SEVEN THINGS I LEARNED FROM MY 100-YEAR-OLD GRANDMA
We had dinner with my 100-year-old, incredible Grandma Martha on a Monday evening, laughing at my nephew’s baby giggles and squeezing her hand with love when she just couldn’t hear us. It felt so normal—just another dinner. But the next day she lost her balance and fell in her kitchen, breaking her pelvis, and a few short days later she passed away.

Some may say, “Oh, she lived a good long life. It was just her time,” but Grandma was immortal to me, passing through every setback with resilience and joy and living and living and living. It felt like she would just be there with us forever, always there to wave goodbye on her porch until we had driven out of sight. At 93, she rode a camel in Jerusalem and at 98 she was still taking care of her husband and living in her own home. In fact, at 100 she was living in her own home by herself.

Though I grew up on the other side of the country from her, I loved her from afar, and when we moved to Utah and I started school at BYU, she became my escape from the stress of college. Her home was like a temple to me, always filled with the Spirit. I knew I could come to her to talk about anything and she would have something profound to say that would improve my outlook. Her closeness to Father in Heaven brought anyone in her presence closer to Him. She was the greatest type of Christ I’ve ever known. I often found myself jumping into my car after a visit with
her on her white couches, my hand still warm from holding hers, and typing something she said onto a note on my phone so I could remember it always. Here are just seven of those lessons she taught me that I hope will live on in me, even though she has graduated from this mortal life:

“There is Joy to be Found in Every Stage”

When I felt lonely my freshman year of college, I went to her feeling completely sorry for myself. I had braces, I had recently had jaw surgery and my face was swollen and foreign to me, I felt deeply self-conscious and no one was asking me on dates. Instead of pitying me, she told me that every season has its challenges but each stage also has many things to be grateful for. There is joy to be found in every stage of life no matter what stage you have left behind or what stage is yet before you.

That was a motto she truly lived by. She found joy living on a farm in small-town Missouri; some of her fondest memories were from living in a trailer in Indiana during my Grandpa’s graduate school years when she had to share pots and pans and baby clothes with neighbors to get by; and she gave her all as a sister missionary in the Central States Mission when she was the only sister who knew how to drive a car. She faced challenges squarely, knowing she could weather any storm with God on her side. God was and is her dear friend.

The Courage to Love

When she was going to meet my Grandpa’s family for the first time, he warned her not to greet with her traditional hug and kiss because that was just not how his family was. She heard him out, but when they arrived at his family home, she walked right in and held nothing back, giving each person a hug and kiss anyway. She didn’t let pretenses or the thought of what others might think stop her from loving wholeheartedly. Whether it was her friend of many years or a stranger coming to her house for the first time, she greeted everyone with love and familiarity. I think it is for this reason that she became the only woman to ever drive her father-in-law’s car. He trusted and loved her because you couldn’t help but love her. Her warmth permeated every heart.

Be a Gathering Place

When a new family moved in to the neighborhood with young boys the same age as her sons, Grandma gathered them all to go spelunking (a popular activity in Missouri, the land of caves). She was the spelunking mom, even when Grandpa wasn’t around to help wrangle their pack of boys. After having fun exploring in the mud, one of the neighbor boys started crying, fearing what his mother would do if he came home covered in mud. My Grandma said not to worry, and promptly took him around back to hose him down.

This family ended up joining the Church because of the fellowship she gave, mothering children she didn’t even birth, and making her house the gathering place for neighborhood kids. She had regular popcorn ball parties, bringing kids from town out to the farm. Living so far removed from everyone made those who did come out to the farm a deliberate group—the group to influence her young boys. She often fed the missionaries and entertained guests from 60 different countries over the years, giving her sons a view into many cultures and people right there on their rural Rolla, Missouri farm.

It was in that remote haven where she began generation-spanning traditions that still permeate our family culture. She was famous for her gingerbread house decorating each Thanksgiving, baking and assembling 35+ gingerbread houses. She also brought a Danish tradition into the
family of dropping an almond into a big batch of rice pudding and everyone eating it until someone found the almond. These traditions brought us all together to laugh and joy in each other.

“If You Marry a Geologist, be a Geologist’s Wife”

My Grandpa was a world-renowned geologist, teaching at multiple universities, spending two years living in Ankara, Turkey, helping get the first man on the moon, and traveling all over the world for his expertise. Though she was busy running a household, serving in the ward and community, directing community theater and, at one point, running an interior design shop, she also made it a point to go with my Grandpa on many of his geology expeditions, not only for the gratifying adventure, but so she could learn more about geology and support her husband in his career. She learned all she could about rocks so she could be a true geologist’s wife. As I was dating various people throughout college, she reminded me that no matter who I married and what kind of career he had to really be their wife. “If you marry a doctor, be a doctor’s wife. If you marry an entrepreneur, be an entrepreneur’s wife.” Likewise, my Grandpa married an entertainer of guests and someone who took everyone in as her own. He was the Good Samaritan’s husband.

“If It Is To Be, It Will Be”

One day during college, I came over to tell Grandma about some of my insecurities I had over a boy I was dating. I wasn’t sure if it was right to move forward in the relationship or if we liked each other enough. With all of these questions swirling in my head, she gave me a simple, yet memorable line: “If it is to be, it will be. If it is not to be, it won’t, and that’s ok.”

Instead of ruminating myself into a hole, her short phrase made me realize that no matter how hard I thought about the situation, God had a plan for me and whatever happened would be a
blessing in the end. If it didn’t work out with this boy (which it didn’t), it would be ok because there was another situation that *would* be that was better (which it was). Side note, it really was ok that every boy I told her about didn’t work out, because the one boy I ended up marrying visited her without my knowing, just to hold her hand and get to know her. Of him, she said, “This man must have wings…and all the other things that angels have!”

“I am Not Lucky. I am Blessed”

With all the love and warmth, she once told me, “I am so blessed. If anyone says I am lucky I will pop them on the nose. I am not lucky. I am blessed.” Though I could never imagine my white-haired glowy Grandma “popping” anyone on the nose, she was so acutely aware that she was blessed every day of her life. She woke up filled with gratitude for another day—not that she was “lucky” to have made it through another night but that she was blessed that Heavenly Father granted her breath for another morning. Nothing was lucky to her. She was blessed in all things.

“I Make Other People’s Lives My Business”

My Dad asked Grandma (his mother) once why everyone felt so loved and comfortable around her. What was her secret? She thought a few days about this question, and when she finally gave him an answer it was this: “I make other people’s lives my business.” She didn’t wait to be called upon or assigned. When a missionary came down with the mumps, she called the mission president and said, “Your missionary has the mumps and I am going to take care of him at my house. Good day.” That missionary stayed with them for a month and is a family friend to this day. When a new mother broke her leg, she was there to help with the baby and the house. When a woman in the neighborhood had deep depression, she visited her every day for three years.

She was not just a beloved Matriarch in her family, she was an extraordinary woman, influencing thousands in her life and helping them to see a glimpse into who Jesus Christ is. I know that is who she was to me.
She made my life her business, setting the goal to live long enough to see me have my first child. She set this goal before I was even dating anyone. Though she won’t be here in body for that day, I know she is in the spirit world with our children and they will be that much more golden for knowing her post-mortal, glorious self.

VIDEO: DID ANCIENT ISRAELITES BUILD Temples OUTSIDE OF JERUSALEM?
View the article and video on Book of Mormon Central.

“And I, Nephi, did build a temple” 2 Nephi 5:16

The Know

Some time after their arrival in the New World, Nephi and his followers separated themselves
from the Lamanites and established a small community of believers (2 Nephi 5:5–15). The Book of Mormon reports that at that time, Nephi constructed a temple. “And I, Nephi, did build a temple; and I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land, wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon’s Temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine” (2 Nephi 5:16).

Some have wondered whether building a temple outside of Jerusalem would’ve been appropriate for devout Israelites following the Law of Moses. At least three different antagonists of the Book of Mormon during Joseph Smith’s lifetime immediately attacked the Nephite record for supposedly contravening biblical law, which these critics insisted forbade building any temples outside of Jerusalem.1 Others have also wondered how it would have been logistically possible for a small band of Nephites to build a temple “after the manner … of Solomon,” which took years of intensive, large-scale labor to construct.2

Although unknown in Joseph Smith’s day, archaeological work has now uncovered that ancient Israelites did, in fact, construct temples “after the manner … of Solomon” at locales outside of Jerusalem and even outside the land of Israel, for that matter. According to William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely, “Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of at least four Israelite temples not mentioned in the Bible that flourished during [the time before Lehi].” These temples have been found at Megiddo, Arad, Lachish, and Beersheba.3

Concerning the temple at Arad, for instance, Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager write, “The temple [is] dedicated to the God of Israel” and consists of a tripartite structure with “a forecourt, main hall, and Holy of Holies,” the same as Solomon’s Temple. While the temple at Arad is not entirely like Solomon’s Temple (it is a “broad-room” type as opposed to the Jerusalem temple’s “long-room” type layout), it shared enough similarities in architecture and function to be unmistakable as an authentic Israelite temple, complete with its own force of administrative priests.4

In 2020 archaeologists at Tel Aviv University in Israel published an article describing the discovery and excavation of a temple at Tel Moza just 4 miles northwest of Jerusalem. “It apparently stood, operated, and welcomed worshipers throughout most of the Iron Age II, from its establishment around 900 B.C.E. until its demise sometime toward the end of the Iron Age (early sixth century B.C.E.).”5 Among other reasons, its proximity to Jerusalem and its architectural parallel with the structure of Solomon’s temple are indications that the temple at Tel Moza was indeed a sanctioned Israelite temple.6

What’s more, the Bible itself “describes at least eleven buildings that can be identified as shrines dedicated to the worship of Yahweh,” as Hamblin and Seely clearly showed. Their list includes holy places at “Shiloh, Dan, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Hebron, Bethlehem, Nob, Ephraim, Ophrah, and Gibeah.”7 Thus, in addition to actual temples, ancient Israelites were evidently not hesitant to construct smaller places outside of Jerusalem for worshipping the Lord.
But perhaps the most famous, and, for the Book of Mormon, most important, example of an ancient Israelite temple being built outside of Jerusalem is the temple that was built by Jewish refugees on the island of Elephantine in Egypt. As confirmed by a corpus of letters written by the Jews living on the island to officials back in Judah, the community had been ransacked by the pagan Egyptians, and local leaders requested redress. “[A] very fragmentary column [in one of the papyri] referred to Temple sacrifices and included a three-fold petition, apparently for protection and the Temple’s reconstruction,” as reported by a leading Jewish scholar Bezalel Porten.8

Yet another letter in that collection refers explicitly to the temple (and the sacrificial ordinances occurring there) a number of times, and “bare traces of the temple itself may have been uncovered in recent excavations.”9 Although the temple at Elephantine post-dates Lehi's departure from Jerusalem by about two centuries, it gives strong evidence that ancient Jews were not reticent to build sanctuaries outside of even the land of Israel itself when necessary.

The Why
The evidence of ancient Israelites building temples outside of Jerusalem indicates that Nephi was not breaking from established custom in his construction of a temple in the New World. Nephi was undoubtedly well-versed in the scriptures and religious practices of his day and knew the importance of having the blessings of the temple in both his life and the lives of his followers. Following an indisputable precedent, he maintained continuity with his Israelite heritage by building a temple where he and his small band of followers could focus their love, devotion, sacrifices, and obedience to God.

The evidence from Elephantine supports the veracity of the Book of Mormon’s report that Israelite refugees built temples outside of the land of Israel. Following the destruction of Solomon’s Temple, certain Jews in Egypt built a small temple to continue religious practices in the community, precisely as the Nephites did, as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

As Hugh Nibley explained, “The discovery of the Elephantine documents in 1925 showed that colonies of Jews actually did flee into the desert in the manner of Lehi, during his lifetime, and for the same reasons; arriving in their new home far up the Nile, they proceeded to build a replica of Solomon’s Temple, exactly as Lehi did upon landing in the New World.” Speaking of the Nephites, Nibley accordingly summarized elsewhere, “In all these things they were simply following in the established line without any break from the past.”
Righteous Israelites in antiquity were a temple-building people. In their poverty, they constructed a tabernacle in the wilderness as the Lord commanded them to do. Wanting to keep the Lord’s presence central in their personal lives and community, the observant Israelites transported that precursor of the temple with them as they wandered for forty years in the desert and even long after they had settled in their promised land. Once the time was right, Solomon built a permanent temple in Jerusalem. In a similar manner, Nephi and his people followed this pattern of consecrated devotion once they had reached the land of promise given to them by the Lord their God.

Further Reading


Notes:
1. “[The Book of Mormon] represents the temple worship as continued in his new land of promise contrary to every precept of the Law, and so happy are the people of Nephi as never to shed a tear on account of excision, nor to turn an eye toward Jerusalem or God’s temple.” Alexander Campbell, “Delusions,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2, no. 2 (7 February 1831): 92. “[The Book of Mormon] represents the temple service continuing in this land, contrary to every precept of the divine law to the Jews in the Bible.” “Mormonism,” *New York Weekly Messenger and Young Men’s Advocate* (29 April 1835). “[The Book of Mormon] finds the North American Indians . . .
building temples five thousand miles from Jerusalem, where alone the Jews were to worship, but [also] offering sacrifice, and performing all the functions of the priesthood acceptably to the Lord, and still exhorting each other to keep the law of Moses.” James H. Hunt, *Mormonism: Embracing the Origin, Rise and Progress of the Sect, with an Examination of the Book of Mormon; Also, Their Troubles in Missouri, and Final Expulsion from the State* (St. Louis: Ustick & Davies, 1844), 86.

2. See for instance the argument along these lines entertained by B. H. Roberts, *Studies in the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed., ed. Brigham D. Madsen (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 259–261. Brant Gardner and Mark Wright have responded to this concern by noting that Nephis’s temple could conceivably have been “after the manner of Solomon’s” in cosmic, ritual function and perhaps basic architectural layout (although later Nephite temples would have almost certainly adopted and followed Mesoamerican temple patterns), not necessarily scale and grandeur, which they acknowledge would have been practically impossible for the small Nephite colony to replicate. See Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 2:101–104; Mark Alan Wright, “Axes Mundi: Ritual Complexes in Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 81–82.


4. Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 338; William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know And When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans’s Publishing, 2001), 181. “Several priestly families at Arad, with names identical to such families in the Bible, are, in fact, known from the ostraca, or inscribed potsherds, one of which also mentions the ‘house/temple of Yahweh’.”


All over the world, Latter-day Saints and others decide to be more diligent about reading their scriptures. They also redouble their efforts in praying, attending church, and going to the temple. But rarely, when we hear such lists, do people include pondering.

Maybe it’s because pondering feels like we aren’t doing anything. It may look as if we’re just pressing life’s pause button. But, in reality, pondering is not passive. It’s active. When we are fully immersed in deep thought our mind is racing, not tuning out.

It’s said that writing is the only profession where you are working even when you’re looking out a window. I remember staring off in concentration as a child, and my mother, who had been calling my name and was now a bit frustrated, saying, “Where are you?” I think I was in Chapter Six.

Fully immersing ourselves in a spiritual quest is even better. It requires the same focus and the
same uninterrupted time. When we meditate upon a truth—or even a possible solution to a problem—we can clear the channel to receive revelation.

David O. McKay said, “I think we pay too little attention to the value of meditation; a principle of devotion… Meditation is one of the most secret, most sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.”

Pondering is essential. We cannot hope to hear answers to our prayers if we dash off quickly right after them. Or hop into bed and fall asleep. The insights we’d love to have elude us because we switch gears and dive into something else after scripture study. I am as guilty of this as anyone, my list of to-do’s looming in the air and pulling me away.

And the adversary is pleased with our busy-ness. If we can’t hear promptings from the Holy Ghost, if we close off the channel of inspiration from our Heavenly Father, Satan has achieved one of his own goals—to basically silence the heavens. Though God wants us to hear answers, warnings, comfort, and inspiration, we have shut the door by turning to other matters.

So how can we make pondering inclusive in our study and in our day? Here are some techniques I’ve used successfully:

Get rid of noise. Quiet is essential. Turn off the music while you’re driving, turn off video screens and TV when you’re home. Not forever. Just when you want to connect to your Father in Heaven, to open that conduit, and get the other half of what is supposed to be a two-way conversation. We know prayer is not just reciting, or asking for what we want—it’s supposed to be interactive. And when we fill all our air space with other people’s ideas, or with constant sounds from other sources, we block inspiration from heaven and our own thoughts. James E Faust told us to “filter out the static generated by Satan.”

I once asked a classroom of high school students when the last time was that they had an original thought. Total silence. For a long time. I wanted to say, “Are you kidding me? You should be having these every day!” But when your hours are crammed full of talking, texting, earphone music, homework, and the mundane tasks of the day, you don’t think big thoughts. You don’t wonder about the great questions of life. You don’t taste creativity. You don’t have bursts of inspiration or fresh ideas.

Take a walk. There’s something about the pace, the change of scenery, the fresh air, maybe even a kinetic component to the motion of walking. All I know is that I agree with Raymond Inman, who said, “If you are seeking creative ideas, go out walking. Angels whisper to a man when he goes for a walk.” Sometimes you’ll have a “Eureka” moment, and sometimes you’ll simply gain a deeper—or wider—understanding of something that’s been puzzling you.

Take notes. Always have a way to capture the thoughts that suddenly occur to you while meditating. Keep a notepad on your nightstand for thoughts that come in the night. You might even write down flashes of truth that came to you in prayer.

Control Your Thoughts. Many think this is impossible, but it’s not. It’s just difficult. With practice we can drive unhealthy thoughts away so that there’s room for messages from the Holy Ghost. Don’t give in to resentments, judgmental thoughts, selfish ideas, or sinful ones. Anything that can block inspiration is put there by Satan, and you have the power to cast it aside.

Do Family History. Often, when praying and then pondering about how to find records, we experience miracles and “coincidences” that open doors. Thousands of such stories fill our
Concentrate during Sacrament Meeting. I was recently pondering the many spiritual experiences I’ve had during this meeting, and was surprised at how many times I got distinct answers to my prayers, or glimpses of truth and understanding, just by having my mind ready at this singular meeting. Pray for the ability to really tune in, listen to the speakers and ponder what they’re saying. This meeting also gives us a weekly opportunity to deeply concentrate on the Sacrament itself, and on the Savior’s amazing atonement. I know it’s difficult if you have wiggly children, but don’t give up.

Christ said, “Ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds.” (3 Nephi 17:3) We can teach our children to do this as well. We can also take meditation classes and learn techniques that we can then share with our families.

How can we keep doing it? That’s the easy part, because pondering yields answers and wisdom. Once we realize how powerful it is, how individual and customized those answers are, we want that again. We simply have to watch for Satan’s distractions and roadblocks, and not allow him to deprive us of the amazing gifts that result from pondering. President Thomas S. Monson once said, “I implore each of us to prayerfully study and ponder the Book of Mormon each day. As we do so, we will be in a position to hear the voice of the spirit, to resist temptation, to overcome doubt and fear, and to receive heaven’s help in our lives.” Wow—who wouldn’t want every one of those blessings?

Perhaps best of all, we will feel God’s love for us. President Henry B. Eyring said, “As you ponder the scriptures and begin to do what you covenanted with God to do, I can promise you that you will feel more love for God and more of His love for you.”

Hilton’s newest work, *A Little Christmas Prayer*, is not just for Christmas. Sometimes it takes a child to raise a village, and this tale teaches anyone, of any faith, the magic of gratitude. All her books and *Youtube Mom* videos can be found on her website. She currently serves as an Interfaith Specialist for Public Affairs.

COME, FOLLOW ME FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL: “OH, HOW GREAT THE PLAN OF OUR GOD”
Isaiah: Journey Before Destination

In Jacob 6:4, Jacob tells us that his brother Nephi asked him to talk about Isaiah that we “may learn and glorify the name of [our] God.” While all of scripture has the power to bring us closer to the Lord and help us become like Him, the writings of Isaiah seem special somehow. In 2 Nephi 11:2, Nephi tells us that his soul “delighteth” in the words of Isaiah. In Mosiah 14, Abinadi quotes an entire chapter of Isaiah when teaching King Noah and his priests. And most noteworthy of all, in 3 Nephi 13:1, the Lord Himself said, “great are the words of Isaiah,” and commanded us specifically that we “ought to search these things…diligently.”

I’ve often wondered why Isaiah was so important for us to study. But the question of “Why?” hasn’t helped me nearly as much as the question of “How?” How can we study Isaiah, a book of scripture that Nephi openly admits is difficult for people to understand if they aren’t deeply familiar with the prophesying of the Jews? What goal should we aim for? How can we read these verses so that we realize the purpose for which God gave them to us, that is, to search them diligently so that we may learn and glorify the name of our God?

One way of doing this could be borrowed from an ancient mode of study still used among
Orthodox Jews of the Lithuanian tradition today. It’s called *torah lishmah* (תורה למשתת), or “scripture study for its own sake.” Rabbis and their students who adhere to this tradition claim that scripture study has no goal or outcome that comes at the end of a process. Rather, they believe that the purpose of immersing ourselves in the word of God is in who we become in the journey of study. They claim that somehow we change, we become different people—better people—when we dive deeply into the scriptures. If they’re difficulty to understand, all the better, they say, because the challenges of the journey to understand such scripture build us into the kinds of people who are willing to sacrifice of our time and energies to see God more clearly.

The gift of God to those who immerse themselves in scripture study for its own sake and not for recognition or finding an answer that they can discard the moment they uncover it is twofold. First, the promise that God Himself will attend their learning journey in a partnership as sacred and personal as the relationship God had with Moses when He revealed Torah to him at Sinai. And second, that as they plunge into scripture and make life changes, even repent, based on the things they learn, God promises them, so they say, that they will see the world as God sees it. As they do this, they come to truly see their brothers and sisters through the eyes of Heaven, or, as Elder Wirthlin once said it, to see others not “in terms of yesterday and today,” but “in terms of forever…as the glorious beings [they] are capable of coming.”[1]

So, whatever our level of familiarity may be with the culture and customs of Ancient Israel, I invite you to take comfort and solace in a bit of light from our Jewish siblings. It's okay if it's confusing right now. It's not so important where you are as where you’re going. What’s important is that we try, for in the very act of trying we come to know Him, and that is really the whole point, isn’t it?

**You are Not Alone**

In the midst of what can sometimes feel like a lot of complicated passages, 2 Nephi 7 begins with some of Isaiah’s simplest. As I’ve repented throughout my life and felt like God and others couldn’t possibly forgive me, or when blessings haven’t come when I was so certain I needed them, the Lord’s words here have comforted me. I invite you to imagine that, right before this verse, you’ve just had a heartfelt talk with Father about how far away He sometimes feels, or how answers to prayer seem impossible to find, or the voice of the Spirit seems to have fallen silent. This verse is His eternal reply to these and any other questions asking whether He has forsaken us or, in the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith, “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”[2]

“Thus saith the Lord [to any and all such questions]:”

“Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord: Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Yea, to whom have I sold you?”

In other words, He asks, “What are you talking about? Where’s the proof that I’ve forsaken you? Did I sign anything saying I’ve sold you or disowned you? Who would I have sold you to?”

Another passage by Isaiah in 1 Nephi 21 tells us the same thing:

“Behold, Zion hath said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me—but he will show that he hath not. For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.”
Speaking for the Lord, Elder Holland repeated the same message for our day:

“However late you think you are,” he said, “however many chances you think you have missed, however many mistakes you feel you have made or talents you think you don’t have, or however far from home and family and God you feel you have traveled, I testify that you have not traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”[3]

This is one of the precious pearls of Isaiah: that no matter what, no matter what, God is always there for us, always there with us. It’s not just that He suffered for our sins in Gethsemane, nor that, as Alma 7:11-14 and 2 Nephi 9:21 both explain, He suffered every pain and heartache we have ever or will ever feel. It is all this and more. He, after seeing all our imperfections and stubborn pride and rebellion (big and small), He sticks around. Why? 1 Nephi 19:9 gives us the answer: “because of His loving kindness…towards the children of men.” He loves us. He loves you. So, when despair and hopeless threaten and tempt you to think that He has abandoned you, remember the words of Isaiah and know that He has not, does not, nor ever will leave your side. Never ever.

Walk in His Light Rather than Our Own

The last verses of 2 Nephi 7 hold a promise and a warning. “Who is among you,” the Lord asks, “that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?”

Translation? Is there anyone that follows the Prophet and keeps the commandments who doesn’t have the Lord’s light in their lives to help them? No, definitely not. Everybody who does these things will have His light to bless them. That’s a promise.

But there are some who, rather than obey the Lord and walk in His light, would choose to make their own light and walk in that. To this, the Lord responds in the next verse:

“Behold,” He says, “all ye that kindle fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks which ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand—ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

Translation? As for all of you who prefer to walk your own path and not obey my voice, the Lord says, go ahead. Walk in that light for a while. Try out those little sparks you’ve kindled to light your way in the darkness of the world. But know this, He concludes: if you try to light your own way, it’s not going to go well.

“I will be a light unto them forever,” says the Lord in 2 Nephi 10:14, “that hear my words.” His is the light that, as the Joseph Smith Translation of John 1: 4-5 says, “shineth in the world, and the world perceiveth it not.” Importantly, verses 8 and 9 clarify that John, though an Apostle, “was not that light, but came to bear witness of that light, which lighteth every man who cometh into the world.”

This is the light that will light our way. Creating our own light instead of following His is the very definition of priestcraft. In 2 Nephi 26:29, the Lord explains that, “priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world.” In contrast, the Lord commands us in 3 Nephi 18:24, “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.” Even when letting our light shine as the Lord told us to in the Sermon on the Mount, it must
always be His light that we hold up, rather than our own.

So, as disciples of Christ, let us trust Him. His way, His path and His light will keep us safe in the otherwise dark and dreary waste of this world. Our hastily kindled sparks may light a way for a time, but they cannot light the way, and certainly not forever. If we lay down our prideful kindling at His feet, His light and love will show us the straight and narrow path that leads to life eternal at its end, and joy and happiness all along the way.


[2] Doctrine and Covenants 121:1


AIRLINE ENDS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHOCOLATIER OVER CEO’S TRADITIONAL VALUES
What does Christianity have to do with the quality of chocolate? A lot, according to Swiss Air.

The company just announced that it’s cutting ties with Läderach, one of its high-end sweets suppliers, because the owner happens to be a believer. And not just any believer, but a pro-life, pro-marriage evangelical. According to the international airliner, the sky is the limit for that.

“Because I fight for the unborn life, I’m accused of misogyny,” CEO Johannes Läderach told reporters. “But I’m not a misogynist—60% of our managers are women.”

And while Swiss Air was worried about the impact of his views on the crew who identify as gay, Johannes Läderach was adamant:

No one at Läderach is homophobic—neither the management nor the staff. We have homosexuals working for us. We don’t ask about it. Läderach has a zero-tolerance policy regarding discrimination.
Unfortunately for the chocolatier, who employs more than 1,000 people in 14 countries, none of that seems to matter to the airline. Like a lot of major corporations, it doesn’t care if the accusations of intolerance are real—it only cares about pushing Christians out of the marketplace.

To read the full article, CLICK HERE.

LATTER-DAY SAINT FICTION: TWO CONTEMPORARIES WITH WESTERN SETTINGS

As my readers surely know I have a soft spot for Westerns, so when an author I greatly admire
announced the publication of her contemporary Western I had to give it a try, even though it’s written for a general market audience. She did great and I enjoyed reading it, but frankly I prefer her historical and mystery/suspense novels. When it comes right down to it, however, I’ll read and likely enjoy any Heather Moore novel.

The second novel, though set in Wyoming, is more Romantic Suspense than Western. This is one of those suspenseful novels it’s almost impossible to set down long enough to get anything else done. Kathi Oram Peterson has become one of those authors I can always count on to deliver a top tier reading experience.

**ONE SUMMER DAY by Heather B. Moore**

Heather B. Moore is well known to readers under her own name, by a shortened version of her name, H. B. Moore, and as Jane Redd. She writes for multiple markets, but is probably best known to readers of this column as H. B. Moore, the author of multiple scripturally based novels, including the *Out of Jerusalem* series and historical thrillers such as *The Killing Curse*. Under the longer version of her name, which she uses for Romance and Women’s Fiction, she has started a new series called *Prosperity Ranch*, which begins with *One Summer Day*. This story is a general market modern Western. (Yes, the characters drink coffee and beer, but there is no explicit sex.)

*One Summer Day* begins almost a year after Macie’s divorce from her cheating husband, Knox Prosper, a rodeo circuit cowboy. He’s not paying support and she isn’t earning enough to support herself and her daughter, Ruby, with her small jewelry making business. She is concerned because three-year-old Ruby knows no family other than herself, so she agrees to an extended visit with her ex-husband’s family at Prosper Ranch where Ruby can get to know her grandparents. When she arrives she is met by Knox’s older brother, Holt.

Holt met Macie first and has harbored feelings for her since then, though their meeting was brief and he only saw her a couple of times while she was married to his brother and never dated her at all before his brother stepped in. When he meets her plane he realizes he isn’t as over her as he had thought. He and his family don’t know the reason the couple divorced, but Holt suspects it has something to do with Knox’s inability to handle finances well. After all, Knox has been borrowing money from the ranch coffers and Holt personally for a long time and has never paid any of it back.

Ruby instantly becomes the darling of her grandparents. Macie discovers her former mother-in-law is harboring hope that she and Knox will reunite. A neighboring woman makes it clear she has Holt in her sights. And Macie and Holt discover their feelings for each other are not only awkward, but rapidly growing. How can someone fall in love with her ex’s sibling? Or his brother’s ex-wife?

This story grabs the reader’s attention immediately. The character’s are likable, but not as strong as the much loved characters in some of Moore’s other books. Holt is kind, compassionate, a hard worker, thoughtful of others, but is a bit of a pushover in business transactions. Macie struggled to care for her dying mother through high school and within a month of her death became involved with Knox, then rushed into a “shotgun” marriage. She loves her daughter, but gives into her tantrums, consequently Ruby is a manipulating brat. Macie is also too willing to push a physical relationship with Holt, considering her disastrous experience with Knox. It is his personal strength, not hers, that applies the brakes. The other characters are not as well
developed as I would like, but since this is a series I assume that will come in the next two books. The plot also leads the reader to expect a stronger ending, but I assume loose ends will be tied up in those next volumes. The background for the story includes a ranch, deeply involved in training horses and rodeo stock, near a small Texas town. Rex, the ranch owner and father of Holt and Knox, is the town mayor. The background is realistic and enjoyable. There are a few annoying grammar errors, but overall this is an entertaining novel contemporary romance readers will enjoy.

Heather B. Moore is a USA Today Best Selling Author and the recipient of multiple awards. She attended Cairo American College, the Anglician School of Jerusalem, and received her Bachelor of Science degree from Brigham Young University. She, her husband, and children live in Utah.

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SUMMER DAY, Prosperity Ranch #1, by Heather B. Moore, Published by Mirror Press, 166 ONE Pages, soft cover $11.99. Also available for eReaders.

A STRANGER WATCHES by Kathi Oram Peterson

Kathi Oram Peterson is one of the best Mystery/Suspense authors currently writing in any market. Her newest book, A Stranger Watches, is set in and around a small, rural community in Wyoming. It features a young woman who had a serious falling out with her father following her mother’s death and his hurried remarriage. She leaves home and begins her own business, a chain of restaurants. After five years of estrangement Kyra receives an email from her father saying he is coming to visit her, but he never arrives. Wishing to end their separation, she returns home to find her father isn’t there and hasn’t been seen for a couple of months, all of the first floor furniture is missing, her father and the wife he married so hastily are divorced (or are they?) and her father’s next door neighbor wanders into the house in the middle of the night. The altercation with the neighbor results in her shooting him, then discovering he is her father’s attorney. She turns to the local sheriff for help and finds herself becoming increasingly attached to him and his daughter. What she doesn’t know is someone is secretly watching and listening.

A major character in this story is Boo, Kyra’s Rottweiler. Dog lovers will love him. He is accurately portrayed as a smart, loyal animal with strong protective instincts. Peterson does a great job fleshing out both major and minor characters. She spreads around negative qualities and questionable actions in enough characters to keep the reader guessing. She also creates a sense of caring and concern for characters caught up in difficult circumstances. The story is fast paced, filled with twists and turns, and keeps the reader turning pages and staying up late. Not wishing to provide any spoilers, I won’t say more about the great plot, but will simply say readers, male or female, young or older, will enjoy this one.

Kathi Oram Peterson received a BA in English from the University of Utah. She then worked for a curriculum publisher. After raising her three children she turned to writing full length novels.

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A STRANGER WATCHES by Kathi Oram Peterson, Published by Covenant Communications, 250 pages, soft cover $16.99. Also available on Audio CD and for eReaders.
“Early Wednesday morning, February 5, an individual armed with a knife entered the missionary training center in São Paulo, Brazil,” said Nei Garcia, Brazil Area director of public affairs.

“Security guards were able to detain the man near the reception desk until police arrived.”

Though the details are not totally clear, “At some point, when the intruder attempted to attack police, he was shot and killed by police,” reported Garcia.

“None of the missionaries or MTC staff were harmed during this incident. Families of the missionaries and staff are being informed.”

“We are working closely with local authorities and are grateful for their efforts to respond and investigate. We will also provide missionaries and staff with any needed support,” Garcia added.

“We are grateful for the prayers and support that have been offered at this time, both for the missionaries and the family of the individual who was killed.”
FEATURES

The Oft-Forgotten Legacy of the Pilgrims
By Maurine Proctor

Pilgrim Governor William Bradford’s New Testament Owned by Latter-day Saint
By Brent Ashworth

Truly a Day of Thanksgiving
By Daris Howard

12 Chapters of the New General Handbook Are Available in 26 Languages
By Meridian Church Newswire

Things I #GiveThanks for During this Pandemic
By Carolyn Nicolaysen

VIDEO: Peter Hollens and David Archuleta Join Voices in Needed Musical Message, “It is well with my soul”
By Meridian Magazine

Area Leaders in West Africa Gave TV Interviews to Invite All to Watch Prophet’s Message
By Meridian Church Newswire
NBC talked to a 100-year-old doctor who still ran his own practice. He had a few untraditional pieces of medical wisdom to share. 4. “Exercise, to me, is totally unnecessary. I do things my way, like skiing when I’m 100. Nobody else does that even if they have energy. And I try to eat pretty correctly and get exercise and fresh air and sunshine.” Try to sit back, because you will learn a lot more listening to others than telling them what you know.” 75. “You have to love what you do. If you find a job you love, you will never have to work a day in your life.” My Grandma just recently passed away after a hard battle with cancer. When reflecting on her death, I want to remember the good things rather than the bad, and so I compiled a list of all the
things she taught me that I never want to forget. Some aren't as important as others, but all are meaningful because I'm so lucky she was able to pass a little bit of wisdom onto me. I've always struggled with my weight, but the way my grandma complimented me and told me how beautiful I was helped me to realize that what society views as beautiful now was not necessarily what was considered beautiful ten, twenty, thirty years ago, so why should you care? It's what's on the inside that makes you beautiful. At the time, I neither planned nor anticipated that this tiny experiment would one day be included in the Library of Congress digital archive of "materials of historical importance" and the few friends would become millions of monthly readers all over the world, ranging from the Dutch high school student who wrote to me this morning to my 77-year-old grandmother in. universally wise sense the word implies, here are seven things I've learned in seven years of making those choices, of. Also: Because Brain Pickings is in its fourteenth year and because I write primarily about ideas of a timeless character, I have decided to plunge into my vast archive every Wednesday and choose from the thousands of essays one worth resurfacing and resavoring. Her oldest grandson is 39 years old now. He's married and a father of two young girls. My grandma's pension is about 450 euros a month. He earns at least five times more. Yet, she gives him money or a gift three times a year: on Christmas, Easter, and his birthday. My grandma grew up in the countryside and she helped her mother raise her seven siblings because she was the oldest one. She got married in her early twenties. She first worked in a mine, then in a shoe factory. It might teach you some things that you'll never hear from any motivational speaker or life coach out there. The Ascent. A community of storytellers documenting the journey to happiness and fulfillment. During the past 20 years, here's what I have learned. 1. Identify common values. These are the things you discover early on that put you on the same wavelength. They might include religious background (even if you don't participate in organized religion), environmentalism, political views, agreement about where you want to live, spending habits and attitudes about money. The more areas of compatibility, the better. That means everything from financial strategies and investment scams to working and living better as we get older. My most recent book is Estate Planning Smarts -- a guide for baby boomers and their parents. If you have story ideas or tips, please e-mail me at: deborah [at] estateplanningsmarts [dot] com. You can also follow me on Twitter.