

THE BOOK OF FIRST NEPHI

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Establishing Credibility (1 Nephi 1)

Most people who have read the Book of Mormon know the first line: “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents”. However, if you read the rest of the first verse, you find Nephi making several other statements about himself:

- Taught somewhat in all the learning of my father
- Seen many afflictions in the course of my days
- Highly favored of the Lord in all my days
- Great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God

After listing his “credentials”, he then concludes, “therefore I make a record of my proceedings”. This listing of one’s credentials was actually expected to appear at the beginning of any properly composed Egyptian autobiography of Nephi’s time – it makes a lot of sense since a reader certainly has the right to ask: “Why should I take the time to read what you have written?”. Anybody can say or write anything but unless one has credibility, they’re just words.

As a follower of Christ, what credibility do I have to tell others about Him?

Do I have a personal testimony I can relate to others that demonstrates Christ at work in my life? Do I have at least a basic knowledge of the plan of redemption and an appreciation I can express that Christ died for me? Is my life obviously filled with joy, even if things sometimes don’t work out the way I might want? Has my life changed for the better since knowing Him?

If I can’t answer YES to these questions, it would be fair for someone to say “Why should I listen to you?” when I try to talk about the Lord. After all, if it’s really true that I’ve never experienced a miracle or answered prayer, if my life is totally miserable and has not changed at all since before I was baptized, if Christ dying for me has no effect on my life, why should anyone take me seriously if I invite them to “know the Lord” as I do?

The good news is that most of us do know the Lord. To make sure you maintain your credibility to talk about Him:

- Rehearse your personal testimony often. Recall answered prayers and miracles that have occurred in your life. Write them down if you have to. Be prepared to share these with others.
- Understand at least the basic plan of redemption, that it is only through Christ that we can be saved in the kingdom of heaven.
- Focusing on the two points above (counting your blessings) will allow you to exhibit joy in your life even when circumstances of life threaten to overwhelm you.
- Be careful about falling back into old sinful ways (or new sinful ways). Nothing robs you of your credibility quicker than living a lifestyle that is not consistent with a follower of Christ.

Nephi effectively established his credibility such that people are willing to read his important message. We need to do our best to establish our credibility so people are willing to hear our important message today.



All In (1 Nephi 2)

I've seen the phrase "All In" used in various scenarios. A baseball team that feels it has a good chance to win this year may be willing to sacrifice future young talent in order to go for the championship this year. The team is considered to be "all in" for this year. A card player who feels he has a winning hand may push all his chips into the middle of the table. At that point he is "all in" for that hand, holding nothing back.

It's easy to draw parallels from the above to our service to God. The concept of being willing to sacrifice and hold nothing back because we know we have a "winning hand" or that we're on the "winning team" is something we should all strive for to be effective servants of God.

In 1 Nephi Chapter 2, Lehi is commanded by the Lord to take his family and leave Jerusalem. It should be noted that Lehi was already doing what was pleasing to God – his faithfulness was recognized by God in verse 1. Yet, Lehi was asked to be "all in" for God and sacrifice everything to follow the commandment of God. In this case, holding nothing back meant leaving behind gold, silver and the most valuable possession of all – the land of his inheritance.

Although it would have been "understandable" to have made other arrangements, Lehi followed the Lord's commandment and took nothing with him except his family, tents and some food and made his way into the wilderness, going all in with the Lord. The result was that he and his family were spared from being killed and they were used to begin a new nation in the Americas.

In Matthew 19, Jesus encounters a young man who is keeping all the commandments. But "*Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions*" (Matthew 19:21-22). Jesus wanted the man to be "all in", holding nothing back, in exchange for treasure in heaven, but he just couldn't push his large pile of chips into the center of the table, even for a winning hand.

What are we holding back today that prevent us from being all in with God?

- Time – Are we satisfied with just attending church meetings? Or are we willing to spend our time during the week doing what we can to further the cause of Christ? Or are we "so busy" that we have to hold back our time? A well-placed visit or phone call can make a huge difference.

- Money – Are we donating to the Lord according to how He has blessed us? Or do we “buy things we don’t need with money we don’t have to impress people we don’t care about”, leaving little or nothing to give to the Lord? The widow who gave the two mites in the Bible was an example of someone who was all in.
- Gifts & Talents – Many of us have experienced success in careers or in things we set out to accomplish in life. Often, this takes creativity, ingenuity, intelligence, wisdom, sound judgment, persistence, etc. Can we put more of “ourselves” into our service to God, rather than holding it all back to be used only in personal pursuits?

When Jesus went to the cross, He went all in for us. Can we go all in for Him?



I Will Go and Do (1 Nephi 3)

After Lehi and his family had walked for three full days into the wilderness, Lehi informed his sons that the Lord wanted them to return to Jerusalem to retrieve a set of records referred to as the “plates of brass”. You can imagine the responses: Wait, what? Are you kidding me? Why couldn’t you have this dream three days ago?

Only Nephi received the directive in a suitable manner, responding, *“I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded”*.

Nephi’s statement has two parts to it – “Go” and “Do”. Both are often necessary to be successful in an undertaking.

One night, a man lost his contact lens and was looking around in the street for it. Someone came by and offered help, asking “Where did it fall out?” When the man responded “Across the street”, the helper asked “Well why are you looking here then?” The response: “Because the light’s better over here”.

In this illustration, the man is “doing the work” but for the sake of ease or convenience, he’s doing it in a place where he has no chance of success.

If I want to be a fruitful servant of God, I need to be willing to go where the work needs to be done. This may mean going to church instead of “serving God at home”. It may mean going to visit someone who is sick instead of just putting their name on a prayer list. It may even mean going to a location other than my home location if there is work to be accomplished there. It will often mean going out of my comfort zone, remembering that *“the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them”*.

Although it’s admirable to be willing to “go”, it’s important to not forget the “do” part.

I have to admit I tend to cringe when I hear someone describe himself as a servant of God by saying, “I go to church”. Going to church in and of itself doesn’t make someone a servant of God any more than going to an auto repair shop would make him an auto mechanic. Rather, it’s what the person does at church (and elsewhere) that defines his servanthood.

When going to church, do we:

- Praise God in testimony and song?
- Seek to be a blessing to someone else?
- Help a visitor to feel more connected to the church?
- Help the children to learn about God?
- Preach the inspired word of God (if a minister)?
- Pray along quietly with the ministry?
- Allow the Spirit of God to work through us?

There may be other things we can do at church besides the list above but the point is that going to church (or wherever God directs us) is just the first part. Doing what He wants us to do when we are there is what brings about the fruit.

“GO” + “DO” = A Fruitful Servant of God



No Excuses (1 Nephi 4)

Nephi and his brothers had tried multiple ways to obtain the brass plates from Laban. They tried asking for them and they tried trading their gold and silver for them. Both attempts failed miserably and ended up with Laban keeping all of their possessions and still not giving up the plates. After “trying their best”, it wouldn’t have been unreasonable for the brothers to return to their father and explain why they couldn’t obtain the plates. They certainly had a valid excuse. Laban had 50 armed men at his command – how could the four brothers go up against that?

However, Nephi knew there was no way he was returning to his father without the brass plates, especially after stating (in Chapter 3): *“the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them”*. Rather than believing the lie that he had no choice, Nephi chose to trust in God and wound up obtaining the plates on the third attempt.

Although we may not want to think of it this way – Excuses are lies we tell ourselves to avoid facing the fact that we are choosing the outcome. In the account above, the part about Laban having 50 armed men was true but the part about the brothers having no choice at that point was not true. If they would have departed without the plates, it would have been fully their choice to do so.

Here are some oft-used excuses regarding our service to God:

- I can’t afford to donate to the Church
- My boss makes me work on Sundays
- I don’t have time to visit the sick, widowed, etc.
- There’s nothing I can do to help the Church

Someone employing all of the above excuses is someone who doesn’t attend church, doesn’t donate and doesn’t do anything for the Church – and believes there is nothing they can do about it!

Recognizing that the “I can’t” part of excuses is generally untrue, we can reword all of the above statements to be more accurate as follows:

- I choose to spend all of my money on other things, leaving none for the Church

- My job is more important to me than attending church on Sunday
- The way I choose to spend my time leaves no time for visiting
- I choose to use my time/energy/creativity for pursuits/causes/activities other than the Church

The above are not necessarily criticisms. In some cases, the choices may be the right choices for us. The important thing is to recognize that they are our choices. This realization is very liberating and is the first step toward considering other choices that may well lead to different outcomes.

When confronted with a difficult choice, Nephi chose to trust in God. We can do the same!



Studying the Scriptures (1 Nephi 5)

When Nephi and his brothers returned to their father with the plates of brass, Lehi then had in his possession a valuable volume of scriptures. What do you think he did next?

- a) Looked for a good spot for them on his shelves
- b) Remarked how difficult they were to understand
- c) Told his wife that he would plan to start reading them next year
- d) Told Nephi what he thought was written in them
- e) Told Laman & Lemuel that the writings would show them how wrong they were
- f) None of the above

If Lehi were a contemporary Christian, he might have considered any of a through e but instead he *“took the records which were engraven upon the plates of brass, and he did search them from the beginning”*. He studied them! Right from the beginning! And what happened? He learned! And when he was done, *“he was filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy”*.

Think of how fortunate Lehi was to have been handed writings prepared by men of God who had experienced Him firsthand. Don't you wish you had access to the same types of writings? Wait a minute – you do! They live under covers that say “Holy Bible” and “Book of Mormon”.

We each have our favorite excuses as to why we can't study the scriptures. They're hard to understand. I'm not that interested in history. It takes too long. I'm too busy. We live in an age of instant gratification where reading anything longer than a text message is considered taxing (Congratulations for getting this far in this article!).

However valid any of our excuses may be, we can't just conclude that the Word of God is not for us. In order to be the best servant of God we can be, we need an understanding of His Word. The best way to obtain this is to make up your mind that you're going to devote some time to reading on a regular basis. Pray for strength, determination, understanding, etc. and then just do it! The Gospel News and Gospel Blog provide features that encourage reading of God's Word. Here are some examples:

- Gospel Blog runs a summer reading challenge every year that encourages you to read a portion of scripture in a specified period of time – use that as a springboard or design your own challenge
- Select a particular book, person or word to study

- Pair up with a reading buddy – you can keep each other accountable and have someone to talk to about what you’re reading

If you absolutely cannot read the scriptures on your own, there are some alternatives:

- Attend your branch scripture study, especially one that steps through books of the Bible or Book of Mormon
- During sermons, take notes regarding what scripture is used and the message that accompanies the scripture
- There are some scripture-based movies that are quite good but you do have to be careful about the interpretation put forth in some movies

Regardless of what approach you take, it’s important to have a goal of learning more about the Word of God. The enemy of our soul knows that God’s Word will lead us in the right direction so his strategy is to find a way to prevent us from reading it. Instead of playing into that strategy, let’s recognize what a valuable gift we have in the Word of God and take full personal advantage of the vast wisdom and knowledge contained therein.



Setting Priorities (1 Nephi 6)

In 1 Nephi Chapter 6, Nephi briefly describes the decision-making process he followed to decide what type of information to include in his own personal record, sometimes referred to as the “Small Plates of Nephi”. According to the chapter, Nephi considered the following options:

- The genealogy of his ancestors (his “family tree”)
- A full account of his father’s life and experiences
- General items of interest to any reader
- Spiritual accounts that would persuade people to come to God

He decided not to include his genealogy since it was in his father’s record, just making the simple note that they were descendants (“the seed”) of Joseph. His father’s life and experiences would certainly have been worthwhile to record but it would have filled the available space (remember, these were the small plates of Nephi). Likewise, he didn’t want to fill up the plates with general information but chose instead to use the limited space to record information that would help bring people to God.

The process that Nephi used to decide what to include in his record is referred to as “setting priorities”. Not to be confused with choosing between right and wrong, the setting of priorities needs to be employed when we have multiple acceptable options and some limitation (time, money, space) that prevents us from choosing all of the options. The word “priority” itself indicates that we are deciding what comes before (prior to) something else.

The most valuable resource we have (which clearly has a limit) is the time that encompasses our life. Deciding how to use this time is the most important setting of priorities we will ever do and will determine how much value our life on earth produces and how prepared we are for the life to come. As a result, seeking God’s direction is critical in deciding how to make best use of the time allotted to us.

The chart shown below is one I developed a few years ago for a seminar on priorities. The way to view it is that the activities higher in the chart have, in general, a higher priority. I say “in general” because there will always be times that, for example, a family event comes ahead of a church event or we have to work when we may have preferred to do something with our family, etc. There is nothing wrong with doing any of the things listed and all should have some time in our life devoted to them, just in the proper priority (note the columns that list possible consequences if the priority given each is too low or too high) and with a proper balance.

Activities	Potential Consequences	
	If Priority Too Low	If Priority Too High
Following God's Direction	Lose Soul, Suffer in Life	Not possible
Church	No Spiritual Growth Could Lose Soul	Family life could suffer
Family	Divorce No relationship with children	No time for church, helping others
Work	Lose job No money to do other things	No time for church, family
Leisure Activities	Burnout	No time for more important activities

Even if we don't need an actual chart to keep our priorities straight, we should have some sense of priorities in our life. Our time is limited and if we want to use that time to its best advantage, we must make sure the things most important to us are being accomplished. If Nephi had tried to put too much information on the small plates, he would have run out of space before the most important information was recorded. If we spend too much time on low priority activities, we may run out of time before the most important things are done.



When the Lord Conducts the Plan (1 Nephi 7)

As Lehi prepared to continue the journey with his family deeper into the wilderness, the Lord spoke to Him and said it would not do for his family to go alone. It was God's intention that this family would begin a new nation in a new land and how could they do that if none of the sons had wives to bear children? So, Lehi was instructed to send his sons back to Jerusalem again to bring a specific family, the family of a man named Ishmael, with them into the wilderness.

On the surface, this plan would seem to have a low likelihood of success. Specifically:

- What if Ishmael and his family didn't want to leave their home and travel into the wilderness with Lehi's family? It would seem like a longshot that they would agree to go and no "Plan B" was offered (perhaps another family) in case Ishmael's family didn't want to go.
- What if the sons of Lehi and/or the daughters of Ishmael didn't want to marry each other? Have you ever tried to play matchmaker (or had it done to you)? If so, you know how low the chance of success is. The odds of all four sons from one family connecting with four daughters of another family were astronomical.

So, how did the plan work out?

- *And it came to pass that the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael, and also his household, insomuch that they took their journey with us down into the wilderness to the tent of our father. (1 Nephi 7:5)*
- Not only did the four sons of Nephi find wives among the daughters of Ishmael, but the fifth daughter of Ismael wound up marrying Zoram, the former servant of Laban who was traveling with Lehi's family. The Lord provided for each and every one!

Now, I'm not saying that we should take wild longshots in our lives and expect the Lord to make them succeed. Rather, I'm saying that if we are sure that the Lord is directing us to do something, we should feel secure in proceeding with the plan, even if human logic, common sense or even our own desires or preferences might dictate otherwise.

When the Lord conducts the plan, we can be confident of success. The plan that is not in concert with the will of God is the plan that is truly high risk.

The first verse of a hymn in our Saints Hymnal sums up the message of this blog article:

#74 – Except the Lord Conduct the Plan

Except the Lord conduct the plan
The best concerted schemes are vain
And never can succeed, And never can succeed
We spend our wretched strength for naught
But if our works in Thee are wrought
They shall be blest indeed, They shall be blest indeed



The Answers Are In There (1 Nephi 8)

When I was a young person, my parents used to take me to MBA every week (Parents: Do you still do that?). One week, our MBA class read 1 Nephi Chapter 8 in which Lehi’s wonderful dream is recorded. After reading through the imagery of a dark and dreary waste, a tree with desirable fruit, a straight and narrow path with a long rod of iron next to it, etc., our MBA teacher gave us an assignment to come back the next week ready to describe what each element of the dream represented.

At the end of the meeting, I asked my friends, “How are we supposed to figure out what each part of this dream means?” One of the older kids spoke up and said, “Oh, just look a few chapters later and all of the answers are in there”. Really? Was I supposed to believe that The Book of Mormon was like my high school algebra book with the answers to the odd-numbered questions in the back of the book? (Of course, my algebra teacher assigned the even-numbered questions for homework).

Well, imagine my surprise when I read Chapters 11 and 12 and discovered that the answers really were in there:

Element of Dream	Represents	Reference
Tree with desirable fruit	The Love of God	1 Nephi 11:25
Rod of Iron	The Word of God	1 Nephi 11:25
Great and Spacious Building	Pride of the World	1 Nephi 11:36
River of Filthy Water	Depths of Hell	1 Nephi 12:16
Mists of Darkness	Temptations of the devil	1 Nephi 12:17

In life, we are faced with many questions, some of a spiritual nature and some of a temporal nature. Regardless of the type of question, God has the answer and it can usually be found in His word. Here are just a few examples:

Question	Where Answer Can Be Found
What happens to a soul after death?	Alma Chapter 40
What should I do when I’m sick?	James 5:14-15
Should little children be baptized?	Moroni Chapter 8
How can I donate when I struggle to pay my bills?	Malachi 3:10
Who should I go to with my questions and concerns?	Alma 37:37

In Lehi's dream, the Word of God was represented by the rod of iron that people held onto so they could stay on the straight and narrow path that led to the tree of life. The symbolism is obvious as God's Word keeps us on the right path in life that leads to the kingdom of God. If we have questions along the way, open the books – the answers are in there!



God Knows What Lies Ahead (1 Nephi 9)

In 1 Nephi Chapter 9, Nephi reflects on the commandment he received from God to keep two sets of records, known as the “Large Plates of Nephi” and the “Small Plates of Nephi”. The Large Plates contained the full history of the people while the Small Plates were to be devoted to spiritual accounts that would persuade people to come to God.

Although Nephi understood the commandment, he didn’t really understand God’s reasoning. Why two sets of records covering the same period of time? Couldn’t all the information just be put in one place? Finally, acknowledging that “*the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning*”, Nephi decided to just trust that God had some wise purpose and do what He commanded. The same “Why?” probably crossed his mind on multiple occasions when he had to engrave the same account twice but he dutifully continued to do that for the remainder of his life and instructed those who followed him as the record keeper to do the same.

So, what happened? Fast-forward 2400 years:

- Joseph Smith begins translating the “Large Plates” portion of the abridged record with Martin Harris as his scribe
- After 116 pages are complete, Martin Harris brings the completed pages home to show his wife and the pages are lost, never to be re-translated
- When the translation continues, Joseph Smith begins with the “Small Plates” portion of the record which covers the exact same time period of the pages that were lost – as a result, there are no gaps in the Book of Mormon account!

Do we find ourselves questioning or second-guessing God when He gives us direction?

- Why should I relocate? I can serve God where I am now.
- Why should I talk to that person about the church? He would never be interested.
- Why should I take this class in school? I don’t need it to graduate.
- Why should I look for a new job? I make good money where I work now.

Assuming that God is actually directing us to do one of the above or anything else, it is in our best interest to proceed because God know what lies ahead. He sees the big picture and knows how the various events will play out such that His desired end is accomplished. If we resist God’s direction in even a small matter, we may be frustrating the plan of God and changing future events in a way that is contrary to the will of God.

If Nephi had done what seemingly made sense by keeping all of the records in one place, our current Book of Mormon would be an incomplete record. Instead, we have a wonderful volume (including the First Book of Nephi through the Book of Omni) because Nephi followed God's direction, understanding that God knows what lies ahead.



It's My Desire (1 Nephi 10)

DESIRE – A strong feeling of wanting to have something that inspires actions to be taken to obtain the goal

After hearing his father Lehi's wonderful vision (1 Nephi Chapter 8) and his other prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah and the future of the House of Israel and the Gentiles (as summarized in Chapter 10), Nephi "*was desirous also that [he] might see, and hear, and know of these things*". Nephi's desire for this was so strong that he was caught up by the Spirit of the Lord and was shown all of this and more (as recorded in Chapters 11-14).

How strong is our desire for the things of God?

- Do we have a desire to know as much as we can about God, studying the scriptures to increase our knowledge? Or are we satisfied with just knowing the basics (reserving our expertise for subjects not related to God)?
- Do we have a desire to have spiritual experiences and manifestations of spiritual gifts? Are we willing to fast and pray for these things? Or have we concluded that these are just for other people (or even unnecessary)?
- Do we have a desire to be in church and with the brothers and sisters as often as possible? Most people have this desire when they are first baptized – has the desire waned? Has attending church become more of a duty/obligation rather than something we really desire?
- Do we have a desire to live righteously, leading a life that is pleasing to God? Are we willing to put aside things that lead away from God? Or do we try to determine how much we can "get away with" and still inherit eternal life?
- Do we have a desire to see others come to Christ? Are we willing to share our testimony? Are we willing to financially support the missionary work of the Church? Or are we satisfied just saving our own souls?

I'm sure most of us want all of the things on the above list (knowledge, experiences, fellowship, righteousness, outreach). The question is – Are we willing to take the actions necessary to obtain them? This is the difference between "want" and "desire".

It is very difficult to get people to do things they don't really want to do. We can remind people, pester them, make rules and invent penalties but if the desire isn't there, the actions will not follow.

So, when it comes to the things of God – Let's measure our desire by whether we are willing to take the associated actions. If the actions are lacking, let's pray for God to increase our desire and then the actions will follow.

Jesus took the necessary action to purchase our salvation, fulfilling the desire of God. Hopefully, each of us can take the actions that allow us to accurately say, "It's my desire to live for Jesus".



The Love of God (1 Nephi 11)

If you've ever read about or learned about Lehi's dream, you probably know that the tree in the dream represents "**The Love of God**" (as Nephi is told in 1 Nephi 11:22). However, if you read the description of what Nephi is shown as the meaning of the tree, you'll see that he is shown the virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus (verses 15-20) as well as the Lord Himself going forth among the people (verse 24). Putting these together, we see that the love of God has been demonstrated to mankind by Jesus coming into the world and making a way for each of us to inherit eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Jesus Himself said the same thing: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Why is it important to proclaim the coming of Christ as the demonstration of the Love of God? Because it's the one gift that is provided equally to all people! Although God gives other gifts "severally as He will" and we are so grateful to Him for all that He provides, let's be careful about using these additional blessings as an indication of how much God loves us.

For example, I am very thankful for all of the following in my life:

- My wife who has been a great blessing to me
- My daughters who have brought great joy to my life
- My career that has provided for our natural needs
- My health which has been excellent

Although I can't begin to thank God enough for the above, if I say that these show how much God loves me, what does that say to someone who never married or is divorced or widowed or couldn't have children or has struggled financially or suffers with health problems? Does God love them less?

Perhaps these other people have other blessings in their lives that I don't. Or perhaps not. It doesn't matter from the perspective of God's love for us since He has given each of us the greatest gift of all – the gift of His son. This demonstrates His great love for each of us. The rest is a bonus.

The value of the gift of salvation so vastly exceeds anything else that we can receive in this life that Jesus put it this way: "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Matthew 16:26).

So, the next time somebody tries to undercut your faith with a statement that goes something like, “If God really loved you, why wouldn’t He give you this?”, you can respond with “If God really loved me, He would have sent His son to purchase my salvation – and He did exactly that!”



Spoiler Alert! (1 Nephi 12)

Spoiler Alert! Annalise was shot by Wes.

Spoiler Alert! CeCe is "A".

Spoiler Alert! Glenn wasn't the one attacked by the zombies.

If you're a fan of any of the TV shows associated with the above, you'll recognize these tidbits of information that would have spoiled the ending of a segment of the show had they been revealed to you prior to arriving at that particular ending. When these bits of information are included in articles that appear online especially, they are generally preceded with the warning of "Spoiler Alert!" so that you know that if you continue reading, you may read something that will give away the ending.

A "Spoiler Alert!" should be issued in 1 Nephi Chapter 12 as the ending of The Book of Mormon is revealed to Nephi (and thus to you). Nephi is shown the future of his descendants and the descendants of his brothers (Laman and Lemuel). He sees that the two groups of people will fight a war and his own descendants will be killed off by the descendants of his brothers. After that war, he sees that the surviving people dwindle in unbelief and become a people "*full of idleness and all manner of abominations*" (verse 23). This is how the book ends, with Moroni (the last living Nephite) burying the records so the Lamanites do not destroy them.

There are times when knowing the ending is a help rather than a spoiler. For example, if you are an avid sports fan, you may go through a roller coaster of emotions watching your team play. Good plays will bring elation but setbacks will cause despair. You may go through considerable tension and anxiety wondering if your team will win. However, if you are watching a recording of the game (and you know that your team has won), none of the despair, anxiety or tension will surface. You know that your team wins in the end so you can just enjoy the game.

God has let us know the ending of the story in the scriptures:

Spoiler Alert! Jesus will lead the armies of heaven to victory against the powers of evil. (Revelation 19:11-20)

Spoiler Alert! The devil will be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. (Revelation 19:20)

Spoiler Alert! If your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you will inherit eternal life. (Revelation 20:12-15)

Knowing the ending of the story is a great benefit and helps us to get past the despair, anxiety and tension that are a part of life. We can experience joy even when things go wrong in life if we can stay focused on the ending of the story:

Spoiler Alert! In the end, WE WIN!



God Bless America (1 Nephi 13)

It was early March 1776. The British General decided to attack the Americans at night. His troops were all ready. But the battle never happened. God had intervened! During the previous day the weather had been very pleasant; it was even abnormally warm. But by nightfall a storm raged. Hail mixed with snow and sleet and the wind blew with almost hurricane force. Windows were smashed and fences were blown over. One American lieutenant called it the worst storm that he was ever exposed to. The next morning the wind continued to blow and the snow and sleet changed over to a driving rain. The British general had no choice. He could not fight under those conditions. So instead, the entire British army evacuated the city of Boston without a fight. If it wasn't for that blizzard, American history could have been very different.

The above is one of many examples of God's intervention that changed the course of American history. When God intervenes in anything on earth, He always has a reason to do so. Why would God intervene on behalf of America? The Book of Mormon tells us that God considers America a "land of promise". In 1 Nephi Chapter 13, various events in American history are revealed to Nephi, specifically:

- The voyage of Christopher Columbus (verse 12)
- The arrival of the Pilgrims (verses 13-14)
- The persecution of the Native Americans (verse 14)
- The Revolutionary War (verses 17-19)

Since God foretold these events, it should be no surprise that He would be part of them coming to pass. Here's a quote from someone involved with one of the events:

"It was the Lord who put into my mind...the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me." – Christopher Columbus

The Pilgrims reportedly left England to seek religious freedom. The persecution of the Native Americans (as mentioned many times in The Book of Mormon) was a result of the Lamanite people disobeying God. The account at the beginning of this article was from a history of the Revolutionary War and there are other similar accounts. God has been very involved in American history!

What is our role in American history? A key part of our beliefs is that we as The Church of Jesus Christ will play a key role in the future of the native people of this land. The accomplishments for which God uses us may well be written in an American history book someday.

Even if we're not at the forefront of fulfilling prophecy, hopefully "history" will recall us as someone who:

- Followed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our lives (like Columbus)
- Stood up for our beliefs (like the Pilgrims)
- Was obedient to the will and word of God (unlike the Lamanites)
- Recognized the intervention of God in our lives (like those who fought the American Revolution)

If someone was writing the history of our lives, what would they be writing today?



Get Off the Fence (1 Nephi 14)

There are many times in life when we are faced with a difficult choice and we put off making that choice as long as possible. We stay “on the fence” as long as we can, perhaps hoping that something will happen to make the choice a little easier. While this is not necessarily a bad strategy, the time generally comes when you either have to make the choice or else it will be made for you.

For example, when you eat at a restaurant, you’re presented with a menu that offers lots of choices of things to eat. Although the choice may be difficult, you eventually have to select something. What would happen if you stayed “on the fence” and refused to make a choice? Either you would sit there with nothing while everybody else eats or someone else would make the choice for you (probably spinach or something equally distasteful).

As Nephi’s vision comes to an end in 1 Nephi Chapter 14, he is shown things from the future. Specifically, he sees that there are *“two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations”* (1 Nephi 14:10).

Since there are so many churches in existence today, it may seem hard to believe that there could ever be only two. However, the prophecy is actually telling us that in the end, there will only be two choices – and only one of those choices will actually be a church. Each person will have to choose to either belong to the church of the Lamb of God (aka “The Church of Jesus Christ”) or be grouped with everybody else, which will include a wide range of people with a wide range of beliefs, none of which are based on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In truth, the same two choices exist today. Each of us has the opportunity to either choose to follow the gospel of Jesus Christ or to choose a different way. The specific “different way” we choose is immaterial since they all end up at the same destination. And what happens if we stay “on the fence”? Well, if we die without making a choice, then the choice is made for us – and it won’t be a choice we’ll be happy with.

At the time of Joshua, many of the Israelites were struggling with choosing between the many “gods” that were available at the time as compared to the true God of Israel. Finally, Joshua pushed them to “get off the fence” with his famous challenge:

“Choose you this day whom ye will serve...”

***but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”
(Joshua 24:15)***



The Fullness of the Gospel (1 Nephi 15)

While Nephi was being caught up to a high mountain to see his wonderful vision (as recorded in 1 Nephi Chapters 11-14), his brothers were in their tent arguing about their father Lehi's dream and what he had said to them regarding future events. Nephi walks in on this argument at the beginning of Chapter 15 and tries to explain to them the meaning of some of the things that Lehi had said.

Among other subjects, Nephi explained the meaning of the metaphor that had been used of an olive tree and branches being grafted into it. He explained that the olive tree represented the "House of Israel" (all the people who are descendants of Jacob/Israel from the Bible) and that the branches being grafted in represented the "Gentiles" (everybody else). Specifically, the metaphor referred to a time when the "fullness of the gospel" would come to the Gentiles who would in turn bring it to the House of Israel. We are living in the period of time that was being described!

What is the "fullness of the Gospel"? It is the total compilation of information made available to us in the Bible and the Book of Mormon (the "two sticks" that are to be one in our hand as prophesied in Ezekiel 37:19). We are often asked whether the information in the Bible is sufficient for salvation. To the extent that one can intuit from the Bible the need for faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost and enduring to the end, it can be sufficient for salvation. However, consider just some of what is added by the Book of Mormon:

- A second "witness" of Jesus Christ as the savior of the world
- Specific instructions regarding baptism (3 Nephi 11)
- Specific instructions regarding not baptizing little children (Moroni 8)
- Detailed description of what happens to the soul after death (Alma 40)
- A history of the natives of the Americas that identifies them as part of the House of Israel

None of the above appears in the Bible, making that volume appear somewhat incomplete when standing alone as compared to the fullness of the Gospel represented by both books together!

For example, many Christian denominations today believe in baptism but perform it in many different ways. Why? Because the only information available to them is the basic baptism references in the Bible which leave considerable room for interpretation. Since The Church of Jesus Christ has access to the full description of baptism (from the fullness of the Gospel), our

baptisms feel like they could have been performed in the days of Christ and His disciples (as testified to by those who observe them – even people who are not members of our church!).

In order to fulfil the prophecy referenced above, The Church of Jesus Christ today is taking action to present the fullness of the Gospel to the “Native Americans”, the descendants of the people referenced in the Book of Mormon, so they can understand that they are part of the House of Israel and that God has a plan for them. The “Native American Outreach Committee” (NAOC) coordinates this effort for the Church.

It’s a great blessing to be living the fullness of the Gospel today. Take advantage of the privilege and the information that is available to us and share it with others so they can benefit also from the fullness of the Gospel!



How to Use a GPS (1 Nephi 16)

A “Global Positioning System” receiver (GPS) is a very useful device that has gained widespread use over the past 10 years or so. The purpose of the GPS is simple – it helps you get to where you want to go. Using a GPS is quite easy:

- Turn on the device
- Tell it where you want to go
- Follow the instructions it gives you

Although the device is easy to use, there are a few things you need to do to ensure a successful trip:

- You need to be able to articulate where you want to go
- You need to be able to hear the directions (turn down loud music, hush loud family members)
- You need to have faith in the device (it can’t help you if you don’t follow its directions)

In 1 Nephi Chapter 16, Lehi discovers a “ball of curious workmanship” (later identified as the “Liahona”) that operates very similar to a GPS:

- It had two spindles, one of which pointed the way that they should go in the wilderness
- The spindles worked according to the “faith and diligence and heed” which was given to them
- Words appeared on it which gave additional understanding concerning the ways of the Lord

Since it would be over 2500 years until the GPS satellites would be launched, clearly this Liahona device was operated by God. In this and subsequent chapters, the people discovered that as long as they were seeking to follow God and exhibiting faith, the device showed them the way to go. When their faith and service were lacking, the device failed to operate.

Today, God offers each of us our own spiritual GPS – it’s called the Holy Ghost. How do you use it?

- You need to “turn it on”. How? By getting baptized and having the ministry pray for you afterward. You then receive the Holy Ghost.
- You need to tell it where you want to go. Here’s where it can be a little tricky. The temptation is to actually try to tell it where you want to go. The correct answer is to tell the Holy Ghost you want to go where God wants you to go.

- You need to be able to hear the directions. When you pray for direction, listen for the response. You may hear it as a voice, it may come as a thought or it may come as a feeling. It may come immediately or it may take some time until the response comes. If you're having a hard time hearing the response, turn down some of the distractions in your life so you can focus on your communication with God.
- You need to have sufficient faith to follow God's direction. Just like when you're driving in a totally unfamiliar area and you have to trust the GPS to direct you, you need to trust God to lead you through areas of your life where you have no idea what lies ahead but you just know where you want to end up (exactly where God wants you to be!).

Hopefully this little "operator's manual" will help you to get the most out of your spiritual GPS. The directions for this GPS come from a lot higher up than the GPS satellites – imagine how much better the view of the big picture is from up there!



The Touch of the Master's Hand (1 Nephi 17)

In 1 Nephi Chapter 17, the journey of Lehi's family brings them to the border of the Arabian Sea (which they called Irreantum, meaning "many waters"). The next part of their journey would be by water, eventually crossing the ocean and making their way to the land of the Americas. However, in order to do that, they would need a ship.

None of the party was experienced at shipbuilding but the Lord summoned Nephi onto a mountain and told Him, *"Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters"* (verse 8).

Not surprisingly, when Nephi's brothers heard the plan for building the ship, they were not exactly supportive:

- They called him a fool
- They didn't believe he could do it
- They refused to help
- When he struggled, they were glad

However, by the end of the chapter, the brothers were convinced that the Lord was with Nephi in this venture. The Lord even told Nephi to reach out his hand and "shock them" in verse 53 to convince them of His power.

Why was Nephi able to build a ship without any prior experience? Because the Lord used him as an instrument to perform His work. Can the Lord use us as an instrument in His hand today to do His work? Absolutely!

Regardless of what type of sinful life we once led, when the Lord touched our hearts and called us into His kingdom, we were transformed into servants of God. Those who knew us before may not believe that the change is real. They may be waiting for us to slip back into our old ways. Let's not let those who are unsupportive bring us down! Instead:

- Recognize the value of a soul (such as yours) that has been called into God's kingdom
- Follow the prompting of the Holy Ghost and live a Christ-like life
- Seek to do work for the Lord to help build up the kingdom of God – if He could use Nephi to build a ship, just imagine what He can use you to do!

If we seek to do the above, the nay-sayers in our lives just may be “shocked” at the results!

There is a famous poem that vividly describes the value that is added to the life of a person who is touched by the Lord. It goes like this:

The Touch of the Master’s Hand

by Myra “Brooks” Welch

’Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin, but held it up with a smile;
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried, "Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar"; then two!" "Only two? Two dollars, and who'll make it three?
Three dollars, once; three dollars twice; going for three..." But no,
From the room, far back, a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow;
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet as caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low,
Said; "What am I bid for the old violin?" And he held it up with the bow.
A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two? Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice, and going and gone," said he.
The people cheered, but some of them cried, "We do not quite understand
What changed its worth." Swift came the reply: "The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune, and battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin,
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine; a game - and he travels on.
"He is going" once, and "going twice, He's going and almost gone."
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.



Don't Tell Me What to Do (1 Nephi 18)

The Lord had directed Lehi's family to the border of the Arabian Sea and had worked through Nephi to build a ship that would take the family across the many waters to the land of the Americas. In 1 Nephi Chapter 18, the family boards the ship and begins the voyage.

One day during the trip, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael and their wives began to have sort of a party with singing and dancing. Perhaps if the party had been limited to this, it wouldn't have been a problem but the account states that they did *"speak with much rudeness, yea, even that they did forget by what power they had been brought thither; yea, they were lifted up unto exceeding rudeness"* (Verse 9).

As Nephi witnessed this "exceeding rudeness", he feared that it would be offensive to the Lord who was after all in charge of this trip, having built the ship and provided the compass to direct them across the waters. So, Nephi approached the group and suggested that they might want to be mindful of their behavior, lest they offend God and put the entire trip at risk. The brothers of course reacted with anger, saying *"We will not that our younger brother shall be a ruler over us"* (Verse 10). In other words – "Don't tell us what to do!"

The "Don't Tell Me What to Do" syndrome is one that affects each of us from very early in life. It can be directed at parents, siblings, friends, co-workers, etc. It's a reason that many people are turned off by religion as they see it as something just set up to tell them what they can and can't do. Some of the factors that drive this syndrome are:

- Pride (I don't want anyone to think I don't know what to do)
- Strong Will (I want what I want when I want it)
- Distrust of Motives (I don't believe that what I'm being told is necessarily what's best for me)

We need to be careful not to allow the above factors to interfere with receiving valuable direction from God. First and foremost, be assured that God can be trusted! Here are a couple of passages that come to mind:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good (Alma 37:37)

If we truly trust God, we should be able to put our will second to His. As an example, imagine if you retained an attorney to represent you in a legal situation. When the attorney instructs you on a course of action, you're not going to say "Don't tell me what to do" but will follow the instructions to the letter. That's because you're trusting that the attorney has your best interests at heart (that's what you're paying for). If you can trust your attorney, you can surely trust God to have your best interests at heart!

Then there's pride. Considering that there are so many people who say they don't need God or anyone else to tell them what to do, there are surely many messed up lives that are a direct result of decisions made by people who "know what to do". A better example to follow is that of one of the wisest men who ever lived (King Solomon) whose words (from 1 Kings 3:7) are part of the chorus of Songs of Zion hymn #44:

*Not knowing how to go out or come in Lord.
Like a child, never sure of the way.
Not often having the answers before me,
But only trusting my Father each day.*

As a servant of God, we have a great source of direction available to us. Our daily prayer should be, "Lord, tell me what to do!!"



Liken the Scriptures (1 Nephi 19)

After arriving at the promised land of the Americas, Nephi spent considerable time with the various records in his possession. It was at this time that he prepared the plates on which he would record his own family's record. He also read from the records of the prophets that were recorded on the plates of brass.

Nephi also spent time teaching his brothers from the writings of the prophets and even read to them from these writings. His favorite prophet to read from was the prophet Isaiah. He said that he chose Isaiah to read from because his writings were especially applicable to his family who were part of the House of Israel. The way he put it was that they could "liken the scriptures" to themselves.

We will gain the most from reading the Bible and Book of Mormon if we "liken the scriptures" to ourselves. The accounts contained in these books are not meant to be just interesting stories but opportunities to learn from what the people went through and how they handled different situations (rightly or wrongly). For example:

- When we read the story of David and Goliath, is it just a chance to root for a virtuous boy to triumph over the forces of evil (like Harry Potter)? Or can we learn how to face our own Goliaths in life, going up against seemingly insurmountable opposition by exercising our faith and courage and standing up for our belief in God?
- Is the story of Noah and the ark an adventure story on the water (like Titanic)? Or can we liken ourselves to Noah, being ridiculed by his neighbors but remaining steadfast and obedient to God?
- Is Samson the Bible's version of a superhero with a secret weakness (like Superman)? Or can we learn that even the strongest of us can fall if we don't follow God's direction in our lives?
- The story of Nephi and his brothers is not meant to be some type of family drama or reality show. As the various blog articles have illustrated, their story can teach us about setting priorities, being "all in" for God, not making excuses, etc.

Then there's the story of Jesus. There are many people who interacted with Jesus who we can liken ourselves to. One of those is Barabbas. Really? A murderer? How can we liken ourselves to him?

What I have learned from Barabbas comes from thinking about how he must have felt as he contemplated being punished for his wrongdoing – and then having Jesus take his punishment for him, thereby setting him free! We have each experienced something similar, being set free from a penalty (far greater than Barabbas was facing) for which we are equally deserving by the same Jesus who was equally undeserving of the punishment He endured. I don't know that Barabbas showed any appreciation for what Jesus did for him but hopefully we are expressing our appreciation for what Jesus did for us by living our lives for the Lord.

So, as you read the scriptural accounts, liken them to yourself. If you're called upon to preach or teach from these accounts, don't just tell the story – liken them to the congregation or class so each can benefit from the lessons contained therein. To the extent that more personal benefit can be derived from the various scriptural accounts, the more that people will be likin' the scriptures!



Open Your Ears (1 Nephi 20)

At the end of Chapter 19, Nephi mentioned that he was reading the words of Isaiah to his brothers. Chapters 20 and 21 of 1 Nephi represent two of the chapters that Nephi read to them. Although not a word for word match, these two chapters line up closely with Isaiah Chapters 48 and 49.

In Chapter 20 (Isaiah Chapter 48), the prophet scolds the House of Israel for not heeding what God was telling them, especially about the coming of Christ. Although God shared this knowledge on multiple occasions, it somehow didn't penetrate for Israel. The way the prophet worded it was: *"Yea, and thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time thine ear was not opened"* (Verse 8). He described them as having their ears closed and the admonishment in the rest of the chapter is "Open Your Ears!"

Once upon a time, a man was at a doctor's office and was lamenting that his wife was losing her hearing but refused to have her ears checked. "What can I do to get her to go to the doctor?" the man asked. The doctor suggested this: "When you get home, call to your wife from the front door – 'What's for dinner'? When she doesn't answer, go one room closer and do it again. Keep doing that until she gets the point."

The man followed the doctor's instructions. He called "What's for dinner?" from the front door and heard no response. He called again from the family room – still heard no response. He repeated it from the kitchen door and finally went right next to his wife and said, "What's for dinner"? His wife turned to him and said, "For the fourth time, we're having pasta tonight"!

In the story above, it was the man who was losing his hearing. Because he was not hearing his wife's response, he assumed incorrectly that she was not hearing what he was saying.

Sometimes, we try to make God hard of hearing. "God is not hearing my prayer", we may say. In reality, God hears every prayer. It may well be that our ears are not open to "hear" God's response. God speaks to different people in different ways – some may hear an audible voice, some may have a new thought enter their mind, others may receive His message from the scriptures or even from other people. It's important that you know how God speaks to you (whether through one of the ways listed or some other way). When you do, you will recognize His voice when you have your spiritual ears open.

Why might we may have our ears closed to what God is saying to us? Sometimes it's because we're distracted by the cares of life or perhaps we're unwilling to wait for God's response or

perhaps we're in a sinful condition. However, the most frequent reason why our ears are closed is that we are looking for a different response than what God is giving and are therefore unwilling to hear anything different than that. This is why Israel missed Christ because they were looking for a different type of Messiah than what God said would be coming.

So, when we communicate with God, let's remember to not only talk to Him but to also keep our ears open for his response. The more we try to recognize His voice and not put words in His mouth and wait until He is ready to respond, the more God will speak to us. Just as any of us prefers to speak to someone who actually listens to us, likewise God prefers to speak to us if our ears are open.

#304 in the Saints Hymnal (verse 2)

Open my ears that I may hear
Voices of truth thou sendest clear
And while the wavenotes fall on my ear
Everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee
Ready my God thy will to see
Open my ears, illumine me
Spirit divine!



Zion – Israel’s Gathering Place (1 Nephi 21)

1 Nephi Chapter 21 includes the first descriptions in the Book of Mormon of a place and time known as “Zion”. Although there is much that can be written about Zion (and perhaps will be in future blog articles), this particular article will focus on Zion as Israel’s gathering place (as described in Chapter 21).

Scattering of Israel

The story of Zion begins with the descendants of Jacob (aka Israel), also known as the “House of Israel”. The House of Israel were God’s “chosen people” but due to their unbelief (especially in Christ), they found themselves scattered throughout the world. Even today, we only know of two of the twelve “tribes” of Israel (Judah and Joseph); the whereabouts of the other ten are still unknown.

The first verse of this chapter indicates that the prophecies presented are directed to the scattered people of Israel: *“Hearken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out, because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel.”*

Gathering of Israel

A time has been set by God when all of the scattered tribes of Israel will be gathered together again. This period of time (still in the future) is referred to as the “Peaceful Reign”. The designated gathering place will be a place called Zion. This gathering place will be somewhere in the Americas and the principle city will be called “New Jerusalem” (see 3 Nephi 20-21 and Ether 13).

This chapter begins to describe this much-awaited gathering: *“O house of Israel, behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west...Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established; and break forth into singing”* (Verses 12-13). What a joyful time this will be as Israel is reunited!

Role of the Gentiles

Perhaps those of us who are not part of the House of Israel may wonder why we should be excited about this gathering of Israel. Well, not only are we invited but we get to be the escorts! As God says to Israel in this chapter: *“Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my*

standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders” (Verse 22).

Even as you read this, there are brothers and sisters from The Church of Jesus Christ in various cities throughout the Americas, inviting people from the House of Israel (specifically the descendants/Seed of Joseph) to this great gathering. Perhaps you too may one day have the opportunity to participate in this effort to “gather them in” and help usher in the period of peace in the place we sing about known as Zion!

Sing Along!

Verse 2 and Chorus of #100 in the Songs of Zion

Long years of silence, born of distress,
Too full of sorrows to ever express;
But in pretty Zion their voices will ring,
Won't it be something to hear Israel sing!

Gather her babies, all her young men,
All her fair daughters, go gather them in;
Raise from the dust and the tears where they bow;
Won't it be something to see Israel smile!

Chorus of #6 in the Saints Hymnal

We are longing for the gathering
That will be forever blest;
We shall gather in Mount Zion,
Where we'll sing redeeming grace.



A Marvelous Work (1 Nephi 22)

MARVELOUS (adjective)

- Extraordinary
- Awesome
- Causing great wonder
- Extremely good or pleasing

In 1 Nephi Chapter 22, Nephi tells his brothers:

8. *And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.*
9. *And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*

What is this work that Nephi refers to as marvelous (extraordinary, awesome, etc.) that will be of great worth (extremely good or pleasing) to everyone (Gentiles, Seed of Joseph, all of the House of Israel)?

Consider the plight of Moroni in the year 420 A.D. As if in a spy movie, Moroni was carrying vital information that needed to get into the proper hands. The enemy was hunting him down. All of his allies were dead. If the records he carried fell into the hands of the enemy, the information would be destroyed and all would be lost. What to do?

Our awesome God took over at that point (as He can do for any of us when we don't know where to turn or what to do). He instructed Moroni to seal the records in a box and bury them at a specific location (Hill Cumorah). He preserved the box for 1400 years (about a day and a half in God's time). In 1827, it was delivered to Joseph Smith (a Gentile) who was used for the next part of the work – translating and publishing the records as the Book of Mormon.

Hopefully, we can appreciate how marvelous of a work this was to put the records of the Seed of Joseph into our hands. They could have easily been destroyed or lost at any time but they were preserved until an era of time when the information could be easily reproduced and distributed. As of today, the information is so widespread, it can never be lost. How awesome is our God?

Earlier articles have described the value of the Book of Mormon but to summarize very briefly, it contains:

- The “fullness of the Gospel” (when used as one with the Bible)
- A history of the Seed of Joseph
- Prophecies regarding the gathering of the House of Israel
- A description of what the role of the Gentiles will be relative to Israel

The above information is clearly of great worth to the Gentiles, the Seed of Joseph and the entire House of Israel. It’s a marvelous book that was the result of a marvelous work to bring it to us. We serve a marvelous God.