

The Book of Mormon:  
The Keystone of Our Testimony; Our Personal Iron Rod;  
Our Personal Urim and Thummim

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Introduction

On Sunday morning April 2, 2017, President of the Church, Thomas S. Monson, delivered what would prove to be his final general conference address. His health only permitted him to talk for three and a half minutes. Of all that he could have said, he chose to use that time to invite the members of the church to “prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day” (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2017/04/the-power-of-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>).

On Saturday April 7, 2018, President Monson’s successor, President Russell M. Nelson, was sustained in solemn assembly. The next day, in his Sunday morning session address, President Nelson, again encouraged church members to “daily [feast] on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon” (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2018/04/revelation-for-the-church-revelation-for-our-lives?lang=eng>).

Why does the Lord through His prophet invite us and why do we heed the prophet’s invitation to read and study the Book of Mormon on a daily basis? Many of us have read the book scores of times. We know the storylines of the book. We are familiar with the doctrines taught in it. We read from the pages of the Book of Mormon on a daily basis because we need the spiritual power that becomes available to us as we do so.

The Keystone of Our Testimony

As we read the truths recorded in the Book of Mormon, the testator, the Holy Ghost attests to the truth of the things we are reading. In the words of Moroni, the Holy Ghost “manifests the truth of it unto [us].” (Moroni 10:4) This testimony of the Holy Ghost to us provides the basis for us to be able to testify unto others that the book is true. And when we share our witness of the truth of the Book of Mormon, the Holy Ghost ratifies that witness and our testimony is strengthened in the process.

When I lived in Glendale, California, my stake president was Brother Tad Callister. Now, Sunday School general president, Brother Callister in his October 2017 general conference address, said, “The Book of Mormon is not only the keystone of our religion, but it can also become the keystone of our testimonies so that when trials or unanswered questions confront us, it can hold our testimonies securely in place. This book is the one weight on the scales of truth that exceeds the combined weight of all the critics’ arguments. Why? Because if it is true, then Joseph Smith was a prophet and this is the restored Church of Jesus Christ, regardless of any ... arguments to the contrary.” (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2017/10/gods-compelling-witness-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>)

The core testimony we receive as we study the Book of Mormon is a testimony of divinity of Him of whom the Book of Mormon is another testament, the Lord Jesus Christ. It teaches in plain and precious ways, His premortal, mortal, and post-mortal roles as our Savior, our Redeemer, and our eternal judge. It teaches that He is the God of all the earth and that He will minister all individuals who will believe in him and come unto Him. By the Spirit, we receive a testimony that He lives and stands at the head of this Church and that, in the lifetime of many here present, will come again.

I testify that these things are true. For like Alma, “I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And ... I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit...” (Alma 5:46)

### Our Personal Iron Rod

Daily reading of the Book of Mormon allows the Lord, through His Spirit, to give us the strength we need to successfully prevail against the temptations and trials that we face on a daily basis.

In a symbolic vision, both Lehi and Nephi saw how our life is a spiritual journey in which we are often confronted with “a mist of darkness” (1 Nephi 8:23) which can cause us to “lose [our] way”. But, in the vision, they also saw that the Lord has provided a “rod of iron” which if we would “cling” to it we can safely navigate the journey. When his brothers asked him what the meaning of the rod of iron was, Nephi replied, “I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:23-24).

The mists of darkness are real, as are the fiery darts of the adversary. But we have the assurance that if we will daily study from the Book of Mormon, we cannot be overcome. I know this to be true.

### Our Personal Urim and Thummim

As we read from the Book of Mormon on a daily basis, the Book can become for us a personal “Urim and Thummin”, an instrument through which the Lord dispenses to us “light and truth”.

We can receive both light and power from the many examples of individuals whose actions are chronicled in the book.

- We read of Nephi’s example of obedience and trust in the Lord to help him accomplish the things the Lord had commanded him.
- We have the example of earnest prayerfulness of Enos.
- We read of the incredible courage of Abinadi as he faced death at the hands of wicked King Noah.

- We see in the book the examples of repentance and conversion of Alma, his son Alma, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, Himni, and so many others.
- We study the examples of devoted service of “Nephi, Timothy, Jonas” and the other members of the 12 chosen by Christ.
- We receive light through the example of eternal perspective of Ether.
- We are blessed by the examples of faithfulness and endurance of both Mormon and his son Moroni.

We receive light as we read the many sermons, epistles, and discourses in the book that plainly teach the plan of salvation, doctrine of Christ, and the principles of His gospel.

As we read the sermon of King Benjamin, our testimony of Christ and the power of His atonement can change our hearts as it did the hearts of those who originally heard it. (Mosiah 5:2)

As we read of the ministry of the resurrected Christ to those assembled at the temple site in Bountiful, our testimony of Him is made sure that He indeed is “the God of the whole earth” and was “slain for the sins of the world”.

It is my witness, that as we read from the Book of Mormon, the Spirit of the Lord will dispense to us customized inspiration and light for our lives. The Holy Ghost will answer our questions and give us direction which may have little to do the account we are reading but everything to do with the questions and challenges of our lives.

### Conclusion

It is my testimony that, if we will follow the counsel of the Lord given through His prophets, and daily study from the pages of the Book of Mormon, this book will become the Keystone of Our Testimony, our Personal Iron Rod, and our Personal Urim and Thummim.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.