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Author(s): Robert E. Wells

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## THE LIAHONA TRIAD

*Elder Robert E. Wells*

Some time ago I had a dream on a spiritual subject. It was an allegory centered on the Book of Mormon. I have never referred to it before, but when I was invited to write about some facet of the Book of Mormon, my thoughts turned to that most unusual dream, and I felt that it might have been given to me for this purpose.

In the dream I saw multitudes milling around aimlessly. A few people were being propelled toward a beautiful goal in the distance. The force moving them was both constant and invisible, but only a few moved directly and quickly toward the goal. Most wavered, slowed down, wandered around, or became totally disoriented, and although the force that was there to propel them was steady and constant, most people were not able to take advantage of it. I asked, "Why don't they all use the force the same way? What is happening? What does this all mean?" The answer came from a personage whose presence I sensed but did not see. He said, "The ability to take advantage of the power attracting people to Jesus Christ, the desirable goal, depends entirely upon each person's faith, diligence, and heed."

I awoke suddenly, knowing exactly where that phrase came from—

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*Elder Robert E. Wells is an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.*

the Liahona story. I have not recounted the details of the dream, only the overall impression, because the experience was quite long.

Since the allegorical dream occurred, I have stayed alert for additional information about the tradition of the Liahona. I will call my remarks "The Liahona Triad." A triad is a group of three closely associated items or concepts. Musicians know that the word *triad* can also mean a chord of three tones: a root tone played with its third tone and fifth tone, constituting the harmonic basis of tonal music. I believe that there is a kind of celestial music that comes from the Book of Mormon and from the three closely associated qualities of *faith*, *diligence*, and *heed*—a celestial music that lifts the soul. I quote from Nephi, recounting the appearance of the strange instrument:

"And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness. . . .

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the *faith and diligence and heed* which we did give unto them.

"And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time" (1 Nephi 16:10, 28–29; emphasis added).

The application of the symbolism of the Liahona to our personal lives was recorded about five hundred years later. The chapter heading of Alma 37 reads, "As the Liahona guided the Nephites, so the word of Christ leads men to eternal life."

Alma explains: "My son, . . . for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass . . . they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual.

"For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land" (Alma 37:43–44).

President Spencer W. Kimball used the symbolism of the Liahona in a fascinating illustration about fifteen years ago while talking to the young men of the Church:

“Wouldn’t you like to have that kind of a ball—each one of you—so that whenever you were in error it would point the right way and write messages to you, . . . so that you would always know when you were in error or in the wrong way?

“That, my young brethren, you all have. The Lord gave to every boy, every man, every person, a conscience which tells him everytime he starts to go on the wrong path. . . .

“You must realize that you have something like the compass, like the Liahona, in your own system.”<sup>1</sup>

President Monson also used the illustration of the Liahona in a general conference talk. He said: “The same Lord who provided a Liahona for Lehi provides for you and for me today a rare and valuable gift to give direction to our lives, to mark the hazards to our safety, and to chart the way, even safe passage—not to a promised land, but to our heavenly home. The gift to which I refer is known as your *patriarchal blessing*.”<sup>2</sup>

So this unusual instrument has fascinated the prophets and been used in their sermons for centuries, by both Book of Mormon and modern prophets.

But is there any independent evidence that such an instrument might actually have existed twenty-six hundred years ago? Some may be familiar with an article in the February 1961 *Improvement Era* by Hugh Nibley entitled “The Liahona’s Cousins.” In that article, Dr. Nibley traced “belomancy” in ancient times, especially in the Near East. “Belomancy is the practice of divination [fortune-telling] by shooting, tossing, shaking, or otherwise manipulating rods, darts, pointers, or other sticks, all originally derived from arrows.”<sup>3</sup>

The Liahona, as we know, had moving spindles or pointers.

Brother Nibley continued: “Whenever divination arrows are described, they are invariably found to have writing on them, like the Zuni ‘word-painted arrows of destiny.’ . . .

“ . . . And what person after considering the divination arrows,

portable or enshrined, of other travelers in the desert will deny that in the Liahona we have an implement which, far from being the invention of a brain-sick imagination, was not without its ancient counterparts?"<sup>4</sup>

If Lehi brought the Liahona to the Americas, can we find any trace of such an instrument in the legends of the Lamanites before Columbus? Well, almost. Last year, while living in Mexico City, I went to the famous Museum of Anthropology in Chapultepec Park. There on display was the famous tapestry of Jucutacato, about six feet by eight feet. It has thirty-six frames, like a comic strip, and obviously depicts the migration of a people. In eleven of the first twelve frames, a peculiar round object with a bird, or dove, above it appears in front of the leader. The object seems to be suspended by three strings or chains, but it also has a base to stand on.

In the book *In Search of Cumorah*, we read: "The concept of a sacred ball was not unique to the Tarascan Indians. The Guatemalan Quiche and Cakchiquel histories mention a sacred ball or rock in connection with their legends of migration across the sea."<sup>5</sup>

"The Totonacapan version tells of four great leaders bringing their people from the other side of the sea. . . . Before leaving [the main leader] was given a present by the god Nacxit. It was called the Giron Gagal [meaning *sacred bundle*]. Taking it with him, by miraculous means Balam Quitze [the leader] was able to lead his people across the sea."<sup>6</sup>

In my years in South America, I heard of other similar legends. So perhaps there are signs remaining of an ancient spiritual compass. And, although these concepts regarding the Liahona may be interesting, I find of much greater importance the contents of the Book of Mormon and the power and magnetic attraction of the triad of *faith*, *diligence*, and *heed* as a formula designed to lead or pull us toward Christ. Faith in Christ, diligence in seeking and following Christ, and heed in obeying Christ are an intrinsic part of all the pages of the Book of Mormon.

I would like to share with you some of my favorite illustrations of each principle of the triad.

## FAITH

The Book of Mormon was written by holy prophets for the purpose of building the faith of the reader—faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the Lord's kingdom once again established on earth.

*Nephi.* In the opening pages of the epic saga, young Nephi was quickly identified as a person of singular faith. “Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou has sought me diligently” (1 Nephi 2:19). Nephi's faith was directly related to the quality of his seeking and searching for the Lord. Then in 1 Nephi 3, we find an inspired insight into the ways of the Lord that will bless our lives if we have the kind of faith that Nephi had. This oft-quoted passage illustrates the practical and universal faith that made young Nephi so outstanding: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know 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” (1 Nephi 3:7).

Nephi's faith that the Lord would open the way has encouraged and inspired countless prophets, leaders, missionaries, and members. Every reader of the Book of Mormon remembers it. It is one of those jewels of truth that jump out at one from the Book of Mormon.

The first story in the Book of Mormon demonstrating Nephi's indomitable faith took place when the four brothers were given the commandment to return to Jerusalem to obtain the genealogy of their forefathers that was engraved on brass plates. Twice they failed dismally. But on the third attempt at this seemingly impossible mission, Nephi (with total faith in the Lord) sneaked into the city alone, not knowing beforehand the things which he should do. Nephi's unwavering faith that the Lord would prepare the way allowed the Lord to bless him with success, overcoming all obstacles (see 1 Nephi 3–4). The Book of Mormon records many other examples of this kind of faith.

I also love the ship story. The Lord commanded Nephi to build a ship that would hold together during an ocean voyage of more than ten thousand miles and for about one year's time—without putting into port for supplies or repairs. That is some boat! This was a family of desert people

who knew about camels and tents and dry sand but little or nothing about ships, water, nautical engineering, and ship construction techniques.

The brothers called Nephi a fool for thinking he could build a ship (see 1 Nephi 17:17). But Nephi's faith told him that God would prepare the way. He reminded the family that the Lord had led Israel out of Egyptian slavery, had divided the waters of the Red Sea for Moses, and had made Israel mighty to drive the wicked out of the promised land. After reviewing these faith-promoting experiences, Nephi said to his brothers, "[God] ruleth high in the heavens," and "God had commanded me that I should build a ship. . . . If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them" (1 Nephi 17:39, 49, 50). The clincher is in verse 51: "If the Lord has such great power, and has wrought so many miracles among the children of men, how is it that he cannot instruct me [a man of the desert], that I should build a ship?"

And Nephi did build a ship—a seaworthy ship—and it did take them across half the circumference of the globe, bringing them safely to the New World, their promised land.

*Alma.* There is in Alma 32 perhaps the finest doctrinal explanation of faith in any of the scriptures. "*Faith* is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have *faith* ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true" (Alma 32:21; emphasis added).

Remember, the main test of this life on earth is to see if we, not remembering the premortal existence with Heavenly Father and not being able to prove His existence by material evidence, will still have faith in Him, trust Him, and obey His commandments, no matter the hazard or sacrifice that may be required of us.

Listen to Alma's persuasive words about experimenting with faith and about faith as a seed requiring care and nourishment: "If ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an *experiment* upon my words, and exercise a particle of *faith*, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe. . . .

"Now, we will compare the word [faith] unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, . . . behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that

this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding. . . .

“ . . . As the tree beginneth to grow, ye will say: Let us nourish it with great care, that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us. . . .

“But if ye neglect the tree [faith], and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; . . . it withers away. . . .

“Now, this is not because the seed was not good, . . . but it is because your ground is barren, and ye will not nourish the tree” (Alma 32:27–28, 37–39; emphasis added).

There is no more clear, more powerful, more faith-developing explanation of this vital process in all the world’s books than is found here in Alma’s masterful discourse.

A question frequently thought of but seldom asked is: “Just how much faith do I need for the atonement of Christ to work for me?” In other words, how much faith do I need to receive salvation? In the book of Alma, and nowhere else, we find the answer. The prophet Amulek taught this simple but grand principle: “The Son of God . . . bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith *unto repentance*” (Alma 34:14–15; emphasis added).

Please note those three words: “faith unto repentance.” That is the clue. Four times in three verses Amulek uses that expression (see Alma 34:15–17). May I quote the part that is the strongest:

“Thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no *faith unto repentance* is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has *faith unto repentance* is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption” (Alma 34:16; emphasis added).

So the combination of faith in Christ plus faith unto repentance is vitally important. That concept is one of the greatest insights we have into the importance of simple, clear faith—faith sufficient to repent. Apparently faith great enough to move mountains is not required; faith enough to speak in tongues or to heal the sick is not needed; all that we need is enough faith to recognize that we have sinned and need to repent of our sins, to feel remorse for them, and to desire to sin no

more but to please Christ the Lord. Then the greatest miracle of all, the Atonement, whereby Christ rescues us from our deserved punishment, is in effect in our behalf.

The Book of Mormon has three outstanding stories illustrating this dual principle of salvation through faith in Christ plus faith enough to repent. They are the stories of Enos, King Benjamin, and Alma.

*Enos.* Enos said: "My soul hungered [part of repentance and change of attitude]; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication . . . [This is repentance and faith] all the day long . . . and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

"And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee. . . .

"And I said: Lord, how is it done?

"And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen" (Enos 1:4–5, 7–8).

Note that both faith to repent and faith in Christ are present.

*King Benjamin.* King Benjamin had just finished delivering a great sermon that an angel had given to him to preach to the people. When he finished, he noticed that the people had all fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. The record says:

"They all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy [they are repenting], and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, . . . for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Note both principles—faith in Christ and faith enough to repent.

"After they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding *faith* which they had in Jesus Christ who should come" (Mosiah 4:2–3; emphasis added).

*Alma.* Alma said to his son Helaman: "I was racked with eternal torment. . . .

"Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities. . . . [He is repenting.]

“ . . . While I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness. . . . [He is very repentant.]

“ . . . When I thought this, I could remember my pains no more. . . .

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold. . . .

“ . . . There can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy” (Alma 36:12–13, 17–21).

Thus, one of the major teachings about faith that I find in the Book of Mormon is the dual concept that the Atonement of Christ works because of the combination of simple faith in Christ and faith enough to repent.

*Moroni.* At the end of the Jaredite history, Moroni, the historian, interjected a short sermon on faith. It is a jewel in itself, worthy of being on everyone’s list of favorite scriptures on faith:

“And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that *faith* is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your *faith*. . . .

“For the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove—and it was removed. And if he had not had *faith* it would not have moved; wherefore thou workest after men have *faith*” (Ether 12:6, 30; emphasis added).

Thus, the Book of Mormon is a great source for learning about and increasing our faith in Christ. It pulls us—like the invisible magnetic power in my dream—towards Christ.

## DILIGENCE

Faith in combination with diligence (the second part of the Liahona triad) creates an unbeatable combination to produce success in any venture. The Book of Mormon is replete with both. If we would be drawn to Christ, we need to understand *diligence*. As it is used in

the Book of Mormon, *diligence* is synonymous with such terms as *perseverance*, *persistence*, *dedication*, *determination*, *steadiness*, *dependability*—so much needed and so much sought after in our uncertain world.

One of my favorite heroes of the Book of Mormon is the principal compiler himself, General Mormon, who exemplifies diligence. His tragic end does not do justice to his long life of diligently serving his people in spite of their sins and unworthiness. Here is a great man who literally and figuratively gave his life for his nation and his people.

Mormon was large enough of stature and sober enough of mind that by age sixteen he was chosen by the people to be the leader of their armies. He served as their general for forty-five years. Other great generals of history—Washington, Napoleon, and Wellington—served for much shorter periods. Mormon was dedicated, courageous, persistent, and endured to the bitter end of the final nine years of the Nephite nation. This was after a thirteen-year interruption to his military service because the Lord commanded him to step down, perhaps partly so Mormon could get the sacred records ready to turn over to his son Moroni and partly to try to get the Nephites to listen to his warnings. Unfortunately, the Nephite nation did not listen to General Mormon, nor repent, so he finally, and diligently, returned to lead his people in their tragic final years.

General Mormon wrote an affectionate letter to his son Moroni that is recorded in Moroni 9: “And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor *diligently*; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God” (Moroni 9:6; emphasis added).

*The sons of Mosiah.* Alma and the sons of Mosiah became very dedicated missionaries. The sons of Mosiah were grandsons of King Benjamin and were princes of the kingdom; one of them could have become the king when their father died. Instead, they all turned to the ministry of Christ. One most distinguishing feature of these great missionaries was their steadfast *diligence* in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. In Alma 17 we find several of their most outstanding

attributes listed. The word *diligent* is not used often, but it obviously applies all the way through. Listen to the kind of men they had become:

“They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures *diligently*, that they might know the word of God.

“But this is not all [they were diligent in other things, too]; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God” (Alma 17:2–3; emphasis added).

They served longer than missionaries do today. Verse 4 says that they had been on their mission for fourteen years (now that is true diligence) and had much success among the Lamanites, bringing many to the knowledge of the truth.

Furthermore, they were diligent in spite of difficult circumstances. They did not have it easy at all: “Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings, for they had many afflictions; they did suffer much, both in body and in mind, such as hunger, thirst and fatigue, and also much labor in the spirit” (Alma 17:5).

These great missionaries were heroic examples of diligence, persistence, and long-suffering in preaching the word of the Lord.

*Jacob.* Jacob, the son of Lehi, was a powerful teacher. As a boy, he saw the Savior. For some time he was the custodian of the small plates, having received them from his brother Nephi. Nephi had ordained him to continue as a consecrated priest and teacher of the people. Jacob accounted for his heavy stewardship with these beautiful words that serve as an example to all today who hold the priesthood: “We did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all *diligence*; wherefore, by laboring with our might [this is diligence again] their blood might not come upon our garments” (Jacob 1:19; emphasis added).

In chapter 5 of his record, Jacob quoted Zenos’s allegory relative to the tame and wild olive trees that had to be nourished, pruned, dugged

about, dunged, rooted up and replanted, pruned again, grafted, burned, and so forth. Then he stated, “How blessed are they who have labored *diligently* in his vineyard; and how cursed are they who shall be cast out into their own place!” (Jacob 6:3; emphasis added).

In addition, we can understand the powerful spirit of Jacob better as we meditate upon the hard work of engraving the plates for the benefit of future generations. He said, “We labor *diligently* to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts” (Jacob 4:3; emphasis added).

And then he bore this wonderful testimony:

“For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us.

“Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name” (Jacob 4:4–5).

The Book of Mormon has many examples from which we can learn to be more diligent in our service to Christ—truly, diligence is an attribute which will draw us unto Christ, as I saw in my dream.

## HEED

The word *heed* is not in common usage today, but in the days of the Book of Mormon it was a strong and frequently used synonym for “hear,” “hearken,” “listen to,” “pay attention to,” or “keep.” Today we would probably use “obey” or “be obedient to.” If we would be drawn to Christ, we need to understand *heed* as used in the Book of Mormon. Here are a few brief examples:

1. “I, Nephi, did exhort them to give *heed* unto the word of the Lord” (1 Nephi 15:25; emphasis added).

2. “Take *heed* that ye do not transgress” (Mosiah 5:11; emphasis added).

3. “It is . . . easy to give *heed* to the word of Christ” (Alma 37:44; emphasis added).

An often-repeated message of the Book of Mormon—right from

its first pages—is closely related to the injunction to obey or “heed the commandments.” Remember the promise of the Lord to Nephi: “Inasmuch as thy seed shall *keep my commandments*, they shall prosper in the land of promise” (1 Nephi 4:14; emphasis added). We can safely substitute the word *heed* for *keep* or *obey*, and then one of the significant promises of the entire Book of Mormon comes into focus. Just as the Book of Mormon is truly written to help the reader increase in faith, it also leads to an increase in “heeding” or “obeying” the Lord—which will lead to prosperity in this land of promise.

The opposite of “heed” is, as Alma said, to be “slothful to give heed”:

“For as our fathers were slothful to give *heed* to this compass . . . they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual.

“For behold, it is as easy to give *heed* to the word of Christ, which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give *heed* to this compass” (Alma 37:43–44; emphasis added).

*To heed is to remain righteous.* “Heed,” as it is used in the Book of Mormon, has a certain permanency about it that is opposite to temporary obedience or alternating “on again, off again” obedience. It is understood that as you continue to heed the Lord, you will not waver, vacillate, or complain, but rather you will weather the storm and persevere no matter what you may be called upon to endure:

“And now my brethren, if ye were righteous and were willing to *hearken* to the truth, and give *heed* unto it, that ye might walk uprightly before God, then ye would not murmur because of the truth” (1 Nephi 16:3; emphasis added).

*To heed is to be careful.* Sometimes *heed* can mean to be careful. In King Benjamin’s great sermon at the temple, he tells us that we must take upon ourselves the name of Christ and then be careful to avoid transgression: “Therefore, *take heed* [be careful] that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts” (Mosiah 5:11; emphasis added).

And another illustration, this one from Mormon:

“Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge

that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil" (Moroni 7:14).

*Pride is an obstacle to heeding.* Pride frequently causes people to choose not to listen or pay attention to prophets and leaders. That occurred from time to time in the Book of Mormon:

"After Helaman and his brethren had appointed priests and teachers over the churches . . . there arose a dissension among them, and they would not give *heed* to the words of Helaman and his brethren;

"But they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceedingly great riches; therefore they grew rich in their own eyes, and would not give *heed* to their words, to walk uprightly before God" (Alma 45:23–24).

*To heed is to pay attention.* The Prophet Joseph used the word *heed* in telling the brethren that their mind, or intellect, could learn more than they thought. Contrary to the "Fixed I.Q. Theory," he taught, "God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect."<sup>7</sup> Could not this same principle apply to the spirit?

Giving heed, or obedience, to the commandments, ordinances, and prophets, will draw you powerfully and invisibly to Christ, just as I saw in my dream.

## "NEW WRITING" ON THE LIAHONA

One fascinating peculiarity of the Liahona was that not only did its pointers guide Lehi's family in the wilderness but "a new writing, which was plain to be read" appeared on the pointers to give them "understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to [their] faith and diligence" and heed (1 Nephi 16:29). Very little is said about this phenomenon. In fact, I can find no further reference to this changeable writing. As I read the Book of Mormon, however, something strange seems to happen to me. Passages of scriptures that I have read many times in one light seem to change—and suddenly there is a new meaning to that old and familiar scripture. I like to think that the Book of

Mormon is truly like the Liahona of old. Not only does it point us in the way of the Lord and to the Lord according to the faith, diligence, and heed we give it, but if we are interested enough to read it again and again, from cover to cover, there are times when a “new writing”—plain to be read—seems to appear. I would like to share two personal examples of such an experience:

As you are undoubtedly aware, the leaders of the Church are prone to choose a passage of scripture and use it as a kind of theme. For a few years, we have had the principal subject of “Come unto Christ,” a phrase that is often repeated in the Book of Mormon. Before that, the theme was the threefold mission of the Church:

1. Proclaim the gospel.
2. Perfect the Saints.
3. Redeem the dead.

I had read chapter 10 of Moroni many times because it is the closing chapter of the great Book of Mormon, it is Moroni’s farewell to the Lamanites, and it has the wonderful promise to readers of the Book of Mormon that if they will read, ponder, and ask of God with a sincere heart and faith in Christ, they will receive an answer to their prayer and know by the power of the Holy Ghost that the book is true.

I happened to be reading Moroni 10 again when verse 31 seemed to jump out in a different way. I don’t know if a general conference speaker pointed it out or if I heard it used by some other person—but there it was: the theme of proclaim, perfect, and redeem was in verse 31—only in reverse! Let me show you this “new writing,” hidden there all of the time. Verse 31 says: “Awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy *beautiful garments*.” Then, “*strengthen thy stakes*” follows, and, lastly, “*enlarge thy borders forever*” (emphasis added). I could clearly see that “enlarge thy borders” meant to enlarge the Church through missionary work and to *proclaim* the gospel to all the world. It seemed that I could also see clearly that “strengthen thy stakes” meant to *perfect* the Saints through the priesthood organizations and the auxiliaries. And it seemed to me that “put on thy beautiful garments” referred to the temple robes and going to the temples of the Lord to *redeem* our beloved ancestors. To me, it was enlightening—it

was a new writing, a new emphasis on an old and familiar verse of the scriptures which I already loved but which now had a new thought that made it even more important to me.

I love to talk to missionaries and train them in proselyting techniques that produce greater than ordinary success. One hot afternoon in the tropics, I stood before a zone conference of missionaries. I was telling them that missionaries should so conduct themselves and be so spiritually prepared in their way of teaching and be such perfect gentlemen and ladies that the investigators and members would actually see them as “angels.” I usually tell some stories about people who have seen the missionaries as angel messengers. In fact, *angel* means “messenger” in Hebrew (*malak*). I quoted from Moroni 7:29: “Have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.” And right there—on my feet, in front of the missionaries—a strange thing happened. My eyes darted across the column to verse 31 and it glowed—it jumped out at me. So I read it as well, and while I was reading it out loud to the missionaries I saw it as a new writing with a new meaning. Let me quote it to you, and then I will interpret it to you as I did to the missionaries that day. It says, “The office of their ministry [the ministry of angels] is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, . . . to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord.”

It was made clear to me at that moment that angels and missionaries do the very same work—the very same things. They (both missionaries and angels) call people to repentance, and they fulfill and do the work of the covenants of the Father (both missionaries and unseen angels work to get people to be baptized, to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, etc.). They also prepare the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto them (both missionaries and unseen angels). In other words, no wonder some special, elect people are so in tune with the Spirit that they see the missionaries as angels. They see only the missionaries, but they feel angels present, so they believe the missionaries to be angels too.

The Liahona triad of faith, diligence, and heed pulling us to

Christ—with each point illustrated throughout the Book of Mormon—plus the concept of a “new writing” every time I reread the Book of Mormon has been of immeasurable help to me in my life. I leave you my witness that the gospel is true. Any person who reads, ponders, and prays with *faith*, *diligence*, and *heed* about the Book of Mormon will come to know that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith was His revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah.

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## NOTES

For additional reading about the Liahona, see Robert F. Smith, “Lodestone and the Liahona,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 44–46; Robert L. Bunker, “The Design of the Liahona and the Purpose of the Second Spindle,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 2 (fall 1994): 1–11; Hugh W. Nibley, “The Liahona and Murmurings in the Wilderness,” in *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester One* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1993), 464–66.

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “Our Own Liahona,” *Ensign*, November 1976, 79.

2. Thomas S. Monson, “Your Patriarchal Blessing: A Liahona of Light,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 65; emphasis added.

3. Hugh W. Nibley, “The Liahona’s Cousins,” *Improvement Era*, February 1961, 104.

4. Nibley, “Liahona’s Cousins,” 106, 110.

5. David A. Palmer, *In Search of Cumorah: New Evidences for the Book of Mormon from Ancient Mexico* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1981), 157.

6. Adrian Recinos, ed., *Título de los Señores de Totonicapan, Anales de los Cakchiqueles, Memorial de Solola* (Mexico, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1950), as cited in Palmer, *In Search of Cumorah*, 157.

7. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 51.