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"A Great Guide to Solving Problems"

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Abstract: Demonstrates Book of Mormon's influence on youth. Stories of Alma the Younger, Enos, Ammon, Joseph Smith, and Jesus Christ are especially applicable; the Book of Mormon gives youth a "cause" with which to identify.

Does the Book of Mormon guide 14-year-olds? Interviews reveal that its stories of family life, its reports of missionary labors, spiritual guidance, and the mission of Jesus, have led youth to label the book . . .

"A GREAT GUIDE IN SOLVING PROBLEMS"

*by G. Dale Weight**

"I know the Book of Mormon is true—I just know it!" began a 14-year-old girl who had been baptized a member of the Church just two months earlier. "A few months ago on a trip west with my parents, I visited Salt Lake City, Utah. We toured several wonderful places but the highlight of the trip was our visit to Mormon Temple Square. At the conclusion of our tour around the historical buildings, I bought a copy of the Book of Mormon. That single event has changed my life and the life of my family. I began reading the Book of Mormon in Salt Lake City, and I continued reading it on the way home. I finally finished the book after arriving home in Pennsylvania. The book troubled me. I found it hard to believe that Joseph Smith could make up the story, yet I did not know what to do about my feelings concerning this new religious knowledge.

"However, not many weeks after our return home to Pennsylvania, the missionaries found us through the use of a referral card. I eagerly wanted to know

For Course 8, lesson 11 (November 15), "Effective Prayer"; for Course 10, lesson 11 (November 22), "Responsibility for Choices—Free Agency and Happiness"; for the general use of Course 12; for Course 14, lesson 16 (January 24), "Other Scriptures"; for Course 16, lesson 13 (December 13), "Achieving Balance in Our Lives: Am I Lopsided?"; for Course 18, lesson 12 (December 6), "Key to Spiritual Power"; for Course 28, lessons 5 and 7 (October 4, 18), "Peoples of the Book of Mormon" and "A Record of an Ancient People: Faith Enough to See"; and of general interest.

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Photo by Lorin Wiggins.

more. My parents knew it. Inasmuch as we have always done things together as a family, we decided to study Mormonism together. I reread the Book of Mormon, and this time I earnestly prayed about the truth of the book. When I got up from my knees that night I knew it was true—I just knew it!

"Now, after two months in the Church, has my life changed? I'll say it has! The events in the Book of Mormon are fantastic examples to live by. Those people solved their problems with the help of God. I believe it will work for me the same way. For instance, I now find I am more careful in the selection of close friends and activities. My attitude is better

—at least that is what my mom and dad say. I now have no doubts about the existence of God. I guess you could say I'm just real happy."

What about other 14-year-olds? What impact does the Book of Mormon have upon their lives? During the last few weeks I have had the opportunity of interviewing many young people from the Cleveland and Pittsburgh stakes on this subject. Almost all of them feel that it is "a great example of how righteous people lived a happy life, solving individual problems under circumstances quite similar to today's conditions." In short, they say the Book of Mormon is "a great guide in solving one's personal problems."

Individual stories in the Book of Mormon have influenced several of the young people I talked to.

Alma the Younger

One young man described the rift between Alma and his son, Alma the younger, as the great "generation gap." He said:

Alma wanted his son to be a religious man, but Alma the younger was kind of a Book of Mormon rebel. Boy, did the Lord straighten him out—it really ended that generation gap, and the strange thing about it was that the dad was right. I think I listen a little more to my dad since reading about Alma.

Enos

Another student felt that the story of Enos had had the greatest impact upon his life. The reason became apparent as he explained his thoughts:

Enos had been born in the Church. He had been a relatively good fellow. If they had individual awards in his day, he probably had a few. However, Enos, like some of us, had made some mistakes. After some real soul-searching he went into the woods to hunt, but instead he ended up praying a day and a night to ask for forgiveness. Finally, because of his strong faith in Christ, he was forgiven of his mistakes. I guess some of us have to try a bit harder at repentance.

Ammon

The story of Ammon, who taught the Lamanites, had the most impact upon another young man:

Ammon really tried hard. To go into the mission field is one thing, but to go on a mission in enemy

land and try to convert people who hate your people—he must really have had courage. He worked hard; the Lord blessed him, and he was successful. It was not easy for him—he really had to try hard. I surely hope I can be as good a missionary as Ammon was. I know I'll have to try really hard.

Joseph Smith

Still another student responded:

We hear a lot about Joseph Smith and what he did in the Church. I don't think I really understood why Joseph Smith went through so much trouble to get the Book of Mormon into the world until I read it. After reading it, although I don't understand all of it, I do realize to some extent why the Prophet was so careful, and why he did the things he did. I believe that Joseph Smith was a Prophet—he must have been to have accomplished the things he did.

Jesus Christ

One girl summed up the feelings of many when she said:

The stories of the individuals are great, and the examples and principles they lived are certainly good guidelines for our lives. But the impact of the Book of Mormon in my life occurred as I realized that Jesus Christ lived among the Book of Mormon people, and he taught them as he had the people of the Old World. The fact that he was here upon the American continent is just too much evidence to ignore. For me, the Book of Mormon made Christ real.

A Cause

Young men and women throughout the world are seeking to identify with a cause. Some take the extremist role as did many of the worldly people in the Book of Mormon. Still others take the passive role and do nothing, likewise paralleling the attitude of some of the Book of Mormon people. If young people in the Church today desire to find a cause, an exemplar, a way of life, then let them begin now to study God's revealed word in the Book of Mormon, for in this volume are found the stories and histories of people who made choices just as we do today, and their choices led them either to wickedness and destruction or to righteousness and happiness.

Library File Reference: BOOK OF MORMON—TEACHINGS; YOUTH.