

# THE WITNESS

*A Quarterly Publication of*



*The Book of Mormon Foundation*

Oh, my people, saith the Spirit,  
Hear the word of God today:  
Be not slothful but obedient;  
'Tis the world's momentous day!

ISSUE 190/ 2025



# THE WITNESS

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## THE *Book of Mormon* FOUNDATION

**The Book of Mormon Foundation** is a non-profit corporation composed of individuals who desire to promote The Book of Mormon and its witness of Jesus Christ.

Through research, publications, seminars and related projects, members of The Book of Mormon Foundation seek to assist in bringing forth the light contained in the Book of Mormon.

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## Welcome to Our New Editor!



The board of directors would like to welcome Beth Spencer as the new editor of The Witness.

Beth graduated from Lone Jack High School, attended Central Missouri State University (now UCM) and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Later, Beth earned her master's degree in Education. She taught preschool and elementary school for 24 years.

She has been married to Jim for almost 40 years. They have three daughters and seven grandchildren.

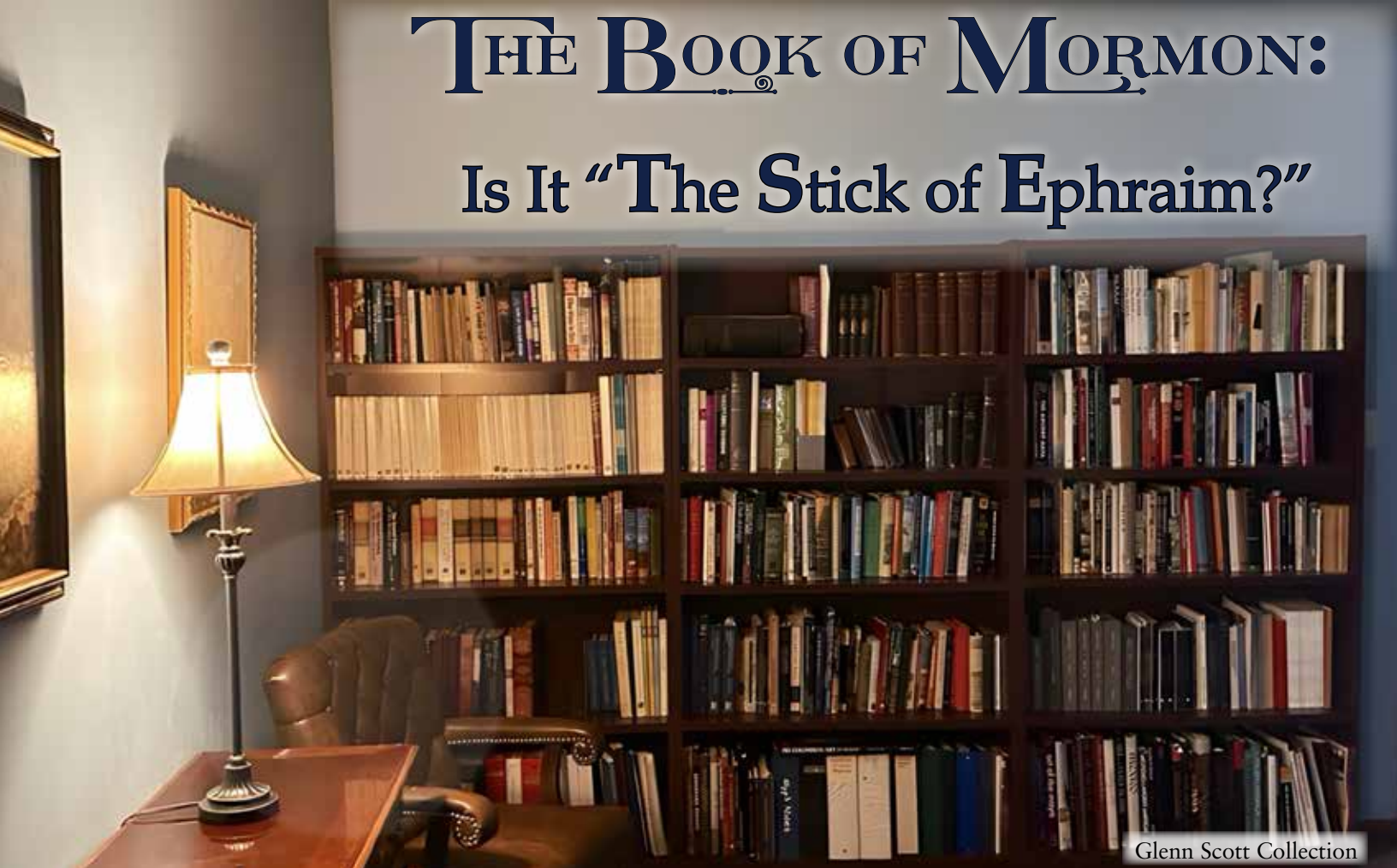
Her mother's family has ties back to the early days of the church. Beth's ancestors heard the gospel while living in England and as a result gathered in to the Nauvoo area. Beth's father was an enthusiastic convert to the restored gospel.

Beth loves teaching children about Jesus. She has written and edited for the children's magazine *I Witness Kids*, published by the Book of Mormon Foundation. She has taught Sunday School, Vacation Church School and camp classes. She is the director of the church school program and helps direct the Handmaidens program at the Church of Jesus Christ, Colbern Road Restoration Branch. She recently completed an illustrated Book of Mormon storybook titled, *The Second Witness of Jesus Christ*, which is available at the Book of Mormon Foundation.

Beth is a talented addition to the Foundation. Please join us in welcoming her to our team!

# THE BOOK OF MORMON:

## Is It “The Stick of Ephraim?”



Glenn Scott Collection

**STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15**

### FOREWORD

I recently had the opportunity to review some of the material donated to the Book of Mormon Foundation from Brother Glenn Scott's library. In the course of that review, I discovered an interesting pamphlet written by Elder Joseph Luff. It presented a new (to me) interpretation of Ezekiel 37:16-22.

As 2 Timothy 2:15 suggests, our study enables us to divide (clearly understand) the Word rightly. I see new information and different interpretations as an opportunity to expand my understanding and open my mind to a greater appreciation of the marvelous mysteries of the Lord. I trust that you do likewise. The information Brother Luff presents in this pamphlet is not being shared to validate his thoughts. I don't know with certainty whether his interpretation of Ezekiel 37 is correct or incorrect. Rather, it is shared so that together we may seek greater knowledge and understanding from on High. As we make this journey, I hope we will each follow the example set by the sons of King Mosiah described in the twelfth chapter of Alma:

They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; For they were men of a sound understanding, and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all: they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting, therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation. (Alma 12:3-5)

May the Lord guide each of us as we seek a strong knowledge of the truth.  
Dale Godfrey



# THE BOOK OF MORMON:

## *Is It "The Stick of Ephraim" Referred to in the Thirty-seventh Chapter of Ezekiel, Verses Sixteen to Twenty-two?*

by Elder Joseph Luff

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions; And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all. (Ezekiel 37:16-22)

For about one hundred years, every Latter Day Saint Church, without an exception, has from pulpit and press answered the above title's question with, **Yes!** Nearly every sermon on the divine authority of the Book of Mormon has included the above verses; and these verses have been employed as being among the strongest biblical evidences at command.



However, this writer has answered the above question with an emphatic **No!** This may sound like a human whisper uttered in an attempt to silence divine thunder, and may go unheeded in consequence. But as I have done a thousand times before, when defending our beloved gospel claims against the boisterous denunciations of an unbelieving world, let me here again use the scriptural word of counsel and suggestion as a means of reaching a safe conclusion as to which answer is right.

### *Scriptural Word of Counsel*

To the law and to the testimony; and if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.  
(Isaiah 8:20)

Does the Bible authorize or warrant the Latter Day Saints' Church answer? **No.**

Does the Book of Mormon declare or intimate that it is the stick of Joseph or Ephraim? **No.**

Does the Book of Doctrine and Covenants anywhere say that the Book of Mormon is the stick of Joseph or Ephraim? **No.**



If my reading and understanding are correct, those books justify me in the distinct and positive answer thus made.

For years after entering the church, I accepted—without question—the position held by the church on this question and so preached, as may be seen by reference to my Book of Sermons, published thirty years ago, in which the popular church belief was proclaimed.

### *Light Came to My Mind During Study*

As years passed and what seemed to me to be light came through different channels to my mind when in study, I was compelled to discard the popular idea as being incorrect and to fix my expectation elsewhere than the Book of Mormon for a fulfillment of the stick of Ephraim prediction. Hence, let me again state that **I am a believer in both the Book of Mormon and Ezekiel's prophecy, but I do not believe that the latter has any reference to the former.** It is the wrongness of the **application** that stirs my pen; for Ezekiel's prophecy, if authorized of God, will **someday be fulfilled.** When that day comes and its **intended** application is attempted, the discovery will be made—to the humiliation of the church—that the place divinely intended for it has been usurped by the Book of Mormon heralds and zealots, although blindly done.

There is an abundance of Bible evidence supportive of the Book of Mormon without Ezekiel's prophecy, so its elimination need cause no disappointment. A right application of Ezekiel's prophecy ought to vitalize our expectation regarding the event to which it properly applies—an event at least as wonderful and glorious as the coming of the Book of Mormon could possibly be.

As already stated, I do not know who first enlisted Ezekiel's prophecy to support the Book of Mormon. I am of opinion that Orson Pratt—who was so marvelously efficient in acquiring and applying scriptural passages to support the claims of the New Evangel—may have been the man. Be that as it may, does it not seem remarkable that (if the popular use of the text is correct) so important a passage as that was not referred to by

the angel who visited Joseph Smith and recited so many other passages of scripture in support of the coming book—and associated events—not one of them surpassing in direct value this passage, if it was really applicable thereto? Isaiah, Malachi and Joel were quoted along with several apparently less important items. It is true that Joseph said that other passages were quoted, but it seems evident that one so important as Ezekiel's prophecy would never have been left unquoted if it related to the involved event? [That is, that the Book of Mormon is the stick of Ephraim.] Judging from the prominence given it in all sermons and articles relating to the Book of Mormon, it is evident that it has been rated by the church as of first importance. My desire is only that each portion of the word of God shall be applied **where He said it should be**, and that when each passage is fulfilled, there will be no clashing of church teaching and claims. **No claims should be made for the Book of Mormon other than its contents justify.** The book has its place and Ezekiel's prophecy has its place; and both will figure in and contribute in an important way and degree toward the consummation promised of God. But the success of God's processes will be delayed—rather than hastened by us—if we locate one where the other belongs, and compel a readjustment by the church when the blunder is exposed upon the housetops by the later divinely planned fulfillment of prophecy. There will be no friction in the God-ordered process; but there will be in our manipulation of church affairs if, in our ignorance, we disarrange the details connected therewith when acting as His interpreters.

But, to my reasons for believing and declaring as I have done. The books speak for themselves. Let me, therefore, appeal to their speech.

### *The Bible Shares the History of the Two Nations*

First, to secure a few sidelights on the subject, let me call your attention to some facts announced regarding those who figure in the involved case. This will help us to more easily reach a proper conclusion:

From 1 Kings 12 and 2 Chronicles 10 we learn that, following the death of Solomon, Rehoboam



his son became king of Israel (embracing all of the twelve tribes). But because of his attitude towards the people, a division occurred and ten and a half tribes revolted. Later, under Jeroboam, they started a separate nation at Shechem in Mount Ephraim for themselves. This left the tribe of Judah and part of the tribe of Benjamin as a separate nation under Rehoboam at Jerusalem. From the later verses, we learn that wars occurred continually thereafter between these two nations. That breach to this day has never been healed. Since that time, they have ever been referred to as **two nations—Judah and Israel, or Ephraim and Judah.** (Isaiah 11:12)

Seven hundred years before Christ, Shalmanezar king of Assyria besieged Samaria and took Israel—the ten and a half tribes, including Ephraim—captive to Assyria. (2 Kings 17:5-6; 18:10-12)

About six hundred years before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against Jerusalem, destroyed it and took the tribe of Judah to Babylon. Seventy years later, by grant of Cyrus king of Persia, Judah returned to Jerusalem and remained there till about seventy years after Christ, when the dispersion occurred “unto all nations.” From that time, reference has been made to them as the dispersed of Judah, while the ten and a half tribes are mentioned as the “outcasts of Israel.” Thus keeping clear the fact of **two nations.** (Isaiah 11:12)

Every thoughtful reader of the scriptures knows that they abound with prophecies of a future return of both Israel and Judah to their former home at Jerusalem. Jeremiah, Isaiah, Hosea, Ezekiel and others are very pronounced in such prophecies.

### *Ephraim is Given Half of Reuben's Birthright*

Next, I wish to note what is recorded in First Chronicles 5:1-3. Here we learn that while Reuben was really the firstborn of Jacob, yet because he defiled his father's bed, the birthright was taken from him and transferred to the sons of Joseph—**Ephraim and Manasseh.** After that we find the word **Ephraim** frequently used interchangeably with Israel when referring to the ten and a half tribes that revolted and later went to Assyria. Sometimes it reads **Israel and Judah.** At other times it reads Ephraim and Judah, substituting the word **Ephraim for Israel.** And in referring to the final gathering, scripture says, **I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, whither I had driven them, for I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn.** (Jeremiah 31:8, 23:8, 31:9) Ephraim, then, is in that north country, or in the coasts of the earth apparently. Read now in Isaiah. Note that here Ephraim stands for Israel.



And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. (Isaiah 11:12-13)

Carefully now read 2 Kings 17:6, 23; Jeremiah 31:6-9; Hosea 7:11; 8:8 & 12; 9:3; 10:6; 11:3-5; and 12:1. Without a doubt, it was while in Assyria that God wrote the great things of his law to Ephraim, which



were accounted as a **strange thing**. (Hosea 8:12) When the **stick of Ephraim** comes forth, it probably will contain that writing.

These passages clearly show Ephraim to be in Assyria. They also show Ephraim as being one of the two nations to which Ezekiel's prophecy refers. Revelations to this church show that nation (those lost tribes) to be there still and **from the coasts of the earth**, as we shall show.

### *The Stick of Ephraim*

Let me now come to the main point in mind, upon which all these passages throw a helpful light. Read Ezekiel 37:16-19, as found earlier in this article. Observe closely, please, the language of the prophecy. Keep in mind the common interpretation of the word **sticks** or **stick**, which I believe to mean **records** or **record**—it should help the scriptures become clear. Let us see:

First, please note that the Lord herein says (in His interpretation of the vision) that He refers to the **two nations**—Ephraim (or Israel) and Judah. There is not a word to justify the admission of any other people or to justify a severing of these. Now what does He say? Read, using the word **record** for **stick**:

Take thee one **record** and write upon it, for Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another **record**, and write upon it, for Joseph, the **record** of Ephraim, and for **all the house of Israel, his companions**; And join them one to another into one **record**; and they shall become one in thine hand. (Ezekiel 37:16-17)

As a meaning for this command, God told Ezekiel to thus explain:

Behold, I will take the **record** of Joseph, **which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows**, and will put them with him, even with the **record** of Judah, and make them one **record**, and they shall be one in mine hand. (Ezekiel 37:19)

Further, in explanation, He says:

I will take the children of **Israel** from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; And I will make them **one** nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be **no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all**. (Ezekiel 37:21-22)

Now, please notice that this stick—or record—of Ephraim must contain the history of Ephraim **and all the house of Israel, his companions**. Does the Book of Mormon contain that?

Notice further, that it is to be found in the hands of Ephraim **and the tribes of Israel, his fellows**. Was the Book of Mormon found there?

And again, it is distinctly referring to and dealing with one of the **two nations** referred to—that nation known as Israel or Ephraim (including the ten and a half tribes that revolted under Rehoboam's rule) and are yet separate from that other nation known as Judah.

Does the Book of Mormon represent that nation? Is it not a simple fact that the Book of Mormon is a history of **two families** whom God led to America **from—not to—**Jerusalem and some items from plates found by them? The Book of Mormon offers not a word regarding this nation of Israel as history or as a record of them and their whereabouts and development. It is simply a record of Lehi, or Nephi and Zoram, and their descendants in **America**.

It is therefore clear from the Bible, and especially the passage from Ezekiel itself, that the Book of Mormon cannot be a fulfillment of the stick of Ephraim prediction.

### *The Book of Mormon Record Will Be United with the Records of Ephraim and Judah*

Let us now consult the Book of Mormon itself and see if it warrants the claim made for it that this pamphlet is written to oppose.



I will quote from the small Plano edition of the Book of Mormon, published in 1874, beginning on page 105, paragraphs 8-10:

Wherefore, because that ye have a bible, ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written: for I command all men, both in the east, and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I shall speak unto them: for out of the books which shall be written, I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews, and they shall write it: and I shall also speak unto the **Nephites**, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth, and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews: and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the **lost tribes of Israel**: and the **lost tribes of Israel** shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. And it shall come to pass that my people which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. (2 Nephi 12:64-73)

The words of the Jews here doubtless refer to the record of Judah mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy. And I suppose that all my readers will agree with me that the words or record of Nephi here referred to means the Book of Mormon, for that book certainly is their record. There can be no question about that. On the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, these words appeared concerning it: "It is an abridgment of **the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, written to the Lamanites.**" (Title Page, The Book of Mormon; RLDS Church History, Volume 1, page 74) Hence, as I have shown, it is at some future

day to be **united with the record of Ephraim and Judah**. If then, this record of the Book of Mormon will someday be joined with the record of the lost tribes of Israel, how can it be the record of those lost tribes? As we have shown, those lost tribes are the nation referred to in Ezekiel's prophecy as one of the **two** nations of former history, the ten and a half tribes removed by Shalmanezar from Samaria to Assyria.

The record of those tribes cannot be taken **from their hand** till they are located. And sacred testimony declares that their appearance will be accompanied with miracles that will eclipse the glory of Israelitish delivery formerly from Egypt. Then they will cease to be referred to as **the outcasts—the lost tribes—** and their records will be joined with Judah's and with that of the Nephites.

### *The Lost Tribes in the North Country*

In the Book of Doctrine and Covenants 108:6, dated November 3, 1831, we are told that those tribes were then still in the north country and we are informed that:

They who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep . . . Behold this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon **the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim** and his fellows. (DC 108:6a, b, e)

This probably has reference to the same events as are foretold in Jeremiah 16:14-15, indicating miraculous display in its fulfillment.

### *The Book of Mormon Does Not Contain a Record of Ephraim*

If, therefore, the Book of Mormon does not contain a record of **Ephraim and all the house of Israel his companions—the lost tribes**, as we



have shown—how can it be the **record** or **stick of Ephraim**, which was to do that?

If the Book of Mormon was found in America, how can it be the **record** which, according to Ezekiel, was to be found in the hands of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his companions, whom we have shown were in Assyria?

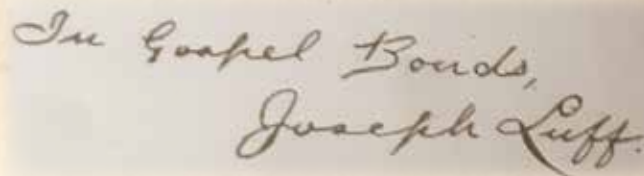
The Book of Mormon was written in America and only claims to be a record of God's dealings with people in America. Any reference in it to others is copied from the record of Judah.

We have no known record of what those tribes (meaning or including Ephraim) found or did in Assyria, or what became of them. The prophet Esdras (supposed by many to be the prophet Ezra of our Bible) in the second book of his writings in what is known as the Old Testament Apocrypha, says that after reaching Assyria they took a year and a half's journey **north**—helped by miraculous intervention—to a country where they were determined to faithfully serve God as they had never done in their own land. Thus the known chapter of their history closes. Our Book of Mormon, as a record, stick or history, does not even squint in their direction. When these lost tribes later appear, they will likely be amazed to learn that the Book of

Mormon has been posing as their history, while not even knowing their whereabouts.

While calling his attention to my views on this subject some time ago, an elder directed me to a statement found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 26, paragraph 2, which he thought declared the Book of Mormon to be the stick of Ephraim. But close reading will reveal that it merely says that Moroni had been sent to reveal the Book of Mormon, and that to him had been committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim. It does not connect the Book of Mormon with the stick of Ephraim, but merely declares that unto Moroni had been committed the authority for the double service—one dealing with the Book of Mormon and the other with the stick of Ephraim.

My views are now before you. Whatever may be the fate of this pamphlet, my mind is freed from the urge that led to its being written. I present it with a desire to **make straight the way of our Lord**, and I am ready to take cheerfully the consequences.



*In Gospel Bonds,  
Joseph Luff.*

Editor's Note: Edits were made for clarity and ease of reading. The original article may be viewed on the Foundation's website at <https://bomf.org/study-resources/>.

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## WHO WAS JOSEPH LUFF?

Joseph Luff (1852-1948) was a powerful influence in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints from the day of his baptism in 1876. He came to the church after an unusual spiritual experience which led to his departure from the ministry of a popular church in Toronto, Canada. Within three months he was ordained to the office of elder; a decade later he was called to the Council of Twelve Apostles.

He served with distinction in this council until released to become the first administrator of the church hospital established in 1909. This change in ministerial emphasis followed his receiving of a degree in the study of medicine while under appointment as a missionary.

Dr. Luff was a popular author, writing books and tracts for the times on gospel themes. *The Old Jerusalem*

*Gospel* is his best-remembered book. He was also a poet. One of his most-loved poems was "Admonition" which appears in hymn form in the church's current hymnal. Many of Dr. Luff's writings evidence his prophetic genius, which added to his stature throughout the church.

At his funeral, the spokesman for his eulogy summed up his power of influence: Preacher, teacher, writer, poet, prophet, medical man—all these were his gifts and more. What made them valuable? He had the testimony of Jesus. It was in him as a burning and a shining light, which grew brighter and brighter through the thinning veil of the flesh as his years mounted . . . All speak of him with reverent affection. [Joseph Luff, *The Old Jerusalem Gospel* (Herald Publishing House, 1968), back cover.]



## Congratulations

to Linda Guin! She is retiring after 30+ years of service to the Lord and The Book of Mormon Foundation.

Linda was the office and bookstore manager, worked with the board and the editorial committee, and served as editor of *The Witness*.

A welcome message in the 87th issue of *The Witness* states:

"Her responsibilities are to coordinate the numerous activities of the Foundation and to oversee employees and volunteers at FRAA's headquarters. Formerly employed by Sprint, Linda brings a wealth of office experience, but most importantly, she brings a desire to serve and a conviction that the work of the Lord must take priority in our lives."

Linda has continued her dedication to promoting the truth of the Book of Mormon and serving the Lord's people in her many years of service. She will be greatly missed at the Foundation. May God grant her many blessings for the new beginning ahead of her.

"Often when you think you are at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else."

Fred Rogers



Linda and her husband Marlin, 1995

Please join us for a

## Retirement Open House

in honor of

Linda Guin

SUNDAY

August  
10

3-5 P.M.

Book of Mormon Foundation  
210 West White Oak Street  
Independence, Missouri



# Powerful, Purposeful, Daily Prayer

## Three-Part Series: Part Two

For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry; and I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers, for the gain of my people. (2 Nephi 15:4)



by Dr. Thomas M. Mitchell

This is the second of three articles focusing on the spiritual disciplines for followers of Jesus: purposeful prayer, searching the scriptures diligently and fasting. The first article in the March issue explored the powerful prospects of searching the scriptures diligently or, in the words of Nephi, **feasting on the words of Christ**. This article will focus on daily, purposeful prayer—one of the greatest disciplines of life and an enabling force to function as a follower of Christ in this ever-changing and ever-evil world. We return again to that keynote scripture and those goldenlines taken from the fourteenth chapter of Alma:

For they were men of a sound understanding, and they had **searched the scriptures diligently**, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all: they had **given themselves to much prayer, and fasting**, therefore they had the **spirit of prophecy**, and the **spirit of revelation**, and when they taught, they taught with **power and authority**, even as **with the power and authority of God**. (Alma 12:4-5)

It is the idea of “much prayer” I will address in this article.

### PRAYER AS COMMUNION/ COMMUNICATION

The story of Enos is an exposé into the power of prayer as a relationship of communication.

Behold I went to hunt beasts in the forest; and the words which I had often heard my father speak, concerning eternal life, and the **joy of the saints**, sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and **I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication**, for mine own soul; And **all the day long did I cry unto him**; yea, and when the night came, I did still raise my voice high, that it reached the heavens. (Enos 1:4-6)

The book of Enos contains few details concerning the circumstances of his life, but it does provide a short synopsis of his encounter with God. The description of this particular event highlights with great clarity the power of purposeful prayer. Notice how Enos begins. He **remembers to pray**, which was cemented in his memory by the testimonies, habits and actions of his father. This should be the first important thing we understand about this



story. Second, he humbles himself **in supplication** by kneeling down before God and hungering for this joy of the saints. Third, he cries mightily for an extended period of time, not only for himself, but continues in prayer for others.



Enos Praying - Used with permission by Robert T. Barrett

As you read this story can you imagine yourself in this same situation? Or have you found yourself in this same state? Does your soul at times hunger for the joy in the forgiveness found in Christ? The response and interaction between Enos and God in the remainder of the chapter takes Enos from a reckoning of his now-forgiven state to an immense desire for this joy of freedom for all men. Notice how the request of Enos grows deeper and more expansive from his own needs to those of his people the Nephites, and then to the concerns for the Lamanites who are at the time, the enemy. There are some wise perspectives we can gather from the prayer of Enos:



### Prayer is a door.

Prayer is the entry door to a relationship, to communion—a door which we alone control.

We have seen the popular painting of Jesus standing outside the door. There is no door handle on the outside where He is knocking, only on the inside. God is always inviting; the response is entirely up to us. This desire for interaction with God can be nurtured by sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as It moves on the hearts of those seeking Jesus.



### Prayer fosters a relationship.

Think of your best friends. How did you become close? Somewhere in the past and hopefully in the present, friends converse frequently—about things we care about, about things we have in common, about our concerns, hopes, fears, longings and yearnings. We call this a relationship—a vulnerable exchange of personalities and preferences. This is the beginning of the relationship desired by Jesus so we become His and He becomes ours. This requires us to focus on our prayer time as the most important communication we can have in this life. The motivational author Brennan Manning explains this process:

In prayer Jesus slows us down, teaches us to count how few days we have, and gifts us with wisdom. He reveals to us that we are so caught up in what is urgent that we have overlooked what is essential. (Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 114)

## PRAYER AS REVELATION

The apostle Arthur Oakman wrote:

Ideas cannot put men in touch with God; they cannot create communication with him. Only God himself can do that. The revelation of God creates communication with him, and it is the only process by which he can be truly known. (Oakman, *God's Spiritual Universe*, p.157)

As mentioned in the first article of this trilogy of spiritual disciplines, the testimony of Christ is the spirit of prophecy as proclaimed by various authors



over time. It seems to be first recorded in Revelations 19:10 by the apostle John. This prophecy is more than mere fortune-telling. It is a spiritual unfolding, a revelation or revealing of the nature and purposes of God for us in our lives.



### **God already knows what is best for every one of His creatures.**

He formed mankind out of the dust and He knows what we are going to ask before we speak the words. He knows what we will do because He sees our actions and all the consequences in the present and the future as well as the story already written in the past. He is not bound by time as are we. This should help us understand that prayer is not simply a vending machine for things we want or desire, no matter how important or critical they seem at the moment. It is not a process whereby, if we pray more or harder, this activity commands or demands God to obey. Once again, He is God; we are not.

This does not mean our prayers or concerns are not valid, for we are told in scripture the prayers of the righteous availeth much. (James 5:16) Rather, I believe He seeks to flood our minds with a measure of His holy desires and the possibilities of our requests when they are in harmony with His holy will in ways where we can exercise our gifts of service and love. By this we are drawn not only into action, but also into understanding. Only when He reveals Himself to us do we truly know what is that mind and will of God for any moment.

Think of the story of the Brother of Jared when he was concerned about the Jaredites crossing a great body of water in darkness. A dialogue occurred as the Brother of Jared sought to work out with the

Lord the challenges to the long voyage across the deep ocean. From this active-learning experiment, the barges are outfitted with clear transparent stones touched by the finger of the Lord and glowing or emitting light to provide illumination during the long voyage. It is important to note that the Brother of Jared was not slothful. He came to the Lord with an idea, with preparation, with prayerful forethought, with an action plan to present to his God for the sake and salvation of his people.



### **We become more like Christ by modeling Christ.**

We cannot become more like Christ by doing things that we or others would do. We become more like the King as He reveals Himself to us—who He is and what He wants in us. This knowledge or intelligence comes through revealing worship with Him. Arthur Oakman writes:

The eternal God chooses to make himself known. He gives the desire to know him. To know him is to be like him. To be like him is to know as we are known. So we discover ourselves in him. In his light we see light. In his peace we are at peace. In his humility we are exalted. As he makes himself known to us, so others are to us made known, and the love wherewith he loves them is kindled in us, and we are led to endeavor for them what he has done for us. (Oakman, *God's Spiritual Universe*, p.154)



### **Revelation is only fully known when it is plenary.**

Plenary means first-person or one-on-one communication, as between a person and God. It cannot come fully personal through others because other people are not full of His light. There is always something lost in the human shadow even from the best of saints and servants. Many times revelations are given to the saints corporately to be received and acted upon as a body. But in our daily personal struggles, we need laser-focused direction for our individual experience. Oakman makes this abundantly clear:



*Amy Thomas*



Only God can tell us who he is. Only God can tell us what he will do. Only God can tell us what he wants us to do. (Oakman, *Themes from His Radio Sermons*, p.85)

## PRAYER AS MOTIVATION

Alma gives us this admonition:

Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him; cry unto him when ye are in your fields; yea, over all your flocks; cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening; yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies; yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them: cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all: ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness; Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you. (Alma 16:219-222)

Alma makes this prayer request scenario real: for real people, with real problems, in real situations, in real activities. But he also calls us to be real with our intent and our dedication for prayer at all times and in all places and in all things.



**The scriptures give us a basic working framework for active, purposeful, daily prayer.**

Jesus, at the request of His disciples, gave a basic framework for purposeful, daily prayer in the New Testament. It is quite similar to a prayer given by Jesus in Third Nephi. I use these scriptural references as a type of scaffolding or framework to remember where I am in my prayer time and

to highlight and remember things I need to offer up to the Lord. In all of this, I petition the Holy Spirit to be my ever-diligent guide and companion. This prayer framework has several major points or themes:

1. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done (God's omnipotence; obedience to His plan)
2. Daily bread (our life needs; the living bread or the need for every word of God)
3. Forgive us/We forgive others (our need for forgiveness; our need to forgive others)
4. Not led into temptation (instead, we are encouraged toward righteousness)
5. Thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory, forever (praise; adoration)



**Prayer is personal.**

There are many rules and procedures people adopt and advocate to others for prayer. I often find some of those prescriptive constraints



unproductive for me. I am not always on my knees in prayer because I cannot kneel for extended periods of time. Sometimes, when in earnest prayer, a session may be over an hour. Sometimes in prayer when I feel the impression of the Spirit, I am on my knees. Many times, I am lying in bed totally awake into the evening; and other times, very early in the morning. I have prayed while on long solo bike rides, while hiking, while driving, or on a plane crossing the ocean.

God knows us. He knows our behavior. After all, He made us. We should then choose our prayer activities wisely—according to our needs and personality traits—and find the most effective way to approach God, led by the examples of others in scripture when prayer was most effectual. Enos was out hunting and pondering his sins when he sought God. The Brother of Jared was seeking help to guide ships over the darkness of the deep when he took the 16 stones before the Lord. Both Alma the younger and Alma the older were often found out on the road in ministry and felt the weight of the sins of their people. Joseph Smith knelt in the woods behind his house in his youth, trying to decide which church to join. Each recorded encounter in scripture has a purpose and a place of prayer appropriate in preparation for the great I Am to answer—and answer He always does!



### **Prayer should be from a heart seeking humility and from a spirit striving to be contrite.**

In the 16th chapter of Alma, we find an unusual story about the proud Zoramite dissenters, whose access to worship was exclusively for the wealthy and socially important individuals of the community. They came once a week to offer their prideful prayers upon a towering stand called the Rameumptom or, the Holy Stand: “And we also thank thee, that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God. And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen.” (Alma 16:93-94) After each man had come to the stand and recited this identical message, they

returned to their homes. They did not worship or think about God until the next week.

Alma found more success among the poorer, downtrodden Zoramite workers who had actually built the sanctuary, but were not deemed good enough to worship there. Alma stressed that prayer and worship are available to all—in all places and at all times—and are common gifts to all mankind.

Today, as in days of old, I believe prayer is one of those principles which could become common or repetitive when we do not see immediate results. But there is nothing common or uneventful about talking directly with God. Results on a farm or in a garden are not immediate nor seen every day. It requires some labor and time for crops to grow to make any progress. There is rain and sun and earth involved. But from the first sprout bursting out of the earth to the harvest, it is worth all the time and effort. Results from athletic endeavors do not happen immediately; it takes time, sometimes years, and extended effort and sacrifice to run the race. But desired success is worth that effort when victorious. Results in vocations, avocations, education, relationships, and other personal communication all take time and effort. So it is with prayer.

I, like many who have come before me, have found power in practical, purposeful, daily prayer. Power that answers the most vexing questions of my soul. Power that can constrain my anger or depression when this world tests my patience. Power to be more faithful, more hopeful, more loving, more humble, more contrite and more obedient. Our prayer relationship, as in all relationships, deepens over time. We find success in perseverance as we press forward to the mark set before us by Jesus as He was constantly sequestering Himself to be in a prayerful relationship with His Heavenly Father.

Let us then press forward. Let us find communion with God as He reveals Himself in so many ways and in the walks of our lives. Let us find motivation from this relationship to press into the work of the kingdom and endure the challenges of this life as we choose to be doers as well as seekers in our prayers. Let us pray individually and collectively with diligence, hope and humility. Let us be practical and purposeful in this great daily event! Let us pray!



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