



THE
WITNESS

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“But it is because
your ground is barren,
and ye will not
nourish the tree;
therefore ye can not have
the fruit thereof.”

THE
WITNESS

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(Alma 16:168 RLDS) [Alma 33:39 LDS]

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The Nephites' Folly

by Corey Stark

The Book of Mormon illustrates the blessings of a loving God upon His people. A clear lesson from the Book of Mormon is this:

Keep the commandments and you will prosper;
break the commandments and you will not prosper.

Nearly every writer of the Nephites, Israelites (of Joseph's son Manasseh), who immigrated to the Americas, testified of these truths. Here is a sampling of scripture sharing those truths. The scriptures are somewhat repetitive, but that is the point! God repeats this promise repetitively to His people because He wants them to know His desire to bless them:

And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord which he spake unto me in the wilderness, saying, That inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise. (1 Nephi 1:116 RLDS) [1 Nephi 4:14 LDS]

Wherefore, I, Lehi, have obtained a promise, that inasmuch as those whom the Lord God shall bring out of the land of Jerusalem shall keep his commandments, they shall prosper upon the face of this land; (2 Nephi 1:18 RLDS) [2 Nephi 1:9 LDS]

For the Lord God hath said, That inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land; (2 Nephi 3:8 RLDS) [2 Nephi 4:4 LDS]

But the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying, That inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land. (Jarom 1:22 RLDS) [Jarom 1:9 LDS]

For the Lord would not suffer, after he had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, and kept and preserved them from falling into the hands of their enemies; yea, he would not suffer that the words should not be verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying, That insomuch as ye will



not keep my commandments, ye shall not prosper in the land.

(Omni 1:8 RLDS) [Omni 1:6 LDS]

And I would that ye should keep the commandments of God, that ye may prosper in the land, according to the promises which the Lord made unto our fathers.

(Mosiah 1:12 RLDS) [Mosiah 1:7 LDS]

And behold, all that he requires of you, is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments, ye should prosper in the land;

(Mosiah 1:55 RLDS) [Mosiah 2:22 LDS]

There are other writers who share the same clear message of wisdom. This wisdom was not confined to the time of the Nephites. Rather, it is an eternal principle granted to God's people anywhere, in any age. We, in the latter days, have access to the same blessings and power, and are subject to the same condemnation, should we stray.

Notice Mosiah's emphasis, "All That He Requires of You is to Keep His Commandments..." Telling, isn't it? Our commission, as saints, is to keep the commandments. At the end of the day, what else were we to do? Were we to keep our own ideas over God's commandments? As foolish as it sounds, that has nevertheless been the downfall of God's people.

While the cultures surrounding the Israelites, in Israel, could be blamed for part of their downfall, human lust knows no boundaries. Our own lust for things of the world constantly wars against the Spirit. The Nephites rose to spiritual power and fell for many of the same reasons as their cousins across the sea.

But the Book of Mormon gives a chilling reason explaining why these Nephites fell; after God pours out the richest blessings upon His people, in the very day He blesses them, they forget the God who gave them.

It wouldn't be such a problem, if God hated us. We wouldn't have to worry about the blessings we stumble over, because they wouldn't exist. But we have a God who loves to bless His people spiritually and temporally:

And it came to pass that they did grow exceedingly; wherefore, we were blessed in abundance.

(1 Nephi 5:215 RLDS) [1 Nephi 18:24 LDS]

And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual;

(Mosiah 1:88-89 RLDS) [Mosiah 2:41 LDS]

And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and prospered in the land.

(Mosiah 11:104 RLDS) [Mosiah 25:24 LDS]

These blessings come with a stern warning:

And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress, and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's path, that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved.

(Mosiah 1:79 RLDS) [Mosiah 2:36 LDS]

Yea, and moreover I say unto you, that if this highly favored people of the Lord should fall into transgression, and become a wicked and an adulterous people, that the Lord will deliver them up, that thereby they become weak, like unto their brethren;

(Mosiah 1:19 RLDS) [Mosiah 1:13 LDS]

So we get blessings because God loves us; we lose blessings and God's Spirit when we live contrary to His ways. The question to ask is whether a process existed that caused the downfall of God's people. The problem is not God's; rather, it is the peoples'. The God who loves to bless us, truly gives us our hearts' desires. Our problem is, once we receive those free gifts, we turn and consume those blessings upon our lusts for wealth, fame, things, instead of using those blessings to further the work and covenants of our God.

The real purpose of wealth, according to scripture, is to use it to do good works. But only after we've obtained a hope in Christ:

And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted.

(Jacob 2:24 RLDS) [Jacob 22:19 LDS]

At one point in history, the Nephites had been so blessed, and then corrupted themselves so badly, it took a Lamanite (Samuel the Lamanite) to admonish them in their wicked ways:

Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God for them;

(Helaman 5:30 RLDS) [Helaman 13:22 LDS]

The shame of our transgression, as a people, is clearly explained in this passage from Helaman Chapter 4. First, notice that in a few short years, people go from bad to really bad:

And in the eighty and second year, they began again to forget the Lord their God.

And in the eighty and third year, they began to wax strong in iniquity.

And in the eighty and fourth year, they did not mend their ways.

And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year, they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness; and thus they were ripening again for destruction. And thus ended the eighty and fifth year.

(Helaman 4:44-47 RLDS) [Helaman 11:36-37 LDS]

In the four previous years, the people went from bad to ripe for destruction. Can we, as a people, ever fall as quickly? Helaman's/Mormon's commentary follows with an apt description of the fallen Christian church's condition:

And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness, doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him;

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people; yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks, and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind, and art;

Sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies, that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people;

Yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One; yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceeding great prosperity. (Helaman 4:48-51 RLDS) [Helaman 12:1-2 LDS]

Is that not condemning? In the VERY DAY GOD BLESSES HIS PEOPLE, THEY WILFULLY FORGET HIM!

The remedy for God's people has always been that they get visited with peril and affliction to stir them up, if they will not remember Him.

And thus we see, that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death, and with terror, and with famine, and with all manner of pestilences, they will not remember him.

O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men;

Yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world; yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity;

(Helaman 4:52-54 RLDS) [Helaman 12: 3-4 LDS]

Losing God's Light.

How Does the Process Work?

An eternal principle is revealed describing the process by which God's people fall away. There are many points to derive from that study. First, the process of falling away rarely happens overnight; rather, it comes slowly, bit by bit, like the eroding of a river's edge.

Second, God's wrath does not come immediately. God is patient and long suffering, and does not willingly choose to afflict His people (Lamentations 3:33 IV/KJV). But the problem is when God's people begin to slip into sin, it may be a slight breach of commandment, or entertaining a stray thought, there may not be any obvious consequence. Not that God allows sin to any degree, but His reprimand may not be obvious or apparent in any way. This may give the sinner false security that his infraction was "OK" because "nothing bad happened." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Any sin starts us on the journey away from God. That is bad whether one realizes a direct punishment for it. Eternal diligence is required to stay on the straight and narrow. The Word of God must be constantly relied upon (not just the 'peace' mantra as did the prophets of Ahab). The principle to understand is that while we are free to make a choice in life, we are never free to choose the consequence of that choice.

The process of losing God's light is explained in this powerful passage:

Therefore thus saith the Lord, Because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of the Nephites, except they repent I will take away my word from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them, and I will suffer them no longer, and I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them; (Helaman 5:10 RLDS) [Helaman 13:8 LDS]

The above passage is one of the most revealing and telling scriptures available to us. We must learn this important lesson. Notice the process? First iniquity comes, hard hearts in this case. Because of iniquity, what is lost first? God's Word is taken from them. The Word of God is lost to the people. This doesn't mean that the books of scripture suddenly disappear (although that did happen in the Old Testament). Instead, the people begin to not desire the Word anymore. Or at least no longer desire the whole Word. Selected scriptures may be emphasized repeatedly, with disregard for others.

Be careful, if your church is dismissing the Word of God, as given to it. It may be on this path. It can come by a denial of the scripture itself; it can come from a loss of inspired speaking. The people will drift into wanting the culture (for instance hours a day of television) and only minutes per month of God's word.

Second, God's Spirit is withdrawn. Without the Spirit, the gifts are lost, the power is lost, the blessings of old become just that--old stories of yesteryear.

When the Spirit is lost, the people are not sure what is happening. Groping for meaning, they just adhere to mantras of 'peace' and 'save the planet' and 'social justice.' All fine topics in and of themselves, but without the Spirit, these causes become 'busy work' ideas to preoccupy the people and mask the absence of the true Spirit of God.

Beware of signs such as these in the church. Paul warned of worshipping the creation over the creator (Romans 1:25 IV/KJV), calling the same problem in his day 'a lie.' Jesus brings social justice when people bow to His ways, not by bowing to the demands of immoral ideas disguised as 'justice', demanded by the Godless culture surrounding the church. Certainly the Sodomites of the Old Testament demanded their equal rights within the church, at some point, didn't they? Was God propelling the Sodomites cause? (Sodomites were male prostitutes in the old church). What causes are being propelled in the church today? Is God truly behind those causes?

The understanding to glean is that the biggest punishment God can inflict upon His people is the removal of His Word and His Spirit. Those are the biggest punishments, because without them we are lost. They are also the biggest blessings, and in their presence, everything else follows. Some would believe the loss of their temporal possessions would be the sign of punishment (oh God, please don't take my big screen T.V. As long as I have satellite television, I must be OK with God), but that is not true. The loss of temporal may happen long after His Word and Spirit are removed.

So what is the process of return? Coming back to The Word and falling on ones knees in humility and repentance. Desiring nothing but the ways of God, even if those ways require sacrifice and suffering. That is the process always required of the church when it strayed in the past.

Conclusion

In light of the Nephite's folly, the question to ask is: Have we been blessed with prosperity as were the Nephites? If the answer is "Yes", then are we using the blessings of the Lord to further the work of the Lord? Or, are we using those blessings for our own enjoyment. Furthermore, have those blessings caused us to turn our backs on God and forget Him, as did the Nephites?

Helaman wrote that in the very day God blesses His people, they forget Him. The problem wasn't confined to the age of the Nephites. When God's people stray, they lose His Word and His Spirit, period. Every other peril they suffer is merely a symptom of that problem. Conversely, as we saw in Nehemiah's story, when God's people return to Him, they are blessed by His Word and His Spirit. Likewise, every blessing is an outcropping from the presence of the same.

A Nephite descendant, Mormon, shares some chilling words for the people of the last days--a people forewarned about these perils--in the next article: *Mormon's Warning to the Latter Days*.

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Mormon's Warning to the Latter Days

by Corey Stark

With one thousand years of Nephite history in his hands to ponder, Mormon, the man who abridged the record called the Book of Mormon, was able to survey the problems with the Nephites, and summarize their downfall. In the previous article, *The Nephite's Folly*, the people forgot God in the day He blessed them. God's people lost His Word and His Spirit. All other punishments were mere symptoms of that fate.

Mormon not only surveyed the spectrum of Nephite history, he also saw ahead into the latter days. In this article, we uncover a clear message Mormon shares with us in the last days.

Thus far, the message of these articles has been:

- 1) God's people can stray
- 2) God's people have strayed, and
- 3) God's people are prone to stray.
- 4) God's people were prophesied to stray and prophesied to return.

Unfortunate as the first three points are, these are the facts. Happily, the fourth point will also be fulfilled. We will read about that in the next article.

Given the church's tendency to stray, is it any wonder that Mormon writes warnings rather than accolades to the people of the last days?

Mormon realized the church was to lead in whatever land she is born. Its commission is to show the culture the true God and how to live in ways that bring true happiness and peace. The presence of the church leading by these truths would bring prosperity to the culture. Conversely, if the land and culture is corrupt, then he understood it's because the church wasn't effective in doing its job.

Mormon makes little distinction between the Gentiles of our day, who were unchurched, and the Gentiles to whom the church was restored. He basically sees an overview of our day, and lumps us all together as a people who had great potential, glimmers of light, but basically fallen.

What did Mormon actually say, and where did he say it? Turn to 3 Nephi, Chapter 14 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 30 LDS]. The whole chapter is a message he sends to us. After all, in his day, no Gentiles were around to read the records--the only Gentiles that could receive the message would be those of the latter days--i.e. US.

The whole chapter is only three verses. He apparently didn't need to expound on the message to us. He says they were commanded to him, by Jesus. Here it is:

Hearken, O, ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, which he hath commanded me that I should speak concerning you, for, behold he commandeth me that I should write, saying,

Turn all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways, and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries,

and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations,

And come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people, who are of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 14:1-3 RLDS) [3 Nephi 30:1-2 LDS]

Now some would argue that these Gentiles were the 'unchurched' because the final admonition speaks to baptism, i.e. to those outside of the church. Perhaps, but the Book of Mormon never calls the people of the last days, who came to inhabit this land of promise, as anything other than Gentiles. Mormon realized this land was the covenant land for Joseph, through Manasseh the original inhabitants. Some of Ephraim would come to America, but those of the church of the last days are lumped together as the 'Church of the Gentiles.'

And after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which has been kept back, by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb, I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb; (1 Nephi 3:183 RLDS) [1 Nephi 13:34 LDS]

The above scripture clearly foretells the Book of Mormon, the plain and precious truths, coming to the Gentiles (even if some were of Ephraim). The great prophecy is the first would be last, and the last first. The meaning is the gospel came to the Israel (Jews, Joseph and others) first, then would go to Gentiles (non-Israel), then be restored to Gentiles (latter day non Jews) and return to Israel (Jews, Joseph, lost tribes, etc.).

We'll look at the following scripture again in the next article, but it's worth noting at this juncture, for this reason; 3 Nephi 10:1(RLDS) [3 Nephi 21:22 LDS] is speaking to Gentiles, these being referred to in the first words with the pronoun 'They.' If THEY repent, i.e. the Gentiles and the Church of the Gentiles, they will be numbered among whom? Jacob, which is to say the House of Israel. And what else does Jesus say (these are Jesus' prophetic words), the Gentiles get numbered among the remnant of Joseph, and this is THEIR land of covenant, not ours. This is big news! All along, the church of the latter day thought the story was about us. It is not. It is about them, the ancient covenant people. Our job was to be stewards of the word, enjoying the benefits of the promises, and being numbered among THEM when the Lord starts His work to regather the nations. The story is not about us, and the burden of the work was never ours alone. Read what Jesus says:

But if they will repent, and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance, and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob; (3 Nephi 10:1 RLDS) [3 Nephi 21:22 LDS]

As a people, we need some major doses of humility. The notions that the story was about us, we were the exalted ones to single-handedly build the kingdom for the world, come from church folklore over scripture. The Word says that we, the Gentiles, get to be counted among the ancient covenant people and assist them, because the covenant was made with them. Jesus covenanted to establish a church among us, the Gentiles, which He did. The promise of gathering, however, was made with Israel, and not because of the church of the latter days.

Mormon's warning is primarily to the Gentile church (not the unchurched) who he saw falling into priestcraft (what is priestcraft? Wrestering the true word of God) and abominations. Jesus has some even more direct words to those of us in the church of the last days. It may be surprising to some that these words are even in scripture, they seem to be overlooked by many. The next article tells of Jesus' latter day warning.

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Jesus' Prophetic Description of the Church in the Latter Day

by Corey Stark

Recall the point from the previous article, *Mormon's Warning to the Latter Days*, the Latter Day church, our church, was called the Church of the Gentiles. The writers of the Book of Mormon, themselves being direct descendants from the House of Israel, knew the church would be restored in the last days, first among Gentiles (i.e. us), then among the original descendants of the House of Israel (Jews, Joseph, etc).

The previous articles reveal how God's people have strayed from Him through time, culminating in Jesus' description of an event among the Gentiles of the last days. Yes, unfortunately, one more straying, one more group of people to turn their back on God and the true teachings of Jesus. This time, the very church established among the Gentiles.

While Jesus doesn't delve into the details of what causes them to stray, He makes a greater point. He explains when the Gentiles sin against and reject the gospel established among them, it will mark the time when He will take the gospel from them and establish it again among the original House of Israel. This is a powerful revelation! Only by this event will the prophecies be fulfilled, marking the return of the gospel to Israel.

Important point: Realize that the term Gentiles, as it is used here, describes two groups of people we can clearly differentiate in our day, although two thousand years ago, the differentiations may not have been apparent.

Jesus refers to the 'Unbelieving' of the Gentiles—these would be people of the land, perhaps christians of various faiths, who live here and do both good and bad works. He also speaks to the 'Believing' of the Gentiles—these would be those who are part of the covenant church among the Gentiles. This difference is important. Too many of our church have read Jesus' words in 3 Nephi, assuming they were all words condemning the 'outsiders' of the American Gentile community. Some of His words are, but clearly, some of His words speak directly about the church established among the Gentiles, which are those of us 'on the inside.'

What Does Jesus Say about the Church Among the Gentiles?

What does Jesus say, and where does He share it? Turn to 3 Nephi 7 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 15 & 16 LDS]. Jesus is speaking to the people of the ancient Americas in person, telling them of their future, and the future of others who would someday inhabit their land. Jesus explains they were the 'other sheep' He had which were not of the fold in Jerusalem, who would also hear His voice. He also explains the Gentiles would not be visited by Him in person, but only by the Holy Ghost, while other remnants of Israel would also receive His personal visits.

After this, Jesus begins to explain the role of the Gentiles, and specifically, the Gentile Church (that is us, those who believe we are part of the greater restoration movement). He says this: the writings of the Nephites will be brought forth through the Gentile church in the future.

That these sayings which ye shall write, shall be kept, and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fullness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth, because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer. (3 Nephi 7:28 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:4 LDS]

Now realize something in the verse above. Which Gentiles must they be? Would the Gentiles outside of the restoration be the ones to take the words of the Nephites to the scattered tribes? No, obviously not. It would be those within the church with this task. But that is the point to understand. He is calling those of the church 'Gentiles.' We need to clearly understand He is calling us, the church of the latter day, 'Gentiles', for what He says next.

Jesus wants to gather His covenant people together, not just the Gentile church of the last days, but all the tribes to whom He has covenanted.

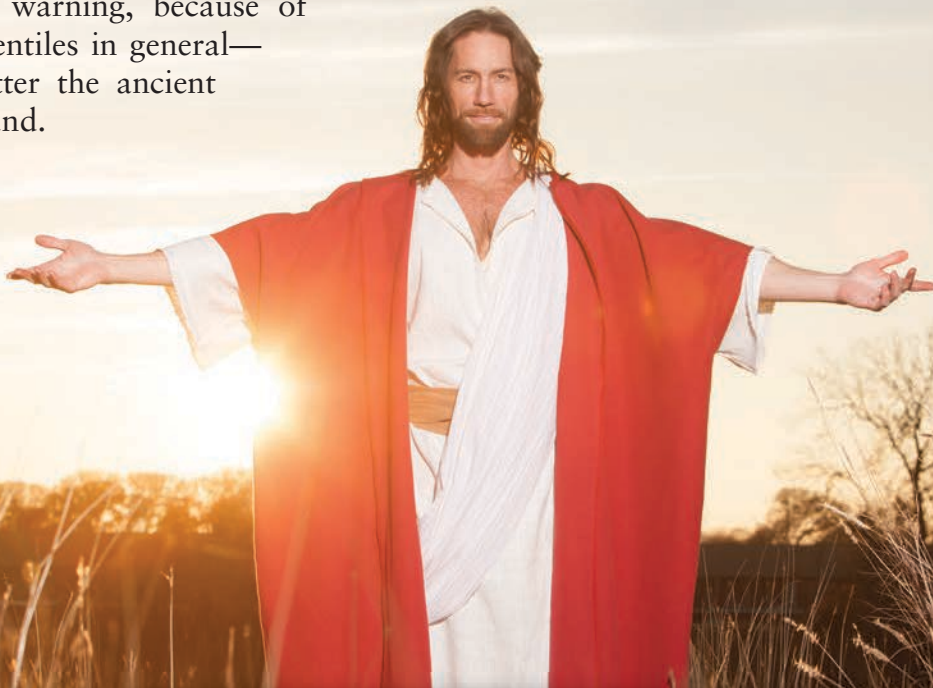
And then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfill the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.
(3 Nephi 7:29 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:5 LDS]

He says the Gentile people (Christians in general) in our day, will be blessed for believing in Him and He would specifically work among them to re-establish His truth (i.e. His church to proclaim the truth) through bringing the words of the Nephites (Book of Mormon) to them.

And blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief in me, in and of the Holy Ghost, which witness unto them of me and of the Father. Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them.
(3 Nephi 7:30-31 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:6-7 LDS]

Then Jesus pronounces a warning, because of iniquity, to fall among the Gentiles in general—they would destroy and scatter the ancient covenant inhabitants of this land.

But wo, saith the Father, unto the unbelieving of the Gentiles, for notwithstanding they have come forth upon the face of this land, and have scattered my people,



who are of the house of Israel; and my people who are of the house of Israel, have been cast out from among them, and have been trodden under feet by them; And because of the mercies of the Father unto the Gentiles, and also the judgments of the Father upon my people, who are of the house of Israel, verily, verily, I say unto you, that after all this, and I have caused my people who are of the house of Israel, to be smitten, and to be afflicted, and to be slain, and to be cast out from among them, and to become hated by them, and to become a hiss and a byword among them. (3 Nephi 7:32-33 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:8-9 LDS]

But now, the focus shifts to the Gentiles of the church. How do we know? Because of the three letter word contained in the next verse: "sin." Sin is defined as willful rebellion against God. Willful means one does something by choice. In other words, in order to sin against something, you have to have it first, then choose to transgress against it, with perfect knowledge what one does is wrong. In other words, for Gentiles to 'sin against the gospel' do not they first need to have the gospel? Of course, the answer is "yes." On the other hand, could Gentiles who never had the restored gospel (other christians for instance) truly sin against something they never had? The answer is "no."

Therefore, to which group of Gentiles do the next verses condemn? Those outside the restored church, or those within?

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; And if they shall do all these things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them; And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them; And I will shew unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you, but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fullness of my gospel.

(3 Nephi 7:34-37 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:10-12 LDS]

The four verses above are some of the most important prophecy for the latter day. Jesus is marking a milestone event in the last days, specifically the time at which the Gentile church that had the gospel and then rejects it, as being the defining moment when the Gospel shall return to the covenant people. This is huge!

First, it tells us that the church, the Gentile church of the last days, will stray. The specifics of how they stray can be left up to the imagination, and believe it or not, are not that important. It is important to read on, however. The Gentiles have room to repent.

And in the following verses, we find many do. **THEY OF THE CHURCH WHO HAVE SINNED ARE NOT REJECTED BY GOD FOREVER AS SOME WOULD PREFER TO BELIEVE.** While the sins may be grievous, all the church's sins throughout the ages were too. The point is, we still have a loving God, who reaches out to us with outstretched arms, hoping we will choose repentance so His blessings may be ours. He wants only good things for us.

Jesus explains that the church of the Gentiles, despite their failings, still has room for repentance. But a consequence may be paid if

they do not repent--the ancient covenant people will exert power over the Gentiles and cut them down, according to the words of Jesus:

But if the Gentiles will repent, and return unto me, saith the Father, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel; And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father.

But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, And they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel.

(3 Nephi 7:38-41 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:13-15 LDS]

After the Gentiles sin, 3 Nephi Chapter 7 concludes with a taste of the forte and power that will be exhibited when the Lord moves to restore His ancient covenant people to the truth. It will be big! It will be huge! And all the world will know it:

The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.

(3 Nephi 7:45 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:20 LDS]

Conclusion

Jesus clearly teaches that the Word will be fulfilled:

The last shall be first, the first shall be last. (1 Nephi 3:200 RLDS) [1 Nephi 13:42 LDS], (Jacob 3:127 RLDS) [Jacob 5:63 LDS], (Ether 6:13 RLDS) [Ether 13:12 LDS] This is a metaphorical way of explaining His word would originate with the House of Israel, go to the Gentiles, be restored among the Gentiles, then return to Israel.

The straying of the Gentile church of the last days marks the sign by which the gospel will return to Israel.

The final restoring of the word to Israel will be in power that the whole world shall see.

There are some big reasons why it is important to see the church has strayed through time: First, so we don't get big heads. That always led to downfalls. Second, so we don't lose hope in the last days. The failings of the church morally can only be attributed to the signs of the time. The Lord God has always been in control. If we read His words closely, we find it has all been prophesied before and we have nothing to fear.

God's plan has always been to restore His people. While it seems to take thousands of years for this to occur, His promises are sure.

*The last article in this series,
The Blessing Fulfilled, can be found
at restoredgospel.com.*

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Shirley Heater

1943-2017



Shirley Heater recently passed away at the age of 74. She married Dennis on March 21, 1981 and passed away on their 36th wedding anniversary. Many Restoration saints have been blessed by her contributions as a Book of Mormon scholar, researcher, teacher and author. More importantly, she was our friend and sister in Christ!

Shirley had a full life of preparation and service to the Lord. In 1978, she moved to Columbia, Missouri, to attend the University of Missouri. In 1982, she completed her degree in archaeology. In 1981, during her course of study at the university, she spent six weeks studying archaeology at a university in Mexico City.

Shirley later moved to Independence, Missouri and became secretary for Bishop Pearson of the RLDS (Community of Christ) church. She also served as secretary for Thelona Stevens, with the Foundation for Research on Ancient America (FRAA). For fourteen years, 1984-1999, Shirley worked for Ray Treat at the Zarahemla Research Foundation (ZRF), doing research on the Restored Covenant Edition (RCE) of The Book of Mormon. In 2008, Shirley and Dennis became active with the Pre-Columbian Studies Institute (PSI). She contributed articles for their publication and joined the board in 2009, as vice president. In 2010, she established the Quetzal Archaeology Center for Mesoamerican Research (Quetzal). She wrote and published Quetzal Codex until the organization merged with The Book of Mormon Foundation (BMF), in January 2015. She served as vice president on the BMF board until her death.

Shirley was particularly interested in the area of geography. At the time of her death, she was working on creating a booklet of different maps concerning locations relevant to The Book of Mormon.

She was also working on an illustrated study manual of The Book of Mormon.

Karen Bates, BMF staff member, is assisting in this effort and shared these personal thoughts about Shirley:

Shirley was enthusiastic and passionate about The Book of Mormon. She made it her life's work. She was gifted with intelligence and studied to show herself approved. I always enjoyed her good sense of humor. She was engaged in a diligent search for knowledge, not just researching.

Shirley was an expert in critical text. Critical text is the study of the textual history of The Book of Mormon, using and understanding the significance of the original Book of Mormon manuscript and its Hebrew foundation. Royal Skousen, LDS Book of Mormon scholar, described her work in this area:

The critical text work of Shirley Heater beginning in 1985; an independent RLDS researcher, Shirley Heater, worked on producing The Book of Mormon: Restored Covenant Edition



(RCE), and by 1999 it had been published by the Zarahemla Research Foundation (ZRF) of Independence, Missouri. Heater's book announces itself on its title page as the "Restored Covenant Edition / With text restored to its purity from the Original and Printer's Manuscripts" ... through diligent work on her own she [Page 246] was able to recover many of the other original readings from various photographs of the original manuscript ... In fact, her 1999 publication of the Book of Mormon shows that she was able to recover about 78 percent of the significant textual changes that have been found from examining the original manuscript or improved photographs of it.

Recently, Shirley worked to complete the updated English version of The Book of Mormon Overview and the near completion of the Spanish version. The Overview is a basic introduction to the record and the groups of people, its purposes, coming forth and significance, as well as a summary of spiritual highlights. She was particularly excited about the Overview's potential to assist Restoration missionaries with their work.

Shirley carried a deep conviction that Book of Mormon organizations should unite together in providing Book of Mormon research, information and testimonies to the saints. In 2015, she came to the BMF board and shared her testimony that we should begin that process, by merging the three organizations within our sphere of influence. Her desire culminated in a merger between three Book of Mormon organizations. She personally rejoiced in the wording of announcement, found in the Winter, 2015, Number 152 issue of The Witness entitled *Three in One*:

It's official! Three Book of Mormon organizations have now merged into one. Zarahemla Research Foundation (ZRF) and Quetzal Archaeology Center for Mesoamerican Research (Quetzal) have merged with The Book of Mormon Foundation (BMF) effective January 1, 2015. The merger has brought together over 100 years of combined research, resources and service. In the beginning, the task of merging three organizations seemed challenging, but we believed the Lord would provide a way to bring us together and knew it was the right thing to do. This journey of faith has brought forth good fruit and demonstrated how the power of God always provides a way to accomplish His will. Our testimony of the merger is also described in Nephi's proclamation concerning the goodness of God:

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father, I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.
 (1 Nephi 1:65 RLDS) [1 Nephi 3:7 LDS]

We're excited to move into the future proclaiming the message of the Book of Mormon. We believe there are great things waiting in the journey ahead and invite all Book of Mormon believers to go forward with us.

We, at the Book of Mormon Foundation, continue to pray for the family's comfort and express our gratitude to God for allowing Shirley to continue working with us over the years. Well done, good friend and faithful servant, until we meet again!

Marlin Guin
 President of the Board



2017 BOOK OF MORMON DAY for kids



FROM THE *Grove* TO THE **PRESS**

SUE MANNING

On Saturday, February 11th, children from kindergarten through fourth grade, stepped back in time to meet with historical figures and witness scenes from the past. Scenes portrayed the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon from the grove to the press.

Our pastor, Kelvin Henson, opened with worship before the kids ate popcorn and watched a movie. The movie was *The Joseph Smith Story*, which helped prepare us for the day's theme. After music, the children went to one of ten stations in the Olde Town to learn about life in the early 1800's.

The first stop was in the grove with young Joseph. He shared his experiences of angelic visitors and finding the plates. Lucy Mack Smith was on hand to tell the kids about life with the prophet when he was a child. A visit to the Optical Shoppe gave hands on practice with the Urim and Thummim by making their own pair. At the Grandin Print Shop, the kids learned how books were printed in those days and about the complicated process of printing, folding and binding the Book of Mormon. After a fun lunch together, the kids had a chance to dip their own candles, make and eat fresh butter and run off lots of energy at recreation. Father Smith welcomed the kids into his home to discover how difficult translating could be, by letting them try to translate their name into Egyptian. At Emma's Stationery Store, a lesson of using quill pens was presented. Early church history timelines were created at Rigdon's Timepiece store.

Each child was supplied with a backpack and a notebook, where they could store their crafts, scripture pages and coloring pages collected at each station. Plus, they took home special memories of an extraordinary day learning how the Book of Mormon went from the grove to the press.

We had 27 volunteers and 35 kids attend. The volunteers worked hard in planning, packing and hauling everything to the Living Hope branch and back to the Foundation at the end of the day. They set up all the booths and cleaned the facility. Most importantly, they interacted with the kids and helped teach them about the Book of Mormon. Thanks to everyone who participated and our hope is all the saints will consider bringing their children to The Book of Mormon Day for Kids next year. We believe there are many more kids, who would enjoy this wonderful experience! Please mark your calendars and reserve the date as soon as it's published in *The Witness*.



DEANA GRIFFIN

The Book of Mormon Day for Kids has always been an important event for me. I grew up believing the Book of Mormon was true and that it came from the Lord, but I didn't have my own testimony of it until I was in my late 30s. So, when I see children come and get excited over the information given to them, it melts my heart. I hear their questions and watch their faces as they learn new material. Some are well-versed and taught in the Book of Mormon, but for others this is a new and exciting day in their lives.

I played Lucy Mack Smith this year and, while telling the story of "my son, Joseph," had one little boy said, "But he isn't really your son is he?" That brought a smile to my face and a chance to explain to this young man about the acting I was doing and how special it was to be able to portray Joseph's mother.

I look forward each year to the Book of Mormon Day for Kids. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve and to teach little ones of the gospel in this venue. It is a highlight in my year, and I believe it is an important day for our children. It is a joy to see how some of the very children at the Book of Mormon Day for Kids years ago are now volunteering and helping another group grow in the joy of the Lord.



Coral Mills

The things I really liked about that day was the singing, and the movie about Joseph Smith Jr. as a young boy. I have no favorite stations. I liked all of the stations equally. I liked making candles, I liked the printing station, the hieroglyph station, making butter, writing with ink and quills, making the Urim and Thummim, putting together the timeline of the life of Joseph Smith Jr. and I enjoyed hearing all the stories about him and his family. It was a really fun day.

Ezra Leland Mills

This is my 3rd Book of Mormon Day and this year my favorite station was #7 candle making. My favorite Scriptures from the Book of Mormon that I learned from that day was: 1 Nephi 3:157, 161, 162; Alma 16:143, 144 and D&C 3:1d,e. It was a fun day.

Bo Gilmore

One week I was sick with the flu. I missed the whole week of school. We prayed that I would feel better because Book of Mormon Day for kids was on Saturday. On Friday I woke up feeling better but I stayed home one more day just to make sure I was better. Then on Saturday I was able to go to BOM day for kids and I was so happy!!



Noah Ballantyne

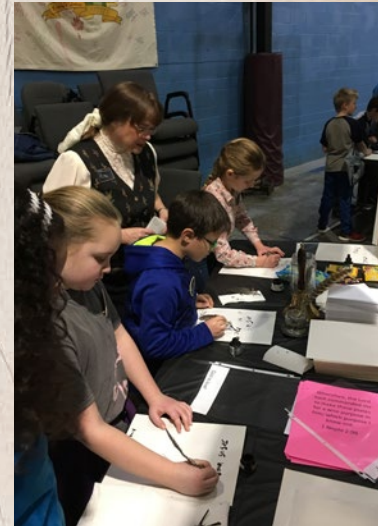
Hi! My name is Noah Ballantyne. I went to the BoM Kids Day this year and had a lot of fun! My favorite part was making candles and watching the movie about Joseph Smith. I also liked the quill pens and making our own butter. I hope I get to go back next year.

Isaiah Mills

When I found out I was going to be helping little children at the Book of Mormon Day for Kids I was really excited because I love helping little children. It was a really fun day. I helped with 3 first graders, chaperoning them to all the different stations. I learned with them also some of the things in Joseph Smith Jr's. day.

Melzora C. Mills

This is my second year helping. When I found out that my Mom and I would be doing the candle making station I was excited. My Mom had me look up facts on the internet about candle making for children. I was surprised to find there was not many facts that would interest children. While they were watching the movie we had to experiment to see how many dips in the wax it took to make a candle. It took a LOT!! Every child made their own unique candle. All in all it was a VERY fun day. I hope I can help again next year.



TODD HENSON

The 2017 Book of Mormon Day for Kids was a great event for all participants. The kindergarten through fourth graders had an active learning day, and all staff helpers were blessed to be assisting. Worship, singing, being with friends, traveling back to an early 1800s western New York era, and even time outside in some very nice weather created a great day. The Holy Spirit was present to bless us all. It truly was a super event.

I was privileged to help bring the Book of Mormon translation process to life for these precious young ones. My station was a re-creation of the front of the Joseph Smith, Sr. residence, outside of Palmyra, since translating was done in homes of the day. Wearing period-style clothing, with long coat tails, ruffles, and bow tie, I acted as the host. I brought my guests in to see ancient language character depictions and a copy of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s handwriting from a letter to Sister Emma, which was composed in Liberty Jail. My guests tried their hand at writing names or messages from the picture of ancient letter characters before them. Assisting these young Book of Mormon scripture students was a tremendous honor and opportunity for me.

ZAC Club from Centerplace Restoration School prepared materials in advance (Zion Ambassadors for Christ).



- THE BOOK OF MORMON - Retreat

But behold I say unto you, that ye must *pray always*, and not faint: that ye must not perform anything unto the Lord, save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.

(2 Nephi 14:12 RLDS) [2 Nephi 32:9 LDS] (*emphasis added*)

BRIAN AND MONICA TWOMBLY, DIRECTORS

Our Heavenly Father blessed the weekend of January 27-29, at the Book of Mormon Retreat. The theme for the weekend was “Pray Always” from 2 Nephi 14:12 (RLDS) [2 Nephi 32:9 LDS]. The retreat was opened by referring to an acronym for prayer where prayer stands for *Prayer Releases All Your Eternal Resources*. The rest of the evening was spent in getting to know each other, singing and praying at campfire.

Saturday, there were three classes taught on prayer. The first class was taught by Elder Benjamin Pedersen on the basics of prayer. This class talked about what prayer is and how to pray. The second class was taught by Elder Robert Gillam on being a prayer warrior. He used examples from the Bible and Book of Mormon on how to implement prayer in our lives and to give us the resources to become prayer warriors. The last class was taught by Elder Rob Bird on having discipline in your prayer life. In his class, he used a demonstration of military recruits and how they have to be disciplined to be ready for battle. He correlated that principle to our personal prayer lives.

Saturday evening, we put the things we learned in class to practice by having a prayer walk. We also enjoyed very creative skits based on Book of Mormon stories.

This weekend was a spiritual blessing full of worship, fellowship and fun. Each camper came with a desire to worship, learn and serve. During the retreat, we spent time sharing prayer concerns and praying for one another. The reminder to pray always will go with us throughout our lives as we seek to live lives of service to our loving Heavenly Father.

PRAYER
RELASES
ALL
YOUR
ETERNAL
RESOURCES





ROBERT GILLAM, RETREAT PASTOR

Our weekend began Friday night, with everyone excited to see one another, renew old friendships, and develop new ones. At the end of our mixers, we gave notecards to each person and asked them to find a partner. On their notecards, they wrote two specific prayer requests. Then, they gave their cards to their partner, who would spend a few moments throughout the retreat praying for the needs of their partner. Everyone seemed eager enough to participate.

Our classes on Saturday focused on prayer. We had three classes, each focusing on a different aspect:

1. Benjamin Pedersen spoke on the basics of prayer (what is it, what does it look like, what are the different kinds of prayer, etc.).
2. I spoke on what it looks like to be a “prayer warrior” and to have a real “prayer closet.”
3. Rob Bird spoke on the discipline of prayer, and what we need to do in our lives to obtain that discipline.

All three classes were very much filled with the Spirit, and everyone seemed to be very engaged and attentive. Saturday night’s activities included cabin skits and a prayer walk, which ended with a spontaneous time of singing hymns for 20-30 minutes after the walk concluded. A very worshipful and peaceful Spirit was present in our singing.

Sunday gave us the opportunity to worship together in a hymn sing, and a time of dedication, prayer, and testimony. Many strong testimonies were shared, and I believe everyone was strengthened by our time together. We concluded our worship service by singing “Ancient Words,” which is such a beautiful and uplifting song.

All-in-all, the weekend was a success, and I am thankful for the opportunity to have served as pastor.

KELVIN HENSON

In The Book of Mormon Foundation’s Internship, the importance and power of prayer is not only taught, but put into practice. With a six-week program, where nearly everything seems to be considered in prayer, it should be no surprise to discover that several blessings are witnessed on a first-hand basis. So, when Jared Gould and I (both former interns) decided to take a trip to Honduras, we knew that prayer needed to be a part of every decision along the way.



It wasn't too long before we left that I received a call from Jared. He had been invited to attend the 2017 Church of Christ youth camp in Zamorano, Honduras, and asked if I wanted to come along. The youth camp didn't start until January 5th, so we decided to leave a couple of weeks early. We set off with nothing but a backpack and a very loose set of travel plans. Instead of flying into Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa, which is only a few hours' drive from Zamorano, we chose to travel mostly across land, stopping to see other saints and friends in different countries along the way. Our journey first brought us to Mexico and down through Belize to a town called Placencia.

We had planned to catch a boat from Placencia to Puerto Cortés, Honduras, but when we got there, we learned we had to wait a couple of days, because the boat only leaves on Saturdays at 9 a.m. When Saturday morning came, we got our things together and went to the dock, where we encountered more bad news. Some fishermen told us that, because of the holidays, the boat schedule was changed, and it had left the day before. They told us of another ferry boat that went between Punta Gorda, Belize and Puerto Barrios, Guatemala. After a quick assessment, we decided our best option was to try to catch that ferry and then make our way across a small section of Guatemala into Honduras.

Jared and I found a bus to Punta Gorda and began to pray more heavily for assistance along the way. We had felt pretty good about our original plan, but now we were running off script. This detour was going to bring us extra border crossings that could very easily hold us back, and we knew that once we hit Guatemala, we would face a language barrier that could potentially throw us off course. We were the last ones off the bus in Punta

Gorda, along with an older man who asked if we were going to the ferry. We said we were, and he told us to follow him there. On the walk, he told us that his name was Frederico and that he was from Independence, Belize. I told him that I was also from a city called Independence in the U.S. We continued talking, and Frederico said he was traveling to Honduras to see his family. He mentioned that he was supposed to catch a boat that morning (a different boat than ours), but it had left the day before. Jared and I laughed and said we had the same problem.

When the boat docked in Puerto Barrios, we didn't know where the border customs office was, so we caught up with Frederico, who was happy to show us the way. It turned out to be a couple of blocks away, in the midst of a busy town. Thankfully, neither of us had any trouble with customs and, when we came outside, Frederico was there waiting for us with a taxi. The taxi took us to a bus, which was going to the border of Guatemala and Honduras. In Belize, Jared and I had traveled on some old school buses, so that was what I was expecting in Guatemala. When I saw the bus, was just simply a large van, I began to realize what a blessing it was to have met Frederico. With all the commotion of a busy town (people running around the markets, horns blaring in the streets, and a bit of rain as well), I would not have known to look for these vans going to the border. We were also spared the trouble of a language barrier, as Frederico spoke both English and Spanish. From there, he really took us under his wing, and we were glad to stick with him.

We arrived in Honduras in the early evening with a couple of hours before sunset. One thing Jared and I wanted to be sure of was to find a place to stay so we wouldn't be stranded in Honduras at nighttime during the holidays,



when the crime rate is up even higher than usual. Frederico had the same idea so, instead of taking a three to four-hour bus ride to Puerto Cortés, he found another taxi that would get us there in under two. We found a hotel just after nightfall, and Frederico arranged for us to get a bus early the next morning. He brought us all the way to San Pedro Sula before we had to go in different directions. From there, it was an easy bus ride to where we were able to meet some saints and stay with them.

Looking back on the trip, Jared and I saw how the Lord blessed us with safety and assurance by meeting Frederico and traveling with him. Our time with Frederico was when we were most vulnerable. On the rest of the trip, we were either with people we knew, or in areas where we had been before, and most of the people spoke English. We realized it would have been very difficult for us to get through Guatemala and Honduras on our own without any problems. Even if we had been able to catch the original ferry to Honduras, it still would have been difficult to continue without taking a wrong bus or getting charged extra on bus fare, for being Americans. Besides that, Frederico also made the trip more enjoyable. He gave us a lot of tourist information and interpreted when some locals were trying to speak to us. He is also a Christian, so we were able to have some discussion about our beliefs and shared a moment in prayer together. There were several blessings on our trip, but meeting Frederico is the one that Jared and I both enjoyed the most. I believe God answered our prayers by causing us all to miss our ferries so we would come together. With Frederico's help, we were able to make it to Zamorano to help with the church camp.

ANNAMARIE THOMAS

It always amazes me how our God will open and shut doors when He has a specific plan for us. In October of 2015, I got a text from Sister Baumgart asking if she could call me later. When I read it, a little voice in the back of my mind said that she was going to ask me to be on staff for the Internship. The voice then asked if I would be willing to trust God in what was coming. The call came, and my answer was yes!

I've learned the hard way that the Devil hates it when you try to dedicate your life to serving God, and he will do his best to distract you. Unfortunately, I still wasn't prepared for what was ahead. In March, my brothers and I closed on our house (which was its own miracle), received official word that my parents were moving to Saudi Arabia, and my dream promotion at work became available. My boss said the job was mine if I stayed in town for the entire summer. Needless to say, the job went to someone else, and I began to actively ask God about His plans for my career. It wasn't until I surrendered my will and pride to Him that He directed me to accept a promotion at a former place of employment.

Meanwhile, my parents were told they would be moving in June, the same month they were supposed to direct a church reunion. But the Lord began moving, too. Our family prayed about it, and we watched the move date slowly change to July. The Internship began the same day as the reunion, so I asked the interns to pray with us for the move and the timing. Prayers opened the way for the interns to go to the reunion and spend an evening worshipping with the saints gathered there. Before we left, my family had one last prayer, asking the Lord to please let us be together again and that the move would be after the closing banquet at the end of the Internship.



One day, the interns prayed specifically for a travel delay, and that night I got a call from my parents detailing how the Lord answered them. The man who was supposed to hand carry their passports and visa applications had left on his trip that morning, but had forgotten all their paperwork. Additionally, a mandatory trip popped up, which delayed them one last time and created a perfect window for them to attend a family reunion in Colorado and be at the banquet.

Put simply, my testimony is when the Lord wants you to do something, He will make a way. It may not be comfortable, what you want to do, or how you planned. But that is okay. Step out in faith, begin a fabulous adventure in trusting Him. It will turn out better than you can ever imagine.

JARED ROWLETT

My name is Jared Rowlett, and I work a full-time job for AWG. There, I load trucks, train employees to pick product to build up pallets of groceries and, on certain days, I am the boss of some departments in the warehouse. AWG distributes groceries to hometown grocery stores. Lately, we have been working between 60 and 70 hours a week. Sunday is always our busiest day. Normally, we work between 14 and 16 hours a day. We have, on occasion, worked an 18 or 20-hour day on Sunday. Since Sundays are always the longest days, and the busiest days, it is the hardest day to get off work. My boss doesn't approve very many vacation days on Sundays, unless someone has worked there for many years. I prayed about it, because I was very nervous to ask him to get that whole weekend off to be able to go to the Book of Mormon Winter Retreat. I finally asked him if I could have that weekend off, which included that Sunday, and he said to fill out a sheet to request those days off. I filled it out and accidently wrote the wrong the dates. He got back to me, saying he believed I had the dates wrong. Sure enough, I did. He had me fill out another sheet, and I made sure I got the dates right. It had been about a week, and he still had not said anything, when normally



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it takes only a couple days. I was getting pretty nervous, so I went to his office and asked him if he approved or denied my request. He said, "Oh yeah, go ahead and take the weekend off!" As soon as I heard those words, my heart filled with joy! Now, this was only one obstacle that was taken care of. The second obstacle to overcome was to see if my dad could trade me Sundays because I was supposed to speak at my church that Sunday. I went to my father next, and asked him if we could switch. He thought for a couple of moments, and said, "Yeah, sure, I'll switch with you!" Right then and there, God provided again! Through all those things that I worried about that stood in the way of me going to the retreat, God opened doors so I would be able to go. I knew that if He didn't want me to, then it wasn't right for me to go. I found out about the Book of Mormon Internship at the retreat. I am going to apply for the Internship, and I hope and pray I will be able to go. I know if I am not supposed to go, God will not open those doors for me. Through prayer and strong faith, God blesses those who strive to serve him!

ELLIE WILLIAMS | HE ANSWERS PRAYERS

I started thinking about the Book of Mormon Internship a few weeks ago, and I decided I would apply this summer. I came home from college one weekend to print out the papers. As I was sitting in

the living room filling them out, I came across the part where you have to write out two testimonies; the first being a testimony you have of Jesus Christ, the second being an experience you have had while witnessing about Jesus. I couldn't think of what to write for either of these testimonies. I have had countless blessings in my life, but I felt that none of them really covered exactly what these descriptions were looking for. I couldn't think of any times where I had witnessed of Jesus. The other experience I wanted to share was, in part, a family testimony, and I was having a hard time remembering how it started. I wondered if I should just write another one. I shared these concerns with my mom, and she said she would pray for me.

The next morning, I walked into the adult class at church that my Dad was teaching. During the class, he said something that sparked a memory I had of witnessing to someone; my first prayer was answered. It just so happened that my dad was preaching that Sunday as well. Dad had decided to share some of his testimonies during this sermon and, as I was sitting there listening, he began to share the exact testimony I had been wondering about writing. He started from the very beginning and told the whole thing. I hadn't said anything to him about the Internship or the testimonies I was praying for (yes, I cried during the sermon). I now had confirmation on which testimony to share, and I could remember all of it! God really does answer prayers.

