

Lehi's Dream and You

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I asked our records department to tell me how many college-age youth we have in the Church. They responded 1,974,001. Good, I thought, I will speak to the *one*.

You may be here in this congregation or somewhere in any one of 170 countries. You, the one of nearly two million, are in the early morning of your life, while I am in the late evening of mine.

My college life began at Weber College, then a very small junior college. World War II had just ended. Most of the men in our class were recently returned from military service. We were, by and large, more mature than college students of your day. We had been through the war and carried with us many memories. Some of them we held on to; others we were glad to have fade away. We were more serious and did not enter into fun and games as much as you do. We wanted to get on with our lives and knew that education was the key.

We took the insignias and labels and sometimes even the buttons off our uniforms, mixed them with odds and ends of civilian clothes, and wore them to school. That was all we had to wear.

At military training camps, we had been marched from place to place in formation. Often we would sing marching songs. At

college, I attended the Institute of Religion classes. We had our own marching songs. I remember one of them:

*A root-tee-toot, a root-tee-toot.
Oh, we are boys of the institute.
We don't smoke, and we don't chew.
And we don't go with girls that do.
Some folks say we don't have fun.
We don't!*

Some laughed with us; others laughed at us. Whatever ridicule they intended with their mocking was of no concern to us. We had gained personal testimonies of the gospel. We had decided long since that we would live the gospel and not be ashamed of the Church or the history or any part of it (see Romans 1:16).

The whole focus of our lives in the military had been on destruction. That is what war is about. We were inspired by the noble virtue of patriotism. To be devoted to destruction without being destroyed yourself spiritually or morally was the test of life.

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I did not serve a mission during those years. Staying close to the Book of Mormon has, I think, made up for that. That witness had come little by little.

Together, my wife and I made our way through the ordinary challenges of life—getting through school, finding employment, raising a family.

You too live in a time of war, the spiritual war that will never end. War itself now dominates the affairs of mankind. Your world at war has lost its innocence. There is nothing, however crude or unworthy, that is not deemed acceptable for movies or plays or music or conversation. The world seems to be turned upside down. (See 2 Peter 2:1–22.)

Formality, respect for authority, dignity, and nobility are mocked. Modesty and neatness yield to slouchiness and shabbiness in dress and grooming. The rules of honesty and integrity and basic morality are now ignored. Conversation is laced with profanity. You see that in art and literature, in drama and entertainment. Instead of being refined, they become coarse. (See 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 2 Timothy 3:1–9.)

You have decisions almost every day as to whether you will follow those trends. You have many tests ahead.

As a boy, President Joseph F. Smith, son of Hyrum, came west in 1848 with his widowed mother. He was called as a missionary to Hawaii when he was 15 years of age. He spent much of the next four years alone. He was released in 1857 at the age of 19 (just the age we call missionaries now). Penniless, he stopped in California to earn money for warm clothes.

With another man, . . . [Joseph] took passage in a mail wagon. They traveled all night, and at daylight stopped near a ranch for breakfast. The passenger and the mail carrier began to prepare breakfast, while Joseph went a short distance from camp to [gather wood and] look after the horses. . . .

A wagon load of drunken men from Monte came in view, on their road to San Bernardino to kill the “Mormons,” as they boasted.

The oaths and foul language which they uttered, between their shooting, and the swinging of their pistols, were almost indescribable. . . . They were all cursing the “Mormons,” and uttering boasts of what they would do when they met them. They . . . caught sight of the mail wagon. . . . [His companion] and the mail carrier, fearing for their safety, had retired behind the chaparral, leaving all the baggage and supplies . . . exposed and unprotected.

Just as [one] drunken man approached, [young Joseph F.] came in view . . . , too late to hide. . . . The ruffian was swinging his weapon, and uttering the most blood-curdling oaths and threats ever heard against the “Mormons.” “I dared not run,” says [Joseph F.] Smith, “though I trembled for fear which I dared not show. I therefore walked right up to the camp fire, and arrived there just a minute or two before the drunken desperado, who came directly toward me, and, swinging his revolver in my face, with an oath cried out: ‘Are you a ——— ——— ——— “Mormon?”’”

[Young Joseph] looked him straight in the eyes, and answered with emphasis: “Yes, sir’ee; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through.”

*The desperado’s arms both dropped by his sides, as if paralyzed, his pistol in one hand, and he said in a subdued . . . voice, offering his hand: “Well, you are the ——— ——— pleasantest man I ever met! Shake. I am glad to see a fellow stand for his convictions.” Then he turned and [left]. [Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1919), 673–74; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith: Sixth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 188–89]*

Joseph F. Smith became the sixth President of the Church. His son Joseph Fielding Smith, who wrote the account I just gave, became the tenth President of the Church. I knew President Smith well. In 1970, he called me to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

You will not face the kind of test that Joseph F. Smith faced. In ways, your tests are going to be harder.

The Book of Mormon became the cornerstone of my testimony.

In the eighth chapter of 1 Nephi, read about Lehi's dream. He told his family, "Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision" (1 Nephi 8:2).

You may think that Lehi's dream or vision has no special meaning for you, but it does. You are in it; all of us are in it.

Nephi said, "[All scripture is likened] unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23).

Lehi's dream or vision of the iron rod has in it everything a young Latter-day Saint needs to understand the test of life.

Lehi saw:

A great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:18),

A path following a river (see 1 Nephi 8:19–22),

A mist of darkness (see 1 Nephi 12:16–17),

An iron rod which led through the mist of darkness (see 1 Nephi 11:24–25),

The tree of life, "whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10; see 1 Nephi 11:8–9, 21–24).

Read it carefully; then read it again.

If you hold to the rod, you can *feel* your way forward with the gift of the Holy Ghost, conferred upon you at the time you were confirmed a member of the Church. The Holy Ghost will comfort you. You will be able to feel the influence of the angels, as Nephi did, and feel your way through life.

The Book of Mormon has been my iron rod.

Lehi saw great multitudes of people "pressing forward" (1 Nephi 8:21) toward the tree.

The great and spacious building

was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

[1 Nephi 8:27]

One word in this dream or vision should have special meaning to you young Latter-day Saints. The word is *after*. It was *after* the people had found the tree that they became ashamed, and because of the mockery of the world they fell away.

And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. . . .

And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; [that was the test, and then Lehi said] but we heeded them not. [And that was the answer.] [1 Nephi 8:28, 33; emphasis added]

Lehi's son, Nephi, wrote:

I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him. . . .

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round. [1 Nephi 10:17, 19]

All of the symbolism in Lehi's dream was explained to his son Nephi, and Nephi wrote about it.

At your baptism and confirmation, you took hold of the iron rod. But you are never safe. It

is *after* you have partaken of that fruit that your test will come.

I think now and then of one of our classmates—very bright, good looking, faithful in the Church, and drenched with talent and ability. He married well and rose quickly to prominence. He began to compromise to please the world and please those around him. They flattered him into following after their ways, which were the ways of the world.

Sometimes it is so simple a thing as how you groom yourself or what you wear, such as a young woman teasing her hair endlessly to give the impression that it has not been combed or a young man dressing in slouchy clothes, wanting to be in style.

Somewhere in little things, my classmate's grasp on the iron rod loosened a bit. His wife held on to the rod with one hand and on to him with the other. Finally, he slipped away from her and let go of the rod. Just as Lehi's dream or vision predicted, he fell away into forbidden paths and was lost.

Largely because of television, instead of looking over into that spacious building, we are, in effect, living inside of it. That is your fate in this generation. You are living in that great and spacious building.

Who wrote this incredible vision? There is nothing like it in the Bible. Did Joseph Smith compose it? Did he write the Book of Mormon? That is harder to believe than the account of angels and golden plates. Joseph Smith was only 24 years old when the Book of Mormon was published.

You will be safe if you look like and groom like and act like an ordinary Latter-day Saint: dress modestly, attend your meetings, pay tithes, take the sacrament, honor the priesthood, honor your parents, follow your leaders, read the scriptures, study the Book of Mormon, and pray, always pray. An unseen power will hold your hand as you hold to the iron rod.

Will this solve all your problems? Of course not! That would be contrary to the purpose of

your coming into mortality. It will, however, give you a solid foundation on which to build your life. (See Helaman 5:12.)

The mist of darkness will cover you at times so much that you will not be able to see your way even a short distance ahead. You will not be able to see clearly. But you can *feel* your way. With the gift of the Holy Ghost, you can *feel* your way ahead through life. Grasp the iron rod, and do not let go. Through the power of the Holy Ghost, you can *feel* your way through life. (See 3 Nephi 18:25; D&C 9:8.)

We live in a time of war, that spiritual war that will never end. Moroni warned us that the secret combinations begun by Gadianton

are had among all people. . . .

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles [and the term gentile in that place in the Book of Mormon refers to us in our generation], it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you. . . .

Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you. [Ether 8:20, 23–24]

Atheists and agnostics make nonbelief their religion and today organize in unprecedented ways to attack faith and belief. They are now organized, and they pursue political power. You will be hearing much about them and from them. Much of their attack is indirect in mocking the faithful, in mocking religion.

The types of Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor live among us today (see Jacob 7:1–21; Alma 1:1–15; Alma 30:6–60). Their arguments are not so different from those in the Book of Mormon.

You who are young will see many things that will try your courage and test your faith. All of the mocking does not come from outside of the Church. Let me say that again: All of the mocking does not come from outside of the

Church. Be careful that you do not fall into the category of mocking.

The Lord promised, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

Even Moroni faced the same challenge. He said, because of his weakness in writing,

I fear . . . the Gentiles shall mock at our words.

[And the Lord said to him:] *Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;*

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. [Ether 12:25–27]

Embedded in that dream or vision is the “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:46).

Lehi and Nephi saw:

A virgin bearing a child in her arms,
One who should prepare the way—John
the Baptist,

The ministry of the Son of God,
Twelve others following the Messiah,
The heavens open and angels ministering
to them,

The multitudes blessed and healed,
And the Crucifixion of the Christ.

All of this they saw in dream or vision. And they saw the wisdom and pride of the world opposing His work. (See 1 Nephi 11:14–36; see also 1 Nephi 1:9–14.)

And that is what we face now.

Now to you, the one of two million, I speak individually. Just as the prophets and apostles in times past did, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what

source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.

Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

[And then Nephi added:] *Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.*

For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.

[2 Nephi 32:3–5]

You live in an interesting generation where trials will be constant in your life. Learn to follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost. It is to be a shield and a protection and a teacher for you. Never be ashamed or embarrassed about the doctrines of the gospel or about the standards that we teach in the Church. You always, if you are faithful in the Church, will be that much different from the world at large.

You have the advantage of being assured that you can be inspired in all of your decisions. You have many decisions ahead of you—small decisions that have to do with getting through school, finding a life’s companion, finding an occupation, settling in, raising children in a world that is turned upside down. Your children will be exposed so much more than we were in our generation.

We notice, as we travel about the Church, that our young people are stronger than heretofore. When I hear them speak in conferences and in sacrament meeting, I hear them quote the scriptures, and I hear them protecting the standards. I do not hear the cynical mocking that is typical of those who are not faithful and not truly converted.

We preside over a Church of twelve million-plus and growing. The Church is out in the world. Much of it is international now. Most of the members of the Church, by that standard, live a different life than you do. Many of them do not have the opportunity of going to college, but they live the gospel. And it is a wonderful, powerful thing to see them and to be among them.

As we think of you young Latter-day Saints and think of the Book of Mormon and think of the dream or vision that Lehi had, we see that there are prophecies in there that can be specifically applied to your life. Read it again, beginning with the eighth chapter of 1 Nephi, and read on to the counsel that is given. The Book of Mormon talks about life after death: what happens to the spirit (see Alma 40:11–12) and what happens in the spirit world (see 2 Nephi 2:29; 9:10–13; Alma 12:24). All of the things that you need to know are there. Read it, and make it a part of your life. Then the criticism or mocking of the world, the mocking of those in the Church, will be of no concern to you

as it is of no concern to us (see 1 Nephi 8:33). We just move forward doing the things which we are called to do and know that the Lord is guiding us.

I pray the blessings of the Lord upon you in your work. I pray the blessings of the Lord upon you in your life as you move forward from the morning of your life, where you are now, to the late evening of your life, where I am now, that you will know that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true. You will face many great and tumultuous and difficult things in your life, and you will also enjoy great inspiration and joy in your life.

You are better than we were. I have the conviction that against what was surely coming and the prophecies that were given, the Lord has reserved special spirits to bring forth at this time to see that His Church and kingdom are protected and moved forward in the world. As a servant of the Lord, I invoke His blessings upon you and bear testimony to you that the gospel is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.