

Autobiographical Notes

The Book of Mormon on the Worship Center Table

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After graduating from high school in 1974 I attended my final church youth camp at the Romoca Lodge camp near Palmer Lake, Colorado. The ministry and fellowship present at the camp produced a rich and inspiring spiritual environment. At one point, while walking over to the baseball field one afternoon with a friend I found myself looking down at my feet to see if I was still walking on the ground. I felt so incredibly wonderful. As we walked and talked together I longed to continue in the fellowship of the One who had brought each of us such unspeakable joy.

Soon after returning home from the camp, a number of youth, who had been at the camp, came to our small mission in Cañon City, Colorado, for a witnessing weekend. During the Sunday worship I shared how the Lord had blessed me at the camp and that He was now leading me to draw close to Him through studying the scriptures. However, as I testified that morning, I did not know where to begin.

The Three Standard Books, as they are often called in the Restoration, posed a formidable challenge to me because reading in general had always been very difficult for me. In fact, back in grade school I had been placed in special reading classes because I had such difficulty. But while testifying before the congregation that morning of God's goodness in my life, my attention was drawn to the Book of Mormon on the worship center table. In that moment the Lord impressed upon me the understanding that I should begin by reading this book of scripture.

Since I did not have a copy of the Book of Mormon of my own, I began reading from the worship center copy in our mission building. The compelling witness of Jesus Christ contained in the pages of the Book of Mormon drew me to this small, humble sanctuary nearly every evening after work and on many weekends until I had read it cover to cover. What I had read confirmed to me that this indeed is a true record of God's covenant peoples whom He had led to the Americas over two and a half millennia ago.

On a personal level, the writings contained in the Book of Mormon were as challenging to me as they were intriguing and inspiring. They caused me to examine my life, especially my desires and motives. As a result, each evening it seemed I spent as much or more time in prayer as I did reading. One passage of scripture was especially sobering to me.

And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen

away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things. (Alma 14:58)

Upon reading this verse for the first time, I found myself going to my knees calling upon the Lord to keep me from such an end. I pleaded with Him to stir my heart to faithfulness all through my life so that I would never deny Him. Reading on, other verses served to reinforce this same desire and prayer to remain faithful unto the end of my life.^[1]

Although I had had such trouble reading in my youth, reading became much easier as I progressed in my journey through the Book of Mormon. Simultaneously I felt a cleansing taking place in my soul. I grew to want nothing more than to know Jesus Christ of whom the prophets of this land had spoken so plainly.^[2] I wanted to serve Him in whatever way or capacity I could and, if possible, to participate in His work of redemption in these latter days.^[3] Equal to this growing desire in my heart, I felt a calling beginning to emerge, a calling to do something with this incredible witness of Jesus Christ and His work and ministry.

In the fall of the same year I became very busy working as a machinist in Cañon City and commuting to Pueblo, Colorado, to attend college courses. I was soon elected to be the boy's youth leader in our church District, which placed a responsibility on me to hold activities for the young men of the several branches and missions in Southeast Colorado.

During this busy time in my life, my hunger to know Jesus Christ and His ways continued to motivate my study and prayer life. One notable event occurred in the fall of 1974. I spent a weekend in a friend's primitive cabin in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of Southern Colorado. Amazingly, I was able to read the entire New Testament of the Bible that weekend. The words of the apostles came alive, and filled my soul even as the Book of Mormon had as I read of Jesus and His marvelous words and work among His people. It was then that I realized I had been healed of my reading disabilities while reading from the Book of Mormon earlier during the summer of that year.

1 cf. Alma 21:37, Helaman 2:161-167, III Nephi 3:12-20 & 13:46-48, Mormon 4:36-56

2 Ether 5:41

3 Moroni 8:2