

# The Witness

Published Quarterly by  
The Book of Mormon  
Foundation

Number 118 • Spring 2006

And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with *real intent*, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:5 RLDS) [Moroni 10:4-5 LDS]( italics added)

**A**BC News recently published an article entitled, Fast-Thinking Mom Saves Child From Drowning.

It is a true story similar to those often heard concerning the quick response of a mother to the imminent danger of a child. In this particular case, a five-year-old boy was trapped in a car driven off a dock by his father. It was sinking rapidly.

A mother, standing close by, witnessed the event and reacted decisively, thus saving the child's life.

As I pondered the actions of this mother, a single word from the scriptures caused me to remember how knowledge inspires us to action. The word is "real" or "reality." She, from personal experience and knowledge, knew the reality of this situation and the sure outcome that would result from inaction. Therefore, she chose to quickly respond and engage.

Alma, a high priest in The Book of Mormon, also speaks of reality and its relationship with our response to the word of the Lord. Only a few verses will be quoted from the sixteenth chapter, but you are encouraged to study the entire parable of the seed in verses 152-174 (RLDS) [Alma 32:28-43 LDS]. Alma says:

Now we will compare the word unto a seed.

Now if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief,

that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts;

And when you feel those swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves, It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding; yea, and it beginneth to be delicious to me. ...

And this because you know; for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand.

*O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea; because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible; therefore ye must know that it is good.*

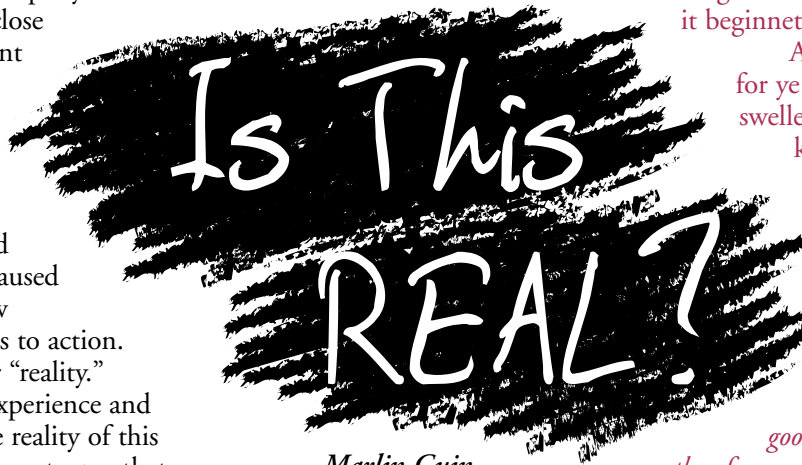
(Alma 16:152-154, 161-162 RLDS)

[Alma 32:28,34-35 LDS ] (italics added)

Observe how Alma teaches us the word of God is real because it produces good fruit that is discernible. Discern means to recognize and come to know. We know it is good because God reveals truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is such an important principle to understand, so let's explore the meaning of this relationship between reality and discernment.

Most people have probably participated in a game called "connect the dots." It is a mental and physical

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Marlin Guin

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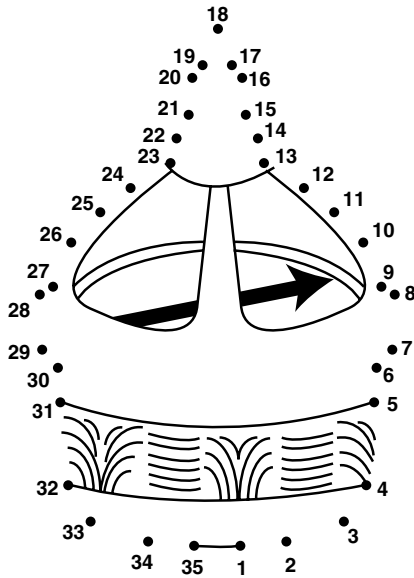
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exercise where a line is drawn from one dot to another until a recognizable image appears. It is a popular activity for children and adults and is often found in newspapers, magazines and books. We enjoy it because of the challenge, excitement and satisfaction experienced in taking random dots and then connecting the dots together so a real and familiar image appears.



So what is the need to understand this basic principle in the context of our spiritual lives? The answer is found in evaluating our response to the word of the Lord. Let's call it the measuring of our good fruits. Jesus said in 3 Nephi 12:22 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 27:10 LDS]: **“And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel, then will**

**the Father shew forth his own works in it.”** The honest and sober conclusion from this observation is the gospel has become abstract in our personal lives and, thus, we are not prepared to participate effectively in the miraculous events ahead.

Abstract means to be insufficiently factual or perceived as without facts. Therefore, an abstract gospel is one that seems unreal because we can't seem to find and relate factual truths to it. Consequently, belief in an abstract gospel promotes a lack of urgent response from those professing it. We can describe it as a “business as usual” or “status quo” approach to life. This is a real stumbling block to many saints today as this great and marvelous work has slowly, from generation to generation, transitioned into progressively greater degrees of abstraction since the early days of the restoration.

There is good news concerning ways we can bring this reality into our lives. One way, but certainly not the only way, is by connecting the dots between scriptural prophecies and events. These events can be historical or current events. The scriptures describe this important process as discerning the signs of the times. We are commanded to know the signs of the times and make the connection to prophetic scripture. This helps remove our abstract belief

in the word of the Lord. Some scriptures supporting this expectation are:

The Pharisees also, with the Sadducees, came, and tempting Jesus, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

And he answered and said unto them, When it is evening ye say, The weather is fair, for the sky is red; and in the morning ye say, The weather is foul today; for the sky is red and lowering.

O hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but ye cannot tell *the signs of the times*. (Matthew 16:1-3 IV) (italics added)

And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for *the signs* of the coming of the Son of man; (D&C 45:6a) (italics added)

and unto you it shall be given to know *the signs of the times*, and *the signs* of the coming of the Son of man; and of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen (D&C 68:1h) (italics added)

John McTernan and Bill Koenig, authors of the book, Israel: The Blessing or the Curse, state the following:

“Through the years, I have spoken to many people about God and the Bible. On a number of occasions, the question was posed . . . What proof is there of God? A similar question asked is, How do you know the Bible is the Word of God? There are many ways to answer this question, but I have taken the approach that the authority of the Bible being God's Word can be seen through the Jew and the nation of Israel . . . The reality of God and the Bible then can be “proved” through the fulfillment of what the Bible states about the nation of Israel. What an awe-inspiring concept this is—Bible prophecy is alive before our very eyes.”

Their premise is based on the awesome spiritual power found in the ability to relate real life to scriptural fulfillment. They believe this causes us to know the Bible is the word of God. The need for prophecy becoming “alive before our very eyes” is important. It brings a positive and empowered testimony to the world through those whose faith has become knowledge because they have experienced and witnessed it for themselves.

What about The Book of Mormon? Would this also be true for it as well? Does Book of Mormon prophecy come alive before our eyes? Those who present The Book of Mormon as the word of God must also be able to support this claim by giving real and meaningful examples of prophetic fulfillment contained within its pages. We all know time is the test of the prophet and what they say must come to pass for it to be valid. Let's look at some of the prophecies to support this truth. Perhaps we can describe it as prophetically connecting the dots using The Book of Mormon. For this article, and in no particular order, I will discuss some specific signs from three major areas.

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### The House of Israel Coming Among the Gentiles

There is a unique prophecy in The Book of Mormon that is easily discernible. It is the movement of the House of Israel among the Gentiles to prepare for latter day events. A partial quoting of one of these scriptures is:

**And my people who are a remnant of Jacob, shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them...(3 Nephi 9:99 RLDS) [3 Nephi 21:12]**

In a general sense, this has already occurred as the House of Israel was scattered among all the Gentile nations. This took place historically in the centuries before and just after Christ. More specifically, since The Book of Mormon is the record of Joseph's land, we should also see this being fulfilled within this mighty nation called America. The Book of Mormon states it will be a latter day event. We can then connect the dots between the scriptures and current events.

Our focus here will be on the movement of the seed of Lehi among the Gentiles. Most Book of Mormon scholars agree the seed of Lehi must be found in a subset of the Hispanic and Native American cultures. Therefore, we should be able to observe and discern their movement among us as a fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecy.

In January 2006, well-known author Patrick Buchanan, in his article entitled, Demographic Crisis of the GOP, states that Hispanics are: "... the nation's fastest growing minority... who now number 40 million and 13 percent of the U.S. population." They became the largest minority in the United States according to the U.S. census in 2000. This represents those who have legally immigrated to the United States. The picture of this prophecy is not clear until we look at some other facts. Carrie Kahn, in an article entitled, Study Details Lives of Illegal Immigrants in U.S., states: "More than 10 million illegal immigrants are thought to live in the United States. The overwhelming majority are Hispanic; most are from Mexico." Even further, we must consider that 1 to 3 million illegal immigrants, depending on the source, are crossing our southern border each year. This prophetic fulfillment has significantly hastened in the last 20 years and continues to do so.



We should not be surprised since the Lord said he would hasten the work in the latter days.

The news media has just released information that the total population of the United States just exceeded the benchmark number of 300 million people. If we do the calculation and total the number of Hispanics currently in the country, we realize that one out of every six people are from this culture. My personal sense is these numbers are lower than the actual count. There seems to be no end in sight, especially with the idea of a better life in America being encouraged by political discussions concerning "guest worker" and "amnesty" programs for those who are illegally residing here at the present. The protection, or lack thereof, of our southern border has become a key political issue and stands ready to have significant influence on the next congressional and presidential elections.

The common sense test of these statements is found in our daily lives as we witness the increasing presence of the Hispanic culture among us. It is easily observable. Hopefully, all of these statistics help paint us a picture of this prophecy being fulfilled before our very eyes.

Somewhere in the midst of those coming among us resides some of the descendants of Lehi, who are of the House of Israel. Only The Book of Mormon makes the claim that we would see this occur in the latter days in Joseph's land. It provides evidence of the reality of the word of the Lord and the authenticity of The Book of Mormon. We should be excited the Lord is bringing them to us since we have

not sufficiently taken the gospel to them as commanded. It's interesting how the Lord works His will regardless of the circumstances.

Another consideration of this prophecy is the Native American culture. The House of Israel, as found in the seed of Lehi, should also be among them. Certainly not all of them are of this lineage. However, some must be since the Lord, by revelation given in October 1830 (D&C 31), sent missionaries to the Lamanites. It was given only six months after The Book of Mormon was published and the church organized. This strongly suggests the Lord was leading the church to move quickly toward this mission. We know they are already among us and were here long before the Europeans came to the Americas. Much more is yet to be seen and heard from this people, so stay tuned. All these signs should now be real in our understanding of the scriptures.



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### The Ripening in Iniquity of the Gentiles

Another sign of the times, that is observable, is the ripening in iniquity of the Gentiles, especially in this democratic nation called the United States of America. Alma says it well, in Alma 8:28 (RLDS) [Alma 10:19 LDS], when he describes it as follows:

*Yea, well did he say, that if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity; that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction.*

One of the best places in The Book of Mormon to find the detailed descriptions of this sign is in the prophecies of Jesus Christ. He saw the latter days and gave us a list of specific signs to observe. In 3 Nephi 7:34 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:10 LDS] we read:

*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;*

I want to specifically look at two of them that are profound in their nature. These signs measure, perhaps more than any other at this point in history, the fulfillment of this prophecy concerning a ripening in iniquity among us. They are described as “all manner of murders” and all manner of “whoredoms” and represent unique prophecies from The Book of Mormon for our day.

### All Manner of Murders

The Associated Press reported in January 2005: “There were 16,137 murders in the United States in 2004, the last full year for which statistics are available.” This is the type of murder that we often think about when we watch the evening news.



However, there is another manner of murder that is unique and profound for the time in which we live. It is abortion. There are about 1 to 2 million abortions in the United States each year, depending on the source. An article, published in January 2006 by BP News, states: “In what can only be described as tragic, the United States likely experienced its 47 millionth legal abortion at some point in 2005, more than three decades after the Supreme Court issued its infamous 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision legalizing the killing of the unborn.” On a wider scale, a website called About.com reports on their Women’s Issues page that there are currently about 46 million abortions in the world each year. These numbers are staggering.

### All Manner of Whoredoms

Prostitution is the manner of whoredom we probably associate with this sign. The Prostitutes Network posts the following statistics based on research conducted through the 1980s: “over one million people in the US have worked as prostitutes in the United States, or about 1% of American women.” Males also participate in this type of whoredom.

However, there are other types of whoredoms that can be observed. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement tell us: “Each year, millions of children fall prey to sexual predators. Experts estimate that one in five girls and one in ten boys in the United States are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood.” The Center for Disease Control (CDC) also reported in July 2000, based on a five-school-based survey: “. . .50 percent of teenagers . . . had sex in 1999.” Take notice, that’s half of our kids in junior and senior high school!

The manner of whoredom that should really catch our attention, as a sign of the times, is homosexuality. Not because it has never existed before today, but because for the first time, it has become such an extremely powerful political, cultural and spiritual force in all levels of our society. It is becoming increasingly accepted as normal behavior. A good example is a CNN article posted January 31, 2006 concerning the entertainment industry. In reference to a recent movie called “*Brokeback Mountain*,” the article says this: “the story of two romantically involved male ranch hands — which already has won best picture honors from the Golden Globes (drama), Broadcast Film Critics Association and New York Film Critics Circle — crowned its status as Oscar front-runner by leading all films with eight nominations for the 78th annual Academy Awards.” The only conclusion that makes sense concerning the power of its influence among us, even though representing a small percentage of the population, is the movement must be empowered by Satan.

What is extremely interesting to me, concerning all these signs of the ripening in iniquity of the Gentiles, is they are

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occurring by our willful choice within this nation, which was founded on Christian principles. Jennifer Wheary, in an article



written for Common Dreams News Center entitled, Who Owns America's Moral Values?, states the following: "Seventy-seven percent of the country is Christian." This statement is in agreement with my research where every poll found places the number of professing Christians in the United States somewhere between 60-80% of the population. What a paradox this presents in light of our national choices, and yet it was still prophesied to occur by our Savior. All these signs should now be real in our understanding of the scriptures.

## The Judgments of God Upon the Gentiles

Signs that often make people uncomfortable are those where the Lord says enough is enough and then responds with judgment. Even though discussing them is not popular among some, we can't ignore the existence of these signs and the reality they bring in support of the scriptures. I want to use 3 Nephi 9:101-104 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 21:14-18 LDS] as the base scripture for our consideration. It reads:

Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles, except they repent, for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots, and I will cut off the cities of thy land and throw down all thy strongholds;

And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:

Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy

standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands;

And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.

From our recent national experience, the devastation of hurricane Katrina relates to many of the signs in the above scripture. I will look specifically at three of them and allow you to do your own research on the others. You will come to your own conclusions as you study and consider them. Let's begin with the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 10:11 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 22:3 LDS] where, concerning the House of Israel, he said:

For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

In October 2005, an article in the St. Petersburg Times entitled, Hurricane Katrina: Who's Rebuilding New Orleans?, states: "Immigrant workers—some in the country illegally—have been pouring into New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina devastated the city." They seem to be inheriting the desolate city of New Orleans because many of the original residents do not want to return. This sign is also connected to the events previously discussed concerning the House of Israel coming among the Gentiles.

Jesus said God would cut off the cities of our land if we did not repent. In August 2005, CNN reported the following news release describing the situation in New Orleans after Katrina: "Major routes into the city were cut

off as well." It is very common for the exact wording used in the reporting of current events to also match the related wording in the scripture reference. In this case, both described it as cities being cut off. This is no coincidence.

Jesus said God would destroy the cities of the Gentiles if we did not repent. In September 2005, the Deputy Police Chief of New Orleans, Warren Riley, told CNN that New Orleans was "completely destroyed." New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin followed up in January 2006

with a similar comment where he said: "Surely God is mad at America. He sent us hurricane after hurricane after hurricane, and it's destroyed and put stress on this country." Again, the wording between scripture and the news event is almost identical. All these signs should now be real in our understanding of the scriptures.

We have only scratched the surface, but we should have enough evidence to nurture an appreciation for the reality of God's word. The Lord keeps every promise whether we consider them to be positive or negative. We are told to



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discern all the signs and not just the ones that make us feel comfortable.

Now, as these signs have been brought to our reality, it becomes essential for us to understand the reasons for which they were given. First, it is so we will not be troubled and afraid but rather have faith and hope in things to come. This occurs because we see God is a keeper of His word. Also, they help us prepare and be ready for active participation in future prophetic events. This preparation certainly includes, among other things, our repentance.

The question we now need to answer is for what future events should we prepare? Jesus answered this question in 3 Nephi 7:35-37 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:10-12 LDS], where he said what events would follow the sign of the ripening in iniquity of the Gentiles:

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.

This speaks of a shift in the focus of God's work in the latter days. It is the result of the prophetic trigger previously discussed concerning the Gentiles' rejection of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the gospel. In response to this rejection, God will bring the fullness of His gospel

from among the Gentiles and bring it back to the House of Israel as promised.

Who then, in the latter days, will the Lord use to restore the House of Israel for the last time? In other words, who will bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah and the fullness of the gospel? It will begin with a collective people who remember the Book of Mormon and former commandments, not only to say but also to do. This commandment was given to the whole church in 1832 (D&C 83:8a-c), because it was the whole church that received the condemnation for rejecting God's word. Therefore, it is the whole church who must repent and not just the priesthood or a few people.

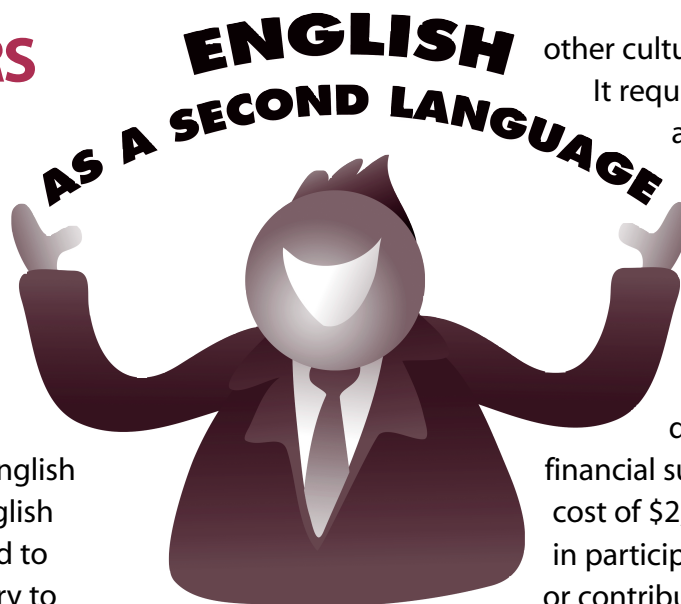
The signs point to this being the day when the Lord will empower the work to accomplish this purpose. In fact, the Lord said it clearly in D&C 2:6c, "for this very purpose are these plates preserved" and further in D&C 83:1b:

yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his Saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city New Jerusalem;

Time will tell as to who will step forward to be an instrument in the hands of God for this prophetic calling. It is a call with pressing urgency. My greatest hope is to hear the voice of the people shout with one accord and say that this is the single desire of our hearts, and we pledge all our spiritual and physical resources for the accomplishment of this common vision. For me, there can be no other common vision that makes any sense in light of the reality of God's word for our time. Therefore, my prayer is that this will become real as it is carried into our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Book of Mormon Foundation has been asked to consider sponsoring a new program entitled English as a Second Language (ESL). ESL is an intensive program to teach non-English speaking people the English language. There is a need to bring this type of ministry to



other cultures that live among us.

It requires significant financial and managerial support.

Implementation is contingent on staffing a director who can fully administer the program. The resources needed, in addition to a program director, are teachers and financial support (approximate startup cost of \$2,500). If you are interested in participating as director, teacher or contributor, please contact BMF.



# How Do YOU DRINK THE WATER?

Gary Hancock

BOOK OF MORMON WINTER RETREAT 2006

This past January, I had the privilege of attending the Book of Mormon Winter Retreat at the Odessa Hills Campgrounds. I served as class presenter for the young adult campers. It was a weekend I will not forget, as I observed God's spirit working with His people. The retreat had approximately 70 campers, a new record for this event, which is another indication God is bringing people together to better understand His work in these last days.

Friday evening provided an opportunity for the young adults and staff to socialize with each other and renew friendships. The campers came from a variety of places in life. Some were finishing high school, others are still enrolled in college, some came from the military, and others have already started jobs. It was our common bond in Jesus Christ that allowed us to relate to one another.

Saturday was a combination of classes and activities that promoted fellowship for Book of Mormon believers. They centered on the theme for the weekend, which was "The Three Nephites Sanctified in the Flesh." I witnessed these young people engaging in serious discussions of the scriptures — both during the three class presentations and also during free time. My understanding of God's kingdom expanded as I participated in these discussions.

Steve Kropp taught an exciting class called "How Do You Drink the Water?" It focused on the day-to-day aspects of how we drink the life-giving ministry of Jesus Christ or guzzle what the world is putting before us. The idea of Gideon whittling down his army goes against our humanity, but God allowed them to do so. Each of the men had to make the same decision, but only 300 chose to stay alert and show they were worthy to join the battle. You and I are determining our battle worthiness every day by the way we drink the water.

The Sunday morning service was the final event of the weekend retreat. The sunrise was beautiful that morning and, even in the midst of winter, I could see God's hand in His creation. I was impressed with the level of respect each person conveyed as they entered for the morning's prayer and testimony service. Many had arrived early and were silently reading their scriptures, while others were engaged in silent meditation. I can testify we were blessed with God's spirit. I could also feel the presence of angels in our midst.



# How Do You ...

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During the preaching service, I had the opportunity to look into the young people's faces. I saw their desire to be part of the Kingdom in these last days. What message could I pass on to them? In my weakness, I attempted to share the steps we must follow in order to sanctify ourselves. We must keep Christ our focus as we go through life. We need to have perfect hope in our lives that only comes through a belief in Jesus Christ. We need to make the study of God's word a daily practice in our life. We must not only have the love of God, but we must also show that love to all people. As the scriptures promise, if we endure to the end, then we can be part of God's Kingdom for eternity.





# The Liahona

WHERE WORD OF GOD MEETS FAITH

Gary R. Whiting

Perhaps no event is more surprising to the first-time reader of The Book of Mormon than the introduction of the curious brass ball that suddenly appeared outside Lehi's tent. This surprising gift is a very important part of Lehi's story—and ours as well.

The name most Book of Mormon believers use for this device is the Liahona. Yet, in the text of scripture, it is a name that occurs only once. Alma mentions this name in passing while explaining the significance of the ball to his son Helaman (Alma 17:71 RLDS) [Alma 37:38 LDS]. Liahona is a word from the language of the Nephites, which means a compass. God provided the compass at a critical point in Lehi's journey to the Promised Land.

Once Lehi had collected the brass plates and the family of Ishmael, he was instructed to prepare to leave (1 Nephi 5:8-10 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:8-9]. The Liahona was found outside of Lehi's tent the next morning. Lehi and Nephi had kept all of the commandments of the Lord. They were able to understand the Lord and follow His commandments without any difficulty. Why then, did God give Lehi the Liahona? A careful reading of the story surrounding Lehi's journey with his family can yield several clues pointing to the purpose of the Liahona.

## Purpose of the Liahona

First, God knew Lehi was committed to seeking and following the word of the Lord. Lehi was willing to obey God even at the risk of his life. It was this faithfulness that qualified him to be chosen to inherit the Promised Land (1 Nephi 1:24 RLDS) [1 Nephi 2:1 LDS]. Yet, the adventure that lay ahead of Lehi was so new and so daunting that Lehi was going to be challenged tremendously in his faith. The Liahona was a way by which God could confirm Lehi's faith and prevent him from being overcome with doubt.

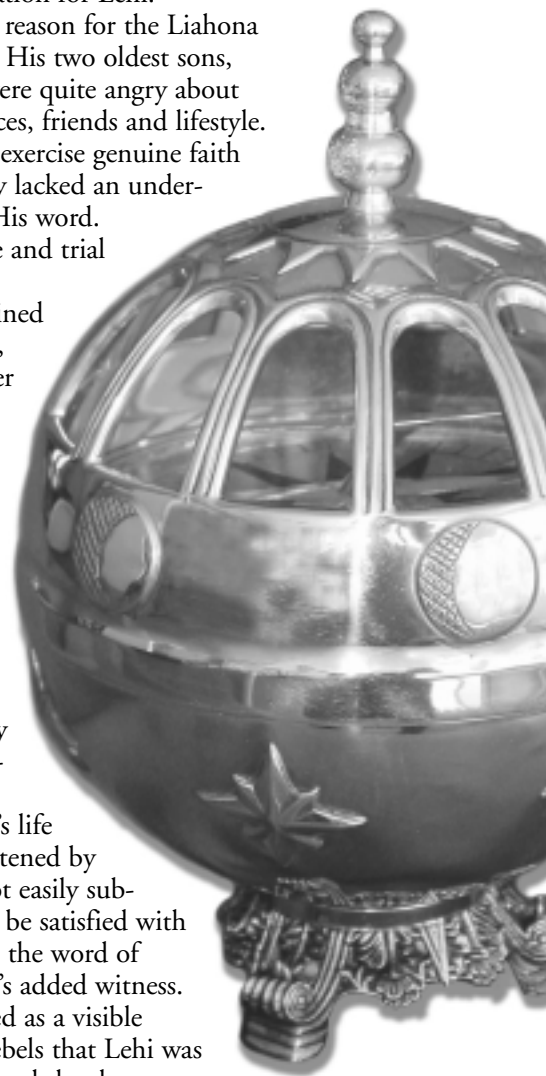
The route taken by Lehi to Bountiful covered territory that was unfamiliar to everyone. None of the party would have known any of the landmarks, location of cities, food and water sources or areas of danger. The Liahona served as a constant guide for Lehi, with updated information on the route. With the Liahona, Lehi knew where to go, and his family was led to the more fertile parts of the land. It served the same purpose as the pillar of smoke and fire that led Israel in the wilderness. The compass was visible evidence of God's presence with Lehi and his traveling party.

The Liahona also served as a revelatory device by which Lehi could receive the word of God. Nephi wrote that the writing on the pointers (1 Nephi 5:34 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:28 LDS] or spindles (1 Nephi 5:12 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:10 LDS] would change from time to time, "which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord (1 Nephi 5:35 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:29 LDS]." Thus the Liahona was a source of encouragement, strength, guidance and confirmation for Lehi.

A third important reason for the Liahona concerns Lehi's family. His two oldest sons, Laman and Lemuel, were quite angry about leaving their inheritances, friends and lifestyle. They never seemed to exercise genuine faith in God and completely lacked an understanding of God and His word. They were a hindrance and trial to Lehi from the start.

After they were joined by the sons of Ishmael, there was an even larger group of malcontents in the party. Imagine the trouble they could have caused in the midst of the journey to Bountiful. They would have complained that their father was lost. They might have left the party and sought a way back before ever reaching Bountiful or the Land of Promise. Lehi's life had already been threatened by his sons. They were not easily subdued and would never be satisfied with Lehi's testimony about the word of God, even with Nephi's added witness.

The Liahona served as a visible manifestation to the rebels that Lehi was being led by the Lord and that he was on the right path. Anyone could look at the writing and observe the action of the pointers. They could see the



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pointers line up and know that the path was true to the direction they were supposed to go. They would know when the compass didn't work and see that its operation was based on faith and obedience.

For Laman and Lemuel and the other unbelievers in the party, the Liahona was a visible witness of the Lord's leading. When they were faithful, the journey went well, but when they were slothful or unfaithful, they faltered and suffered. It served as a means to teach them the power of faith, to learn the ways of God and to mature as believers. Unfortunately, they never gave place in their heart for the word of God. Even when their obvious disobedience put their lives at risk on the sea voyage, Laman and Lemuel never learned the lesson of the brass ball.

## Lessons for Today

The ball or director was a representation of the word of God. Alma taught this to Helaman, his son.

*And now my son, I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass, (now these things were temporal,) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual. For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course, to the promised land. And now I say, Is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow, into a far better land of promise. (Alma 17:78-80 RLDS) [Alma 37:43-45]*

This is a valuable lesson for the saints of today. It is one that we ought to stop and study closely. The Restoration is the testimony that God is a faithful God who is the same yesterday, today and forever. He does not

change, and He always keeps His promises and covenants.

Nephi and Alma both described the spindles or pointers in the ball. They are important to our understanding of how the Liahona worked and how the hearing of the Word is to be mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:2) to our profit and God's glory.

While the exact design of the compass is not known, Nephi's description (1 Nephi 5:11-12 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:10 LDS] seems to indicate that the brass ball was open at the top so that one could look inside. Inside the ball were two pointers, presumably similar to the needle of a modern magnetic compass in appearance and mounting. Nephi also said "the one pointed the way wither we should go into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 5:12 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:10]. God prepared this device to show Lehi which way his family should travel in the wilderness. Wouldn't one spindle be sufficient to accomplish this? Why was the compass built with two spindles?

I believe the second spindle was the means by which they would know if they were exercising faith or were being slothful and unbelieving. When the family was faithful, both spindles lined up and pointed in the same direction, but when they were not, the needles were at variance with each other, and no direction was discernable. Alma told his son that, "if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go,

Behold it was done"  
(Alma 17:74 RLDS)  
[Alma 37:40 LDS].

Alma's testimony shows that both pointers had to work together before a meaningful direction was known.

Nephi tells the story (1 Nephi 5:22-35 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:18-29 LDS] of an incident in their travels that illustrates just how the Liahona operated. After traveling for a long time in the wilderness, Nephi's bow broke while he was hunting. All of the other bows were also

inoperable, and the camp was suffering from hunger. This led to a series of complaints and murmuring by Laman, Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael. Even Lehi was caught up in the complaining.

Nephi rebuked his brothers and the other complainers and exhorted them to have faith. At the same time, Nephi made a new bow and arrow out of wood and asked his father to seek the Lord to know where the best hunting was. Lehi had been humbled by Nephi's words and actions, and "he did inquire of the Lord." The Lord's answer was, "Look at the ball."



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# The Liahona

*continued from page 10*

Whatever the Lord wrote on the ball at that time was so amazing that it caused all who previously had murmured “to fear and tremble exceedingly.” It was then that Nephi observed the relationship of faith and the operation of the ball:

*And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith, and diligence, and heed, which we did give unto them. (1 Nephi 5:34 RLDS) [1 Nephi 16:28 LDS]*

Alma’s testimony parallels Nephi’s description of the ball’s operation. Alma stated that the device worked when the people were faithful and diligent. But, when they were slothful, the ball ceased to operate for them (Alma 17:74-76 RLDS) [Alma 37:40-41 LDS].

It is important for us to understand this principle, because Alma goes on to say that the Liahona was a type and shadow of the word of God. If we apply the same principles of faith and diligence that enabled the Liahona to lead Lehi to the word of God, we also shall be led to the promised land of eternal bliss (Alma 17:79-81 RLDS) [Alma 37:44-46 LDS].

The story of the broken bow illustrates the means through which the Lord leads His people. These are the steps that Nephi described: (1) asking by humble prayer, (2) faith, (3) diligence and (4) heed.

Humble prayer is the prayer of faith. “Those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). In order for the Lord to write instructions on the ball, Lehi had to inquire of the Lord. This required a humbling and repenting process in conjunction with his request to the Lord. Lehi prepared himself and sought wisdom from above.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). This is the fundamental principle of the Restoration, that men should humble themselves and ask God for wisdom from above. Our testimony is that the Lord does answer and guide those who will keep His commandments.

Faith is believing in God and is the submission of our will, our vision and our hope for the will of God and His plan for us. Agency is the means given to men to show their faith in God. As agents, we have the ability to choose

between the right and the wrong. Agency comes with a commandment to love our brother and to choose God as our Father (Genesis 7:39,40; 2 Nephi 1:120 RLDS) [2 Nephi 2:27 LDS]. When we choose to do this and to reject the world’s alternatives, we are exercising faith.

Diligence is the effort of faith. Many do not humble themselves before the Lord because it requires “too much” of them. These people are described in the parable of the sower as rejecting the word of God, or those who lose the word either for lack of roots or are those overcome by the weeds of life (Matthew 13:17-21). The diligent are those who labor with the word of God to bring forth fruit of the Word in their lives.

Heed is the application of the word of God to our situation. It is the obedience of understanding. Heed involves asking, How does this word of God apply to me, and what is it asking me to do? It is, according to scripture, the faithful and obedient who will eat the good of the land (D&C 64:7; Isaiah 1:19).

## Conclusion

The word of God (scripture and the testimony of Jesus Christ) is the Liahona for today. If we are willing to ask and obey His commandments, God will lead the Church

of Christ into the more fertile parts of the land and, ultimately, into the kingdom of God, or Zion. The word of God is liberally distributed in the world. Like a farmer tossing seed into a field, the Lord is sending His word out for any to hear. His word is the only way men and women can be saved and delivered into the Kingdom of God. Unity and power in the church are the result of God’s people agreeing together, through the prayer of faith on the word of God and seeing it to fulfillment through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The days ahead of the saints of God are unlike any we have ever seen. Our traditions and that with which we have been familiar are not sufficient to guide us to Zion.

The world we are used to is changing rapidly, and the landmarks we once knew are vanishing. All, that is, except Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God and the Shepherd of our lives. He is the Liahona for these days. Will we ask? Will we obey? Will we follow the path He knows and is willing to show us?

*O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look, they might live; even so it is with us. (Alma 17:81 RLDS) [Alma 37:46 LDS]*



## From The Board . . .

We count it a privilege to join you in sharing The Book of Mormon message. Your support, prayers and encouragement continue to humble and uplift us. Thanks to your generous support, we have been able to pay off the cost of the roof replacement. In another exciting outreach opportunity, the BMF Learning Center has now been made available to the School of the Restoration for their educational programs. So, in addition to the regular Thursday night classes offered by the Foundation and the Tuesday morning classes sponsored by the Restoration Women's Council, the learning center is now being utilized several other times a week.

In December, the board held its election of officers. The new officers are Dale Godfrey, president; Jeff Ballantyne, vice president; Eldon Anderson, treasurer and Kathy Keller, secretary. We wish to thank all who served so faithfully in those positions in 2005, and we look forward to your continued support as we approach the opportunities of 2006.

*The* **Witness**  
Number 118 • Spring 2006

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Published quarterly by  
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