

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

Class Summary

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Title page, Introduction, 1 Ne 1-5

“Therefore, What?” Using the Book of Mormon to Come Unto Christ

“What am I doing here?”

This is the question we must ask ourselves. “Why did I decide to take this institute class at this time?” “What am I hoping to gain from this class?” “What brought me here, and what will keep bringing me back?”

Dr. Hugh Nibley, on the first day of the BYU Honors Book of Mormon course, said:

“At this moment everybody asks certain questions, and the questions we all ask are, “What should I be doing? What am I doing here?” ...That is the question, you see. We know the world is in confusion because many people are doing things they should not be doing. And many people are not doing the things they should be doing. Now the shocking thought comes to us: Is it possible that nobody is doing what he should be doing? The answer is yes. It's not only possible; that's the situation. When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in the Grove, according to the oldest and best account of all—that of Frederick G. Williams, written in 1832–33 and dictated by Joseph Smith when he was only 26 years old. It's different from the one we have in the Pearl of Great Price here because the Lord speaks in the first person. In the account we have here, it's an indirect quotation (what the Lord told Joseph), but here the words to the Prophet when he was only fourteen years old are, “The world at this time lieth in sin, and there is none that doeth good—no not one. Mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the world to visit them in this ungodliness.” There are those who do well and have good intentions, but that is not what it means. It means to do what they should be doing—the best possible thing.” (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, Lecture 1*)

He then goes on to say:

“Many of us are not where we should be... The thing is that this is where the Book of Mormon comes in. It's like nothing else. It's the only answer you are ever going to get to that question in this dispensation. In reading the Book of Mormon no one is ever doing something he shouldn't be doing. Most of the time he would be doing probably the best thing he could possibly be doing. If it is not itself the best thing to be doing, it will quickly put you onto the best thing to be doing because it will have a direct effect on you. It will change you; it will work on you. It is a personal, intimate document. It will hit you. You can't just read the Book of Mormon and nothing else. It immediately puts you on the high road to what you should be doing, like no other book. And it will lead you directly into a course of thought or a course of action of the greatest significance to yourself and to the world you live in. In other words, it will enable you to break loose as nothing else can.” (*Ibid*)

The Book of Mormon = Change

That's what this class is all about—using The Book of Mormon to grow our relationship with the Savior and to make *change*. We may read the Book of Mormon, we may study and comprehend and even understand the Book of Mormon; but what does any of that really mean unless we let the Book of Mormon *change* us?

The Introduction to the Book of Mormon tells us, “The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after his resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.”

To summarize, the purposes of the Book of Mormon include:

- 1) to “put forth the doctrines of the gospel”
- 2) to “outline the plan of salvation,” and
- 3) to tell us how we, too, can “gain peace in this life,” (and who doesn't need greater peace?), “and eternal salvation in the life to come.”

In short, the Book of Mormon is *the* definitive guide for creating the life we desire, both here on earth and in the worlds to come. These blessings only come one way: through the Savior, Jesus Christ. This is what the Book of Mormon can do for you—it can literally lead you back to the Savior's presence.

“Therefore, what?”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said the following: "President Boyd K. Packer, himself a master teacher and long-time administrator in the Church Educational System, has a question he often asks when we have made a presentation or given some sort of exhortation to one another in the Twelve. He looks up as if to say, “Are you through?” And then says to the speaker (and, by implication, to the rest of the group), “Therefore, what?”

“Therefore, what?” I think that is what the Savior answered day in and day out as an inseparable element of His teaching and preaching. I've tried to suggest that. These sermons and exhortations were to no avail if the actual lives of His disciples did not change." (*CES Conference on the New Testament*, 8 August 2000, BYU)"

As Dr. Nibley states:

“I was going to ask the question, how many have read the Book of Mormon? It's an utterly absurd question. It's like asking, have you seen the moon? Or have you been to North America? The answer is "yes," I suppose, but you haven't told me a thing. How much did you learn from that? With the Book of Mormon, it can mean anything. You can say, "I read the Book of Mormon." I remember when I would say that, and it didn't mean anything, of course. It meant I had piled up so many pages and got my gold star; that was it. That's not what we are reading it for now. Oh, what would we do without the Book of Mormon!”

Precisely! *Oh what would we do without the Book of Mormon?* Are we using it in our lives, every day? Are we not just opening it, not just reading it, but truly feasting upon the words of Christ? Are we applying the words, principles, and doctrines in our daily lives? Are we wondering, each time we read, “Therefore, what?”

An anonymous author wrote:

“What if you treated your Book of Mormon like your cell phone? What if we carried it around in our purse or pocket? What if we turned back to get it if we forgot it? What if we flipped through it several times a day? What if we used it to receive messages? What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it? What if we gave it as a gift? What if we used it as we traveled? What if we used it in case of an emergency? Oh... and a few more things. Unlike a cell phone, one plan fits all, we have unlimited usage, there are no roaming charges, we always have reception, the battery is always full, and we don't ever have to worry about being disconnected because Jesus already paid the bill!”

Are we treating our Book of Mormon like the healing, helping, hopeful, happy, heavenly guide it is?

Come Unto Christ (& be perfected in Him)

This semester, as you study the Book of Mormon, focus on how it can bring you closer to Jesus Christ. *He* is the only path to true change, and as Moroni implores us, in these beautiful, parting words: “Yea, come unto Christ, and *be perfected in him*, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, *then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ*; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.” (Moroni 10-32)

Seek to understand the Book of Mormon. Seek to learn the doctrine and the plan of salvation. Then, seek to *apply* what you understand and have learned to your life. Use the Book of Mormon as your guide for how to “Come unto Christ,” to “*be perfected in Him*.” Utilize the Atonement to “at-one” with the Savior, to find not only forgiveness, but to rely upon and use the enabling power it offers—to use “his grace” to “be perfect in Christ.” Use the Book of Mormon to find “peace in this life,” and “eternal salvation in the life to come.” Let the Book of Mormon work in you. Let it change you.

4 Questions

As you read and ponder the Book of Mormon, manual, and supplemental materials this semester, I encourage you to ask yourself the following 4 questions:

- 1) Where am I in this story? Or “How does this story relate to my life?”
- 2) Where is Jesus Christ in this story?
- 3) What is He trying to teach me here?
- 4) What do I do about this? Or “How does this affect my life?” In other words, “Therefore, what?”

I encourage you to find a quiet space where you can study each day, and to use a journal or notebook to keep your answers to these questions. Begin your study with

prayer and meditation to invite the spirit, and then, as you read and ponder, listen. He is speaking through these pages. Hear what He has to say to *you*.

The Power of the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is powerful. It has the power to change lives—to change each of us. The very first verse, alone, demonstrates this power:

“I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.” (1 Ne 1:1)

In just this one verse we learn that Nephi is the first author of the Book of Mormon. We learn that he is keeping this as a personal account of his dealings with the Lord (and we know later that he was commanded to keep his record as scripture). We learn that he was taught of his parents—that’s what “goodly parents” do—teach their children “all the learning” they possess. This means he was well educated. He was blessed with loving, righteous parents. He and his family, however, had many afflictions, just as we do in our lives. Nevertheless, he knew he was “highly favored of the Lord”—he recognized his blessings, despite his trials. In fact, Nephi is telling us here that he *knows* God—that he knows “the mysteries,” which implies he saw Christ face-to-face and saw many marvelous things that “cannot be uttered by man,” that can only be learned through personal revelation. Nephi writes of these things, and he shows us how we, too, can partake.

I testify of the power of the Book of Mormon. It fills our hearts, minds, spirits, and souls more fully with the Spirit of Christ. It invites the presence of the Holy Ghost as He testifies of the Savior and the truths in this great book. It offers Truth, with a capital “T,” and along with that Truth, it shows us the path, the “way” back to the presence of God.

I testify that the Book of Mormon fills our homes with the spirit and invites learning, inspiration, forgiveness, and growth as we open and partake. I testify of the Savior, that He is in these pages. He is the reason for this incredible book, and through studying and seeking Him in our studies, we will “come unto” Him., and He will receive us. We will develop our relationship with Him, and He *will* perfect us.

I can’t wait to “be perfected” this semester with you.

Next Week: Read 1 Ne 5-11; Student Manual, chapter 3; Nibley, “Teachings of the Book of Mormon,” Semester 1, Lecture 12 (optional)

Ponder the following questions:

1. Focus on that idea of “Therefore, what?” as you read this week. Write about the

experiences you receive as a result. Come prepared to share one of these experiences in class next week.

Additional materials for this semester:

- 1) *The Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122*. You can access this online at:
<https://www.lds.org/manual/book-of-mormon-student-manual?lang=eng>
You may also choose to purchase a copy of this manual, through Deseret Book or online.
- 2) *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University*, by Dr. Hugh Nibley
<http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/book/teachings-of-the-book-of-mormon-semester-1/>
- 3) Visit: <http://www.likeawateredgarden.com> for Like a Watered Garden Podcast episodes, study guides, handouts, powerpoints, and to join our email list.
- 4) Find out more about Dr. Christina Hibbert on her award-winning website/blog: <http://www.DrChristinaHibbert.com>