

Underneath the Bookshelf

By Suchat Chaichana

In a pile of dusty books, a single book caught my attention. I pulled it out and wiped off the dust. It was a Book of Mormon.

I have many memories of growing up in northern Thailand, but two things stand out distinctly: inequality and the name of Jesus Christ. I remember inequality because I witnessed poverty all around me, including in my own family. I remember Jesus Christ because at my Christian middle school I heard His name often, though I didn't know then that He would later come to have great meaning in my life.

My concern over inequality was reinforced when, as part of my university studies, I had the opportunity to travel to the more rural parts of Thailand, where I saw many more poverty-stricken people. Why were some people born into families in which they had everything they needed while others were born into starving families? I searched for solutions, but was disappointed in the beliefs of my own religion and in different political philosophies. I gradually realized that society could be changed only by changing people's hearts. But how could this be done? I searched but found no answer.

One day as I was walking and contemplating these problems, I spotted a small handbill blowing around my feet. I shook my foot to free the paper from my shoe, but it seemed attached there, so I bent over to remove it.

Glancing at the handbill, I noticed it said, "You are having problems in your life, right?" I answered the question in my heart. "Right." The next line stated, "If you are having problems in your life and cannot find a way to solve them, Jesus Christ is the one who can help you."

Many thoughts started to enter into my heart, thoughts I hadn't had since middle school. "Who is this Jesus Christ?" I thought. "Can I find in Him answers that no other can provide?" At that moment, I felt a strong yearning to learn more about Him. I resolved to visit the Christian church whose address was listed on the handbill.

On a Sunday morning I visited the church, where a teacher was speaking about the life of Christ. A young student sitting next to me raised her hand and asked, "Are you familiar with the 'Mormon' church? What do you think about it?"

The teacher turned to face the girl and answered, "We don't talk about that church in this class. That is the church of the devil." I was startled by the instructor's answer. I had never heard of this church, but I felt that what the instructor said was just not right.

I raised my hand and asked a question that silenced the entire class. "How do you know this church is of the devil?"

Gazing at me with irritation in her eyes for interrupting her lesson, the instructor answered, "I don't know. I just think it is."

Because I had been searching for equality all my life, it upset me when someone judged or criticized another unfairly. "That is unjust," I replied. "You shouldn't criticize something you don't know anything about."

I felt disappointed with my visit to this church, and I left feeling I would never find the answers to my questions anywhere. But the strong desire to learn about Jesus Christ remained in my heart, so I decided to try to learn about Him on my own. I obtained a Bible and began studying it.

One day as I was sitting in the foyer of my dormitory, I started to feel an impression like I'd never felt before. The feeling told me to get up and look underneath a nearby bookshelf. I tried to shrug the feeling off because it didn't make sense to me, but then I felt impressed that there was something under that bookshelf that would be very important to me in my life.

When I looked, I discovered in a pile of dusty books a single book which caught my attention. I pulled it out and wiped off the dust. It was a Book of Mormon. What I saw there amazed me. For the second time in my life, I came into contact with the word *Mormon* as I read the title, the Book of Mormon.

I thumbed through the book and discovered it was in English. Even though my English was not very good at that time, I tried to read the book and was able to grasp that it began with a story of a family that moved from a place called Jerusalem because God had commanded them to go to a new land. I thumbed through some more pages and came upon a picture of a man descending from the sky, surrounded by bright light. The picture's caption read "Jesus shows himself to the Nephites." I was intrigued. I took the book home and started reading it every day along with my Bible, although I was frustrated because I could understand so little English.

One day, after having read both books, I was startled to look up and see a stranger standing outside the door of my room. On his face he wore an expression of happiness and excitement. Looking into my room at my new book, he asked if I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"No, I'm not," I replied.

"Then where did you get that Book of Mormon?"

When I explained how I had come upon the book, he smiled and asked, "Would you like to know more about our church?"

“Yes, I’d be happy to,” I answered without hesitation. The man explained he’d come to visit my roommate, a relative of his. He offered to take me to his church soon, and I accepted the invitation. As he left the room, I felt a trace of hope enter my heart. Perhaps I would finally find answers to my questions.

One evening, my new friend escorted me to the top floor of a tall building, where I saw a sign that read “Mission Office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” But the office was dark and silent. Perplexed, my friend led me to a phone booth outside, where he dialed many different numbers until he got through to a Church member. He told me he wanted me to meet this member who was playing a key role in the Church in Thailand at that time, for she was translating the Book of Mormon. “The Book of Mormon in Thai!” I thought, intrigued.

Walking down the road to get to this member’s house, I noticed two neatly dressed young men walking toward us on the other side of the street. One was Thai, and the other appeared to be North American. When my friend spotted the young men, he became very happy and waved them over. The two young men introduced themselves as Church representatives.

We decided to forgo our appointment with the local Church member for the time being and instead walked to a nearby meetinghouse, where I began to ask my questions. Why was life so unjust? Why was there so much inequality in society? Who was I really, where had I come from, and where would I go after this life? What was the ultimate purpose of life?

Both elders had a startled look on their faces when I asked these questions. They quickly answered that there was a prophet who had answered these questions, a man named Joseph Smith. They told me how God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, had appeared to this prophet while he was yet a boy. I learned how this prophet had translated ancient scripture that was the Book of Mormon. As I heard these things, a miraculous thing happened to me. I had never believed in God before, but from that day forward I believed without a doubt. I was shocked at how easy it was to believe the things the elders taught me. I would later come to understand the Holy Spirit and how it assists those who earnestly seek for truth.

Two weeks after I began the missionary discussions, I was baptized a member of the Lord’s Church.

I have now been a Church member for 26 years. I have served a mission myself, been sealed in the temple, and raised a family. I have served in many Church callings, including branch president, counselor in the mission presidency and stake presidency, high councilor, and country director for the Church Educational System. Since the day of my baptism, I have changed so much. Not only have I learned how the gospel of Jesus Christ can create justice in society, I have also learned that we can progress to become like God and live forever with those we love. I’m not afraid to face the obstacles of life anymore. Life has so much more meaning when we understand its purposes.

The Book of Mormon was published in Thai shortly after my baptism, and I've read it many times since. It has played a crucial role in helping me understand life's purposes.

Recently, I was blessed to participate in the revision of the Thai translation of the Book of Mormon. As I have worked on this translation, I've thought often about how I was led to the Book of Mormon and how it has changed my life. I have felt so grateful to be able to help share the Book of Mormon with other Thai people who, like me, will discover the power of this book. I testify of its truth.

An Added Witness of Christ



“This ... Book of Mormon, this scripture of the New World, is before us as an added witness of the divinity and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the encompassing beneficence of His Atonement, and of His coming forth from the darkness of the grave.”

“The testimony is here to handle; it is here to be read; it is here to be pondered; it is here to be prayed over with a promise that he who prays shall know by the power of the Holy Ghost of its truth and validity (see [Moro. 10:3–5](#)).”

President Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Greatest Miracle in Human History,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 72.