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Read the Book of Mormon

Author(s): William J. Critchlow, Jr.

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Abstract: This article states that the Book of Mormon must be read slowly, personally, and purposefully. The author believes that leading the Book of Mormon will reveal the gospel of Jesus Christ to the reader.

men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:15-16.)

To Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler who came to Jesus at night, the Savior was a little more explicit. He said, ". . . this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19.)

What happens when a light fades out—when a man, a woman, a family, or a nation departs from the standards by which they have arisen and succeeded? Then all things go to decay. They build their structures on sand. The winds of adversity blow. The storms come, and the structures tumble. Their hopes, their aspirations, and their innermost feelings and longings are shattered. Their house is left unto them desolate. It is the tragedy of an irresolute and misspent life.

Activity in the Church is the one best safeguard; it is essential to growth and development. Light does not penetrate the dark places without some effort and some solicitation. It requires the energy of individuals, personal contacts, patience, diligence, and the inspiration of devoted missionaries and teachers to spread the light and to place the gospel message in the hearts of people.

The gospel is a beacon light to guide humanity through the journey of life. It points the way. It inspires unselfish service. It fills the soul with love for others, and it is the pure, primitive faith preached by great men like Peter and Paul.

Jesus outlined the road to happiness, for his gospel in a way of life. It is the foundation upon which you and I must build our lives. There is no other safe and dependable road for us to follow, for ". . . strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14.)

Those who have spoken today and in the past from the place where I now stand have testified to the divinity of Jesus Christ. His words are solemn declarations of truth, and his life is a shining light to all the world. That light will never fade away, for "heaven and earth shall pass away," said he, "but my words shall not pass away." (*Ibid.*, 24:35.)

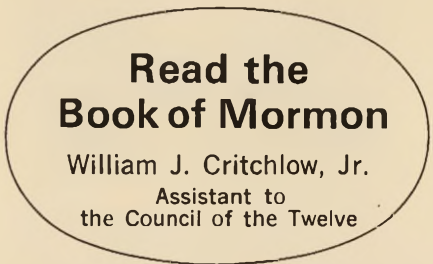
It will survive the harsh, superficial, and bitter criticism of bigots and cynics. In all of his assertions, Jesus never minimized nor underrated the importance of his message to the world.

Many of you who are listening to me at this moment, and I refer to the Latter-day Saints, have introduced the gospel into your lives. You have tested it. You have lived by it. It has guided your footsteps and has kept you

mindful of your duty to God and your fellow men. Your convictions have deepened, and your understanding of the gospel has increased; you have recognized the priesthood as the life-giving power of the Church; you have read the literature of the Church, including the Book of Mormon; doubt and uncertainty have fled; doctrines and principles have been examined and compared with those taught in other churches. You know the purpose and meaning of mortal life. You have answered the questions which have perplexed humanity for centuries, namely: Whence did I come? Why am I here? and, What is my destiny? You are composed and satisfied.

The revival of faith and enthusiasm in the early Saints and followers of Jesus after the crucifixion and the resurrection is one of the marvels of history. They too had investigated and examined. They were convinced by what they had seen and by the promptings of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Redeemer, that truth had been personified before them, and they recognized it. The proof was overwhelming. They could not conscientiously deny it.

May we be true to our convictions. May we be loyal to our standards. May we serve the Lord with a singleness of purpose and live righteously before him and all men, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



President McKay, wherever you are, I love you. We all love you.

I have been reminded that we are short on time and long on speakers. I would be happy were all of my time given to Elder Hinckley, but maybe I should use a part of it. I'll pocket my prepared speech. Now I'll be prepared for conference next year.

Let me substitute for it a sermonette or two.

Sermonette No. 1: Would any of you who claim membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or who are assumed to be members, go to a food store on Sunday, buy food, take it home, put it on the table, and ask the Lord to bless it? End of Sermonette No. 1. The subject of that sermonette is "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy."

Sermonette No. 2: Shame on the girl who would let a boy fondle her

body with his hands in that evil practice of petting. And shame on the boy who would take advantage of a girl in that abominable practice of petting. Petting leads to something worse. End of Sermonette No. 2. The subject: "Be clean, ye youth of Zion, and stay clean."

I still have time for a storiette. A storiette is a very brief story. Sometimes it is a long story greatly condensed. Mine is that kind.

Jesus told storiettes. We call them parables. A parable is a fictitious storiette. This one is true:

I have a practice of purchasing a Book of Mormon before I board a plane or train here in Salt Lake City—more often it is a plane. The book provides me with reading material and material also for someone else, since I purposely leave the book on the plane or train. By the way, the last two or three times I have boarded a plane, I couldn't find the stand at which the books are sold. Whichever priesthood quorum is assigned to provide the stand and books, I wish it would get back on the job.

Returning from Los Angeles one evening after a stake conference, I tied myself in a seat next to a window. I was tired. I dozed. A bit later, I suddenly came to life in a seizure of coughs. I discovered the irritant. A man had strapped himself in the seat beside me and was smoking the stinkiest cigaret I ever smoked, second-handedly. I was glad when the stewardess requested him and others to put out their cigarets. The plane, she said, was ready for take-off. But just as soon as we were up in the air, he lit up another, and he puffed the smoke in my direction; and when he had finished it, he lit another. He was near the butt of a third one when I, my dander up, decided to tell him off. I was practically fogged out. I turned to speak to him just as he stooped to take something from his briefcase on the floor. I waited. Straightening up he beat me to the punch—to the conversation, that is—and he said: "Have you ever read this book?" I looked at it in astonishment. What do you suppose it was? It was a Book of Mormon.

"May I see it?" I asked. He handed it to me, and I examined it and said to him:

"Yes sir, I have read this very book. Two weeks ago I purchased this identical book before boarding a plane in Salt Lake City, and I left it on the plane. I'm glad you found it and are reading it."

Well, you must know, from that moment on, all the way to Salt Lake City, the fragrance of his cigaret was fine; it didn't bother me at all, and I was sorry that I had to get off the plane in Salt Lake City. I wished I

could have gone on farther with him because we were having such a fine conversation about the Book of Mormon.

If this storiette has a subject, it would be "Read the Book of Mormon."

You here in this building have read it. There may be people listening in on the air who have not read it. I plead with you, read it. You may find it as interesting as did the man on the plane.

I read the Book of Mormon when I was a young man. I read it on the top of a mountain down in southern Utah where I was tending a theodolite in the service of the US Coast and Geodetic Survey. Finishing it, I felt I had a fair understanding of the gospel principles contained in it.

Once I sat with General Authorities of the Church and heard President Joseph Fielding Smith say, in substance, "Brethren, all of us have to read the Book of Mormon. We are asking the members of the Church to do it, so we brethren must do it, too."

One of the brethren moaned, saying, "Must we who have read it so many times take time out to read it again?"

"Yes," replied President Smith, "we can't ask the members to do something we are not willing to do."

I turned to the brother sitting next to me and asked him how many times he had read the Book of Mormon. He answered, "Forty-five times."

"May I quote you?"

"Not until I go home and check."

The next day he told me I could quote him: "I have read the book fifty times." That brother is Milton R. Hunter. "I taught," he said, "the Book of Mormon in seminary and institute classes. That accounts for my reading it so many times."

How many times have you read it? Read it again. And this time read it *slowly*, so you can digest the spiritual calories you will find in it. Read it *personally*, putting yourself in the shoes of Lehi, who was told to take his family into the wilderness. What would you have done were you in his shoes? Put yourself in Nephi's shoes. He was instructed to go after the brass plates. What would you have done in his shoes? Yes, read it personally.

Read it *purposefully*, and let your purpose be to discover its spiritual calories and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Read it for *pleasure*. Discover how it testifies of the Christ. Somebody said his name is mentioned 526 times therein. It testifies also of the Bible. Turn off the TV, turn off the radio, and read the Book of Mormon. You will enjoy it.

I bear you my witness: In the Book of Mormon you will find the gospel of Jesus Christ. You may discover, reading it, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true.

I did. May you so find it, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Principle With Promise

Gordon B. Hinckley
Of the Council of the Twelve

I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit, that the things I say may be in harmony with the inspirational things to which we have listened.

To the Galatian Saints Paul wrote these stirring words: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1.)

I thought I witnessed something of this bondage recently while riding in the lounge of a crowded plane with three other men.

As the jet began the fast climb to its assigned altitude, I noticed that the man across the table had his eyes fixed intently on the "No Smoking" sign. The instant it went off, he reached for his cigarettes. As he began smoking, the man next to me became nervous. He clenched and opened his fists, looked out the window, turned to look at the man across the table, and his face reddened. The air was a little bumpy. I thought he might have been frightened. I took a closer look. He was a man of good physique, well-dressed, immaculately groomed. He did not look the kind who would be frightened by a little bumpy air.

Then the fourth member of our quartet took a pack of cigarettes from his pocket. He offered me one, and I declined. He then offered my seat companion one, and he replied, "I'm trying to quit, and it's nearly killing me."

That started a conversation.

The first man to light up told how he had resolved to quit after hearing in January 1964 the report of the Surgeon General of the United States. He recounted a tale of agonizing days and sleepless nights and of a final surrender to a habit that had held him for many years. He placed his cigaret between his lips, inhaled long and deeply, then lowered his head as the smoke drifted slowly from his lips and nostrils. "I couldn't lick it," he said with an evident air of defeat.

The next smoker took up the conversation. "I almost quit. I'd been burning two packs a day. I thought I could taper off. I cut down to one cigaret after each cup of coffee. That was my formula. It lasted for a time,

but I found myself drinking too much coffee. Now I'm back to a pack a day."

He had the manner of an educated man. He held in his hands a business journal. He said that the report of the Surgeon General had frightened him also, but then he had read counteracting statements. Perhaps, he concluded, the relationship between cigaret smoking and cancer is only coincidental; the disease could just as likely come from the exhaust fumes we breathe. Then with an impulsive display of self-mastery, he crumpled his half-smoked cigaret into the ash tray, snapped shut the lid, and commented, "Just the same, I wish I could quit."

My seat companion then spoke: "I'm convinced there's some truth in what I've seen and read on the subject. We take the government's word for an awful lot these days, conclusions based on less convincing evidence than this. I don't believe you can deny the facts. There is a hazard in smoking. But I'm having a terrible fight. I never dreamed a habit could be so tough to break."

One of them looked at me. "What about you?" he asked.

I replied: "I've never used them."

"How lucky can you be?" was his response. Without wishing in any way to appear self-righteous, I thought the same thing—"How lucky can I be?" And I thought of a day long ago when as a boy I sat in this Tabernacle and heard President Heber J. Grant speak with moving conviction on the "Little White Slaver," as he bore eloquent testimony of the Word of Wisdom as a divine law. I was greatly impressed that day, and that impression gave me resolution.

Who could question the bondage in which these men found themselves? Our conversation indicated that all three were educated, able men who made important decisions every day. But in a matter admittedly affecting their own lives and health, two already had conceded defeat, and the third was fighting a terrible battle, the victim of a habit that would not let him go.

One study indicates that among men who had stopped smoking, 37½ percent reported they were smoking again. And even among those who reported that they had gone for as long as 12 to 24 months, nearly 18 percent had relapsed into the old habit. (*Consumer Reports*, March 1964, pp. 112-113.)

Commenting on the January 1964 report of the Surgeon General, an editor concluded: "No longer can reasonable men argue whether smoking is or is not a major health hazard. It is. The remaining topic for consideration is what can be done about it." (*Ibid.*, p. 112.)

A veritable mountain of evidence has been produced by the Surgeon General's office, the Federal Trade Commission, the American Cancer So-