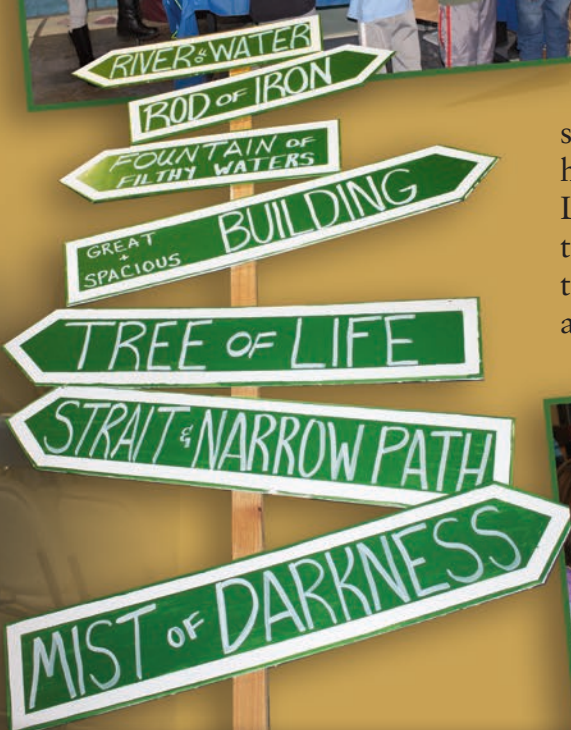
On Saturday, January 16th, we entered the large and spacious field in Living Hope Restoration Branch to prepare for a day-long road trip. Our first assignment was to stop at the photo booth and get our picture taken in a convertible. We would use those photos later in the day. Then we assembled together to have our trip advisor, Kelvin Henson, prepare us for the day and remind us of the route we would take through Lehi's Dream. We watched a video, *The Tree of Life*, to help us visualize each part of the dream, show us where we would stop during the day, and we had some popcorn to get our engines started. Rita Woolery gave us some fuel, with music and movements to get energized for the long trip ahead.



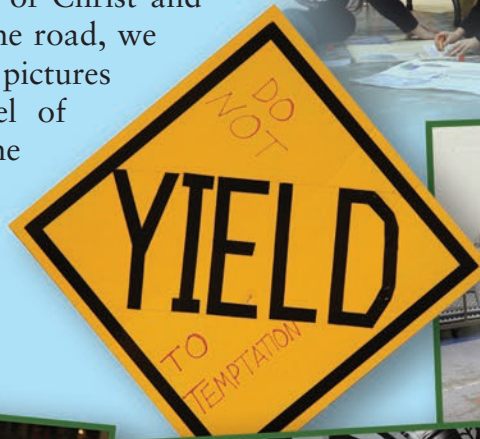
We got our bags ready to pack with mementos of each stop we would make. Then, we accelerated to the first stop—which was the Tree of Life, where we learned about the love of God. We then made a tree of life of our own. Other stops included the River of Water, where we participated in a science experiment and learned how to make dirty water clean again. We saw the Rod of Iron, where we learned that the rod was the word of God. Then, we made our own replicas of the Book of Mormon to take home to remind us of the rod of iron. After that, we headed to the Strait and Narrow Path, where we traced our feet on colored paper to paste onto sandpaper. That was to help us remember what path God wants us to use every day. One of our favorite stops was the snack shop, where we made edible renditions of our own cars. Most of those cars didn't make it past the rest area, though!



After putting a few miles behind us, we made a turn into the fueling station and took a lunch break. It was great to stretch our legs and see what souvenirs our friends picked up along the way. After lunch, we hopped back into the driver's seat and headed down the road through Lehi's Dream. Things got a little scary for a moment, when we traveled through the mist of darkness, but I'm glad to say everyone made it through with no accidents! Sometimes those mists can sneak up on you and make it hard to see the rod of iron clearly.



As we passed the Great and Spacious Building, the inhabitants made fun of us, so we motored on quickly, only hesitating to make a mini collage, comparing the Great and Spacious Building to Christ's church. It was at this station that we decided to be disciples of Christ and stay away from pride. Down the road, we made a souvenir frame for our pictures of us sitting behind the wheel of the convertible we took at the beginning of the day. After maneuvering through some cones in a construction area, we got out to stretch our legs and throw a few tires around.



We had opportunities to stop and have the story of the dream and its interpretation read to us and to make murals of the entire vision. At the end of the day, our trip advisor, Kelvin, brought us back together and reviewed our stops and the symbolism of each. We collected our souvenirs, packed them in our bags and took one more short trip home. Our travel agent, Lorrie Look, did a wonderful job of planning the day's journey. Our trip was a dream!



PROPHECY WATCH

The hearts of Christians today weep for our persecuted brothers and sisters in the world. Even in America, various forms of Christian persecution are rising, but have not yet reached the violent levels seen in other nations. That time will come.

It seems we are facing relentless reports of Christian persecution worldwide. This fulfillment of prophecy is another sign we are living in the last days. Lately, reports of these things are coming at us in every way possible and with escalating frequency. Here are just a few news headlines and email examples that have recently captured our attention:

- **Bombing at the Easter celebration in Lahore, Pakistan (Restoration saints)**
It was caused by a suicide bomber who blew himself up at the entrance to the area where the festivities were being held. Since most attendees were Christians, the act was aimed at believers in Jesus...I just received an email from Brother Ibrahim. Sadly, he reported that some of our members were killed and injured.
- **Mission President speaks on Three Utah LDS missionaries injured in Belgium attack**
- **ISIS threatens to crucify a Catholic priest on Good Friday**
- **Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal to veto “religious liberty” bill**
- **Christians suffering from increasing and various forms of persecution worldwide**

The list goes on and on and may cause some to scream the question, “what’s going on?” The Book of Mormon prophets give us a brief glimpse, as Nephi describes the situation after the Book of Mormon comes forth. He prophesies about a level of wickedness that goes far beyond the identity of an earthly institution. Instead, he describes a level of wickedness culminating in evil works that reflect the abominations of their founder.

And the angel said unto me, Behold the foundation of a church, which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity.

And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the foundation of it.

(1 Nephi 3:139-144 RLDS)

[1 Nephi 13:4-9 LDS]

Today, persecution of Christians validates this scriptural truth: “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Ephesians 6:12 IV/KJV) The saints bear witness to this reality in the many testimonies they share.

We are now confronted with some questions that can no longer be ignored: What is our response to this persecution? Where can faith and hope be found? How can we be unafraid? How can we accomplish our mission in the midst of such things?

Restoration saints should have a different perspective than most Christians because of greater light found in our scriptures. We should not be responding to this tribulation by declaring the rapture as our hope to escape these evil things. Escapism through the rapture may be the most common Christian solution we hear today. Instead, we are called to embrace the opportunity to witness for the Lord Jesus and declare the coming forth of a great and marvelous work. Knowing this causes us to remember our prophetic calling as Restoration saints and how it has always remained the same, even in the midst of persecution.

Increased persecution makes the urgency of our response to press more heavily upon us. The Lord has said from the beginning: “seek to bring forth

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and establish the cause of Zion.” (D&C 6:3a RLDS) [D&C 6:6 LDS] He wants us to prepare for and participate in the restoration of His people according to the words of the prophets. (D&C 83:1b RLDS) [D&C 84:2 LDS] He wants us to offer the hope of Zion, the Kingdom of God on earth, to all who will listen. He wants us to prepare for and participate in the greater gathering of His people from the nations of the earth. He yearns for us to believe again in the reality of Zion, a place where the power of God resides to protect His people and the presence of Christ lives to bring all His children into one fold and one shepherd. (3 Nephi 7:16 RLDS) [3 Nephi 15:16 LDS]

It’s easy to see the faith and hope found in the Restoration mission is unique to our calling. We proclaim, with faith and hope in Christ, the call to actively participate in the last days instead of the call to escape before all things are fulfilled. Those who diligently pray, study and fast are clearly reminded of the great things coming upon the earth, in spite of the persecution. They are those who want to be engaged in them.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth;

And they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.

(1 Nephi 3:230-231 RLDS)
[1 Nephi 14:14 LDS]

For he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous.

Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it be so that the fullness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire.

Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, They shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.

(1 Nephi 7:35-37 RLDS)
[1 Nephi 22:16-17 LDS]

and the time speedily cometh that great things are to be shown forth unto the children of men;

(D&C 34:3d RLDS)
[D&C 35:10 LDS]

The saints should also personally prepare by taking on the whole armor of God so we are able to withstand the evil day (Ephesians 6:11 IV/KJV). We are called to overcome all things with faith, hope and fearlessness because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4 IV/KJV).

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

(Revelation 2:7 IV/KJV)

The signs of the times are among us! Watch, therefore, and pray always!