

# Enos–Words of Mormon – S03E13

“He Works in Me to Do His Will”

The prophet Enos’s powerful prayer gives way to 300 years of Nephite history in rapid succession, and Latter-day Saints are forced to deal with a missing part of their record.

I’m Mark Holt, and this is Gospel Talktrine.

Welcome to Gospel Talktrine, your “Come Follow Me” podcast. Today’s lesson is the books of Enos through Words of Mormon: “He Works in Me to Do His Will”. And before I begin, I just want to say a few words. Right now is a difficult time in the lives of many people around the world. There are those who are suffering with health problems, who have contracted COVID19, and are sickened by it. There are those who are worried about contracting it. There are those who are worried for their families, for their own health, for their frail parents or aging relatives, or for their young children, for their pregnant relatives. So that is a very real concern.

There are also those who have been displaced, unable to return home, or perhaps they’re in confinement, away from those they love. They’re worried if they have the virus, they don’t know, so things might get worse. There are those who are simply economically affected, and they have no idea when things will return to normal. Perhaps they’ve lost a job, perhaps they’re wondering – which is my own case – about their ability to continue to keep their business going.

So, the First Presidency has asked for a fast this weekend. I hope that many of you are involved in that fast as we speak, or will soon be. And just let me add my voice to theirs, expressing love and empathy. I have a sister who is suffering from COVID19 right now, and wow, it can be debilitating. It’s certainly a very weakening, and in some cases – thankfully not hers – can be life threatening, or even deadly.

## 200th anniversary of the First Vision

And so, let me add my prayers to the many that have already been offered, that all of you are finding your way through this difficult time. There are also those who are asking questions about the spiritual meaning of all of this. So 200 years ago, right around this time of the year, we don’t know exactly when. There are one or two accounts of the First Vision that give it a date in late March.

My own personal take on those dates is that they’re undependable. I personally have concluded that we don’t know the date of the First Vision with exactness. Nevertheless, it’s very soon, if it hasn’t already happened – the 200th anniversary of that event.

## Feast of Trumpets

And so, what does this mean for all of us? Perhaps many of you are aware that in Salt Lake City we had a recent earthquake. And it was, thankfully, not life threatening to anyone, but did dislodge the trumpet from the Moroni statue at the top of the Salt Lake Temple. And that has given many people cause to consider, especially given the knowledge that when Joseph Smith was finally given access to the – and this is interesting to think about – when he was finally given access to the golden plates, that was on the date of the Feast of Trumpets for that year, in 1827. And the Feast of Trumpets was a Jewish feast which was the acknowledgment – everyday they would blow the shofars, the ancient Israelite trumpets, making the Israelites aware that the Day of Atonement was coming up, and they all needed to repent of their sins.

And Moroni was identified in several of Joseph Smith’s revelations as that angel who John the Revelator prophesied would come forth, blowing the trumpet sounding repentance to all people.

## Last days?

So is it significant in a spiritual sense, in a last days sort of sense, that the trumpet of Moroni has been dislodged? You know, it’s an interesting thing to think about, that the Festival of Trumpets began this dispensation, and then, now, the trumpet has ceased sounding in a symbolic way. And so therefore the Day of Atonement is at hand, that day in which you have been given an opportunity to repent.

My own take is this: you can choose to see whatever you want in these events. I would give you one example to think about, and that is the example of World War II. During the time of World War II, I don’t imagine there were too many people to whom it didn’t occur that they were in the last days.

They looked around them, and they saw destruction everywhere. They saw suffering, they saw good versus evil being clearly represented and played out on the world stage. I would forgive any person living during that time for thinking that Jesus Christ is going to come very soon.

And yet, here we are, decades later, still thinking, “I hope that Jesus Christ hastens his coming.”

Now this is a noble thought. Jesus, in fact, taught us to pray for that very event. But is the coming of Jesus Christ right around the corner? What is next?

I just want to say a few things along these lines. Number 1: The scriptures are not intended to be a chronological… well, let me put it another way. Those people who try to calculate the date of the Second Coming using scriptural information are missing the point of the scriptures. They were not intended for that purpose. And I don’t think they’re very useful for that purpose.

Number 2: The scriptures are often not chronological in the end times events. And so, therefore, trying to say this has happened, and this needs to happen before this happens, we can also be misled in that way.

## Parable of the faithful servant

Number 3: Jesus said that – to me the most telling analogy that Jesus gave, the most telling parable, the most instructive one – is the master returning, having left his servants in charge. And those servants who were labouring throughout the night, and throughout the long months when he was gone. And then he will return in an hour you think not. And blessed is that servant, who when his master returns, he finds working, faithful at his job.

The point is this: When Jesus Christ returns, when end of days events begin to occur, is not what was important to Jesus. The very point – if you did know when Jesus was going to return, then you would be a worse person in the interim. You would be lazy, you would be – to use the analogy of the servant again – you would be a lazy servant, you’d be doing whatever you wanted to do. And then, in the few days, or even few hours, before your master returned, you’d whip everything back into shape, and you’d try to make it all look good, and then he’d come back and say, “Oh, aren’t you a good and faithful servant.”

So, the point that Jesus was trying to make was: it doesn’t matter what the state of things is when I return. What I care about, what is important to me, is who you are, every day. Because I’m going to come back and find you, who you are. You can’t fake it. You can’t quickly put things into order when I come back. You can’t fake it on that day.

## What matters is who we are, not when God is coming

So for us, look, things are bad right now for a lot of people. And things are hard for almost everyone. So, just keep that in mind, that what matters is who we are, and not when God is coming, or when certain events might occur. God has left us everything we need. We have a living prophet, we have the scriptures from old times that have been compiled over thousands of years with so much hard experience, to bless our lives. And we can learn from those scriptures every week.

We have the priesthood, we have the power of the priesthood in our homes, or at the very least in our neighbourhoods or in associations where we can partake of the sacrament in spite of the fact that we can’t go to our chapels right now. What a blessing all those things are! We have access to the atonement, we have access to the Holy Ghost, we have the ordinances of the priesthood, we have everything we need. And God wants us to turn ourselves into the kind of servant, that when he comes back, he finds ready.

President Woodruff used to say – when asked about the timing of the Second Coming, “When would you think that timing would be?” – he always said, “I would live as if the Second Coming were tomorrow. But I’m still planting cherry trees.”

And the point was: there are some blessings that only come with long-term planning and work. Cherries are one of those blessings. If you want a cherry, then you have to plant a tree years before. If you want a family, then you have to begin to establish that family years before. If you want a firm testimony, if you want a good reputation, if you want a thriving business, if you want many of the blessings of life, mortality, and of faithfulness in the gospel, you have to spend years of work to get them.

So, live your lives as if Christ is coming tomorrow, and don’t stop planting cherry trees.

## This week’s lesson material

With all that said, I’m really looking forward to today’s lesson. And this is a special podcast for me. This week – this is probably the cause of my delayed recording – this week I was loaned a copy of a new book that has come out. It’s called “The Lost 116 Pages – Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories” by Don Bradley.

And the book was so fascinating that I quickly concluded that I couldn’t record this week’s episode until I’d read enough of it, to be informed about what I was talking about this week.

So, we’ll get into that as we talk. So, let’s talk briefly about each of the books that we’ll discuss. And the first story that we’ll discuss is the story of Enos. Enos is the son of Jacob, whom we’ve been talking about for a couple of weeks now, the brother of Nephi. So Enos is the nephew of Nephi, and this is after the death of Nephi, and possibly even after the death of Jacob. Or it may have been after the point at which Jacob passed on his record.

## The records are passed through a prophetic lineage

So the tradition was initiated after Nephi, that he would pass the records on, and they would be kept by someone trusted in his line. And so Nephi trusted his brother. And interestingly enough, Nephi’s offspring, his descendants became the kings over the Nephites, and he didn’t pass the records on through them. He chose to have a prophetic and a kingly line.

Now, the record is clear, that there were many prophets during this time. As I’ve mentioned before, the word “prophet” wasn’t always used to describe the leader of a “church” (quote unquote). But it was often used to describe someone who was simply a mouthpiece for God, a spokesperson for God, who would represent the words of God to the people. And therefore, didn’t exercise an ecclesiastical authority. So, this was the case with the Nephite history.

Their culture mirrored the culture they’d left, the culture of the Israelites, where a prophet in Old Testament times might be someone who had been a farmer, and was called by God to go and preach a word, a message, that was not pleasing to the people of that time, a message generally of repentance. And as I mentioned, may not have had an elevated status, or any sort of priest hierarchy.

## Laban records the words of Jeremiah in the brass plates?

And so this seems to be the continuation of the tradition, for the generations following Nephi and Jacob. And they would have had one lineage that was given the sacred relics, the sacred things to care for and to keep. The brass plates are described in the book of 1 Nephi as having been kept by Laban and his fathers. And this means not only that they kept them safe, but that they also kept the records. Meaning that they wrote in them. And they expanded the records as time went on.

In fact, one of the things that we do know, is that Lehi had, in the brass plates, several of the revelations of the prophet Jeremiah. And the prophet Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi. And therefore, Laban himself was likely labouring during his lifetime to record revelations of prophets.

One of the things that’s interesting about Laban, is that he’s a wicked man, and yet he recognised, rather than put down the words of a false prophet – there where many false prophets at the time of Jeremiah – he chose the correct prophet. So, as wicked as he was, he was recording the words of a man who was calling the people to repentance. Which is an interesting thing.

So this was the continuation of that tradition among the Nephites.

## Two types of analysis: scholarly or historical interest, and spiritual interest

So as we talk today, I want to draw a distinction between two kinds of analysis of the Book of Mormon. And this was not even controversial when we were discussing the Bible, but I think it’s worth talking about in the context of the Book of Mormon. And those two kinds of interest are: scholarly interest or historical interest, and spiritual interest.

Now you and I and everyone in the world has a spiritual interest in the Book of Mormon. Because as Joseph Smith said, “it’s the most correct book of any book on earth, *and* a man or a woman will draw closer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” So the Book of Mormon is of great spiritual benefit to us, because of what it teaches about Christ, and the way that we can fulfil our covenants with him, and what his commandments are, and what the blessings are for fulfilling those covenants. What the plan of God is for us in our lives.

This doctrine is expounded in the Book of Mormon the way it is in no other book. That’s the spiritual interest.

## Having a scholarly interest in Book of Mormon doesn’t dispute its spiritual importance

And I want to make one thing clear: we’re going to talk today about a lot of scholarly topics, regarding the Book of Mormon. And I want to make clear that this has a place in Mormon scholarship and Mormon study. And it is not meant to contest the spiritual value of the Book of Mormon. In the same way that when we talk about where the Bible came from, we’re not contesting the value of the Bible.

The Bible has been the most influential book in the history of mankind. And that is not even disputed. It’s obviously the best-selling book ever, but the Bible’s influence has created the societies in which you and I live. The ideas of the Ten Commandments are what made possible the innovations in government and political science that give us the freedoms we enjoy.

And therefore, talking about the origins of the Bible is not to dispute how valuable a book it is.

When we talk about today some of the interesting facts about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and some of the deductions that we can make from those facts, it’s not to dispute the value of this book, the spiritual value.

So when we talk in a scholarly way about the Book of Mormon, it’s separated from the spiritual nature of the Book of Mormon. In much the same way – you’ll recall that Nephi said, “I have been prompted by the spirit to create two sets of plates,” and both sets of plates, incidentally, were called the Plates of Nephi – and Nephi was prompted to create smaller plates, where he would record things that were primarily spiritual.

Now, as he hastened to add, and as prophets after him also added, anything that they would record would have benefit to the spirits of the children on men. But the things that they recorded on the small plates were those things that have particular application to the covenants of God, the doctrine of Christ, and there was an inordinate amount of space dedicated to re-copying old scriptures, specifically from Isaiah, but also from Zenos and other prophets.

And the point of all of this is, that there was a very distinct value seen in this historical record, but even more important – as we know, because this is what was preserved for us – was the spiritual record.

So the Book of Mormon stands out as a spiritual resource, and as sacred scripture, but that doesn’t mean we should ignore it’s value as a historical document as well. So we’re going to talk a little bit about both of those aspects of the Book of Mormon today.

## Questions about authorship and transmission of books of the Bible

And the reason why I drew a parallel between the Bible and the Book of Mormon is, when we talk about the Bible, there are a lot of questions! Who wrote the five books of Moses, for example? Now we know that there are plenty of people in this world, both Christians and Jews, who would say “The five books of Moses were written by Moses.”

And their faith would lead them to claim, that the way we have the scriptures today is exactly the way they were issued from the pen of the original prophet who wrote them. That there is no way that God would allow his word to be changed in any way. Or polluted in any way, or perverted in any sense. So the intervening centuries, the many hands they’ve passed through, that is nothing to God, and he can preserve his record, and the Bible is sacrosanct. And the same is true of the New Testament, many Christians would say.

So this is a fundamental tenet of many people’s belief in the scriptures. Scholars would tell you that that’s just not the way the Bible came to us. For example, many scholars dispute the idea that Moses wrote the five books of Moses. They say somebody wrote them, and they ascribe them to Moses in order to give them more credibility, in order to get greater readership. So that’s an open question, that’s a controversy. I’m not trying to weigh in on that controversy today, other than to say, that the controversy exists.

And authorship of almost all of the books of the Old Testament is disputed. Some of the books are said to have been written by more than one person. Daniel and Isaiah, these books are divided thematically and stylistically in some ways. And so then people come in later and say, well obviously, it’s not the same person writing these two parts of this book. And therefore, it has more than one author.

So all of these questions are interesting questions, and they can be profitable to discuss in the context of the Bible.

## 8th Article of Faith: We believe the Bible to be the word of God, so far as it is translated correctly

Now, in the Articles of Faith, it says “We believe the Bible to be the word of God, so far as it is translated correctly.” And that also means so far as it’s transmitted to us faithfully. As far as things are not left out, or added to it. And that’s not just translating, right? That’s transmitting, that is transcribing. As far as it was transmitted to us correctly, the Bible is the word of God.

And “we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” And then it’s without any qualifier. We believe that the Book of Mormon – the implication is – was translated and transmitted to us faithfully and correctly.

Now all of that is true. So what many people do, from that, is they say, “Ok, then there is nothing to examine as far as how the Book of Mormon got to us, and what happened.” And we don’t do that consciously, we don’t do that because of any evidence that we’ve been given. We do it because, perhaps, of the Article of Faith, and then that’s enough for us. We know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and therefore, we don’t need to really take a scholarly interest in its provenance.

## Recommended book: The Lost 116 Pages, by Don Bradley

Well, I want to draw your attention to a book, I’ve mentioned it already, “The Lost 116 Pages.” Now this talks a lot about what we are missing from the Book of Mormon. So that’s the context for what I just said. The Book of Mormon, as it was intended to be, is not what we have today. And there is no-one who disputes this. This is not even a controversial statement.

So the words that Joseph Smith originally worked on, the first thing that Joseph Smith produced, as a seer, as a translator, under the gift and power of God, were pages that were eventually lost. And ever since the beginning of the year, what we’ve been studying is sort of what some people might call a stop-gap measure, or a consolation prize, you might say – and we’ll talk about why that’s not true – for the pages that were lost.

So the books specifically of 1 Nephi, all the way through the book of Omni – and these books get progressively shorter, for reasons that we’ll discuss – they are all part of what are called the “Plates of Nephi,” or are referred to by Jacob as the “small plates.”

Now Nephi talks about the plates that he’s keeping, all the while they’re travelling through the wilderness, they’re keeping plates, they’re keeping a record. And then we kind of get the impression, later in his life, Nephi feels prevailed upon by the Spirit, he’s prompted to create another set of plates. And he says, “I don’t know exactly why, but the Spirit… thus it worketh within me, according to the Spirit, to produce these smaller plates.” And he also calls them the “Plates of Nephi.”

So that is one of the things that confuses people, who haven’t read that specific part, and realise there are actually two sets of plates, that are called by the same name, that are accomplishing two different purposes.

Joseph Smith, in his first preface to the Book of Mormon – so here’s what happened, Joseph Smith, he translated one of these records, and then they were lost – we’ll discuss the process – and then there was another set of records that was found to contain an account of the same historical period. And so Joseph translated that, and when he originally published the Book of Mormon, he realised, “I’m not publishing something that has the form that it was originally intended to have. The title page of the Book of Mormon, as written by Mormon himself, says, “An account written by the hand of Mormon,” and then you turn the page, and there’s 1 Nephi, where it says, “I Nephi wrote this record.”

And so, in order to avoid confusion in his readers, Joseph Smith wrote a preface to that first edition to the Book of Mormon, which was later taken out, because there were some things in it that weren’t 100% clear. But in that preface, he talks about 116 pages having been lost. So we’re going to talk about those missing pages this week, because it’s very much on my mind, and I think it’s important for everyone to understand.

Keep in mind, in all of the study we’ve done up till now, we haven’t gotten the whole story, because a lot of it is missing.

## History helps our understanding of complicated scriptures

And I suppose one of the reasons that I wanted to make a special point of this is, to me it has actually been really wonderful, it has felt really faith affirming, and satisfying, edifying, to study these things this week, because, the Bible is a very complicated book. When I read the Bible, I feel like there is an expected amount of… Let me put it another way. History happens, right? History is something that we look on in retrospect, but at the time it’s happening – as we’ve learned in very recent times – things come up that totally take your expectations and turn them on their head.

And so the books of the Bible – some are lost, some are partial, some are mistranslated, some have lacunae or ellipses that we don’t understand what’s missing, why don’t we have that missing portion, and some things are out of order, chronology is not preserved in the record – and all of these things we have to understand by reconstructing the paradigms of a people that no longer exist.

One example is the large numbers in the Bible. And when we read in Exodus that six hundred thousand battle-aged Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, there has been a huge amount of scholarship to account for this number. Because that number of people travelling through the wilderness – first of all it’s not likely coming out of a civilisation like ancient Egypt is recognised to have been.

So there are a number of ways to account for this number. Either it was true, and you have to say how the other inconsistencies in the story can be accounted for. Or, you have to say, “Why was the number recorded as six hundred thousand, when it really wasn’t.”

And the reason that I bring that up is because, understanding those questions, and then striving to reconstruct what the answers to them might be, adds richness and depth to the study of the scriptures. And in much the same way, the study of the missing manuscript of the Book of Mormon adds richness and depth to the understanding of these sacred scriptures.

And it in no way – in my mind at least – it in no way casts doubt on its nature as sacred scripture. Instead what it does is, it says history happened to both the ancient Nephites and to the modern Latter-day Saints in the time of Joseph Smith, in a way that they couldn’t have foreseen, only God could have foreseen it.

And the fact that the record that we have today, that we read in our scriptures, is not the record that Mormon originally intended for us to read, is to me a very interesting fact. And one that makes me sit up and take notice, and want to ask “Why?”

## Jacob 7:26 – “We did mourn out our days”

Alright, I’ve danced around it long enough, let’s begin with the story of Enos. But before we do, we’ll back up just a few verses, into Jacob chapter 7. So last week we left off with Jacob chapter 7, and Jacob is talking, first of all about the olive tree, and then the intervening years, and then he has an encounter with an anti-Christ, and that’s resolved. And the last few verses of the book of Jacob read like this, in [Jacob 7:26](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/jacob/7?lang=eng&id=26#p26):

“26 And it came to pass that I, Jacob, began to be old; and the record of this people being kept on the other plates of Nephi, wherefore, I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days.”

So this kind of gives a very, very specific insight into the character and personality of Jacob, not so much as a prophet, but as a human being, as a person. It tells us what his outlook was on life.

Now Jacob never knew this city of Jerusalem. He was born in the wilderness, as we know from the books of 1 and 2 Nephi. And so, it wasn’t that he missed Jerusalem so much, but he did feel, somehow he felt, their numbers were very few, they were lonely, they were a lonely people, they were wanderers, as they said.

So, he had been part of two different exoduses. The first exodus, he was in the middle of when he was born. So, he would have been very young when it was completed. But that was the voyage, through the Arabian Peninsula, and across, presumably, the Pacific Ocean, which is the largest ocean on earth, and then to wherever they originally landed. And his second exodus was when Nephi was prompted that Laman and Lemuel were going to kill him, and that he should leave immediately with everyone who would follow him. And take their journey into the wilderness, and then establish a new city.

So that’s a different exodus, it’s basically saying “We have to take our entire civilisation, uproot it, and change.” So, Jacob saw himself as a wanderer, because even though they had spent now decades, several decades, in the city of Nephi, building it up, building a temple, creating a civilisation, creating laws, creating a structure for their society, there were still so few people that they felt like wanderers. And when he says it felt like life “passed away, like it was unto us a dream,” to me that resonates, that language resonates. Whether that resonates with you is individual to every person. But basically, what it means is, he felt like, he felt what Elder Uchtdorf described a few conferences ago as “weltschmerz,” which is a German word meaning “world ache” or “world weariness” as we would translate it into English.

He felt this kind of feeling that there had to be more to it, and with Jacob, it was an especially poignant feeling. It was hitting him all the time. He “mourned out” his days; everyday he felt like “I’m distant from my real home.”

Now Enos may or may not have had that transmitted to him. But Jacob, you can’t write a verse like this, verse 26, without feeling it very, very keenly all of the time. And perhaps it was heightened by his experience with Sherem.

So it may be at the end of his days, when he said “Here I began to be old,” it may be that it was more on his mind, because he was looking back over his life, and reflecting on these things. We don’t know for sure.

But then it talks about how – it’s mainly verse 26 that I wanted to point out – but then it talks about how he has passed along now, he has passed along these plates to his son. So instead of passing them to his younger brother, Joseph, who was also one of the people called to teach the people, Jacob passes it to his son. So, this becomes now his line of succession, of passing on the plates.

Incidentally, along with the plates, went a few other things. We don’t know what happened to the Liahona, we don’t know what happened to the sword of Laban, but we can presume, that with the plates of brass are passed on the other sacred relics that Lehi and Nephi brought with them from Jerusalem, and also that Nephi took with him when he left the original settlement with Laman and Lemuel.

So later on in the book of Mormon, when the Nephites start to think about *the land of their first inheritance*, it’s actually not precise. *The land of their first inheritance* was the city they created, that included Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael. And later on, when they left, they created a city called Nephi. And this, was what later on they would call *the land of their first inheritance*, the land of Nephi.

So, we’ll talk a little bit today, and then this will be ongoing, but we’ll talk a little bit about why that would be so important to them. And this discussion – the topics that are missing from the Book of Mormon – is going to be ongoing throughout the rest of the year, because the Book of Mormon text will periodically bring up references to earlier scriptures that we don’t actually have. And from those references, then we will see what it is that we can deduce, what we can surmise, about what that content was, of that lost manuscript.

## Enos: A rebellious son? A prophet’s initial contact with God?

So Enos, the son of Jacob, so he grew up the son of a prophet. And we gather that he was also a faithful man. ([Enos 1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/enos/1?lang=eng))

So one of the quick assumptions that you might jump to as you read this chapter for the first time, is that you might think he was a rebellious son of a righteous father. But now remember, every prophet has to have a point at which they have their first vision, or their first experience with God. And I would say that every person, one of the desires of Moses was that everyone should be a prophet. And so, each of us has to have a conversion story.

Even if we are born in the Church, we have to have a time when we have our initial contact, when we realise there is someone on the other end of the phone – when we kneel down to pray, and we pick up that heavenly phone, and we start addressing God, like we’ve been doing since the time we were a kid. There comes a first time for everyone, when we realise there is another person on the other end of the line.

And so this isn’t necessarily, for me – I’m realising as I re-read Enos – that it’s not necessarily the story of a rebellious child of a righteous father, but every kid would be rebellious, if your father is the prophet, right? Because you just don’t have the same light and knowledge that your father does. You don’t have the experience with God that the prophet that you know so well, who has raised you, has.

And so you have not taken as seriously spiritual things, as your father has. That’s Enos’s situation.

So it may be that he was rebellious. Probably he was just a normal kid of a prophet, right? He’s trying to do the best he can – and as I was reading it – there is no actual indication of anything rebellious that he did. It was just an impression that I got. So if you have that same impression, then examine this text, and see if you find any evidence for it.

So he’s just hunting, right? He’s just hunting, as anyone would do. But the point is, he has some solitude. And this is his experience, this is when he first realises, “I don’t actually know God myself. But the words my father has always taught me, they sank into my heart,” and so he kneels down, and he prays. He prays all day, and then he prays all night.

This is something I think many people have tried to duplicate, with varying levels of success. I’ll talk to you a little bit about an experience I had one day – it didn’t last all day and all night, by the way. But so, after praying all day and all night, eventually an answer comes, and Enos is actually called as a prophet at this point. He says “There came a voice unto me.” And at first we think, “Oh, this is a physical voice.” Later on, in [verse 5](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/enos/1?lang=eng&id=5#p5), we read there came a voice unto him. Later on, we learn that the voice was in his mind. [verse 10]

So, Enos is prevailed upon by the Holy Ghost, and is in direct contact – mental contact – with God. And God gives him a revelation. And the thrust of his first line of prayer is the salvation of his own soul. He’s worried about forgiveness for his sins.

## Parallels to The First Vision and Joseph Smith’s prayer

Now incidentally, Joseph Smith, when he went into the sacred grove – and I’ve been listening to the sacred grove, the [First Vision podcast series](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/inspiration/latter-day-saints-channel/listen/series/the-first-vision-a-joseph-smith-papers-podcast?lang=eng), a six-part series, and it’s part of your Gospel Library app – and at the end of the second episode they leave a little cliff-hanger. You know, “The main question of Joseph Smith was not actually what church is true. What question was it?” Then they say, “We’ll discuss it in our next episode.” That’s where I am in that series.

But the answer is, obviously, Joseph Smith was concerned with which church was true, for a reason, and that reason was, he wanted to know how to secure the blessings of salvation for himself, including forgiveness for his sins. “How do I access grace?” That was his question. “Where can I come upon the blessings of God’s grace? And how can I secure them for myself and my family? Because I feel that I am separated from God, and I want to know how to bridge the gap between us. I know that God didn’t do anything wrong. Where can I turn? What can I do?”

And so, if you read the different accounts of the First Vision, one of the things that Joseph was promised, was that his sins were forgiven. This was very much on his mind.

So Joseph Smith and Enos are very similar in this way. They go out into the grove of trees, and they both start praying for the welfare of their soul. And in the case of Joseph Smith, it happened right away that his answer came, not in the way that he expected, obviously. Satan appeared immediately, or Satan prevailed upon him immediately, and then God appeared not too long after that.

In the case of Enos, it took all day and all night, and it was a simple answer in his mind. But the answer was the same: “Your sins are forgiven.”

Now interestingly enough, we don’t have a record that Enos had spent a bunch of time trying to make restitution for all of his sins, and trying to change all of the habits he had. But he had done a fair amount of work, right? This prayer represents a lot of work. And so, the forgiveness of God came to him when he had changed his heart enough, that maybe God knew that he’d go back and if he’d hurt anyone he would apologise, and he knew enough about the character of Enos at the point; if he was willing to pray this long, then he’s going to make it right, and I can forgive his sins now.

So that was his first line of prayer, that was his first priority; “What is the state of my soul before God?” And much like Joseph Smith, then he proceeds to ask about his people. So Joseph was like, “What church should I join? How should I organise myself in order to continually gain access to grace? And how can I know what doctrine is true?”

## What did Enos pray for?

Enos’s question was slightly different. “I want my people, the Nephites, to be preserved.” So, in verse 9 we read:

“9 Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.”

Now we can imagine – this is a guess – but we can imagine that what he was praying for was that the Nephites would be preserved, that the Lamanites would not destroy them. He may have heard – in fact it’s likely that he heard, from his uncle Nephi, or perhaps from his father – that Nephi once had a vision. And in that vision, he was shown that the Nephites, the righteous part of his people, would be destroyed one day by their enemies – and brethren – the Lamanites.

And so, what Enos wants to do, is contradict that. He wants God to change his mind! And the answer to this question is, “Look, Enos, this is not up to you. I’m going to bless them according to their righteousness. And I have to punish them according to their unrighteousness.” This is the justice of God.

So Enos accepts this answer. He’s happy with it, in fact. And at that point, his faith begins to be “unshaken”. Unshakable. In the Lord. As he says in [verse 11](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/enos/1?lang=eng&id=11#p11), unshaken. And so then, he now wants to know about who he calls his “brethren,” – who are also his enemies – the Lamanites. He considers them his brethren.

Now, he prays for their salvation too.

## The Lord’s answers to Enos’s prayers

And his prayer is answered with a “yes.” So, his first prayer was answered with a “yes,” the second prayer was answered with a “I’ll do the best I can,” basically. And the third prayer is answered with another “yes.” And only after we learn the answer, do we learn the question. And the question wasn’t “Can you help us? Because we’ve tried and tried to convert the Lamanites. Can you help us to convert them?”

The question was “If the Lamanites eventually are going to defeat our people, the Nephites,” – and that’s left understood in this narrative – that Enos already knows the outcome of history, of what it’s going to be. The Lamanites *are* going to prevail, and eventually destroy the Nephites. So that’s sort of a downer, it’s a spoiler alert on Nephi’s revelation about the future.

Now we don’t know for sure that he transmitted that. So it may be that Enos was just praying because he feels worried; maybe it’s been communicated from his father that his people are going to be destroyed. Or it may be that he actually knew of the revelation of Nephi. But in any case, this worry has come up in his mind.

And the answer is not that the Lamanites will eventually convert, or they won’t destroy the Nephites, the question that he was asking was, “If they do eventually destroy us, will you – God – will you preserve a record of our people? So that,” – and this is interesting – “So that, that record can come back unto the Lamanites, and then convert them.”

And to that question, he gets a “yes.”

Let’s talk about what this tells us about Enos. First of all, he does seem to have a genuine charity for his enemies. But let’s not ignore the fact that, he recognises that if the Lamanites win, that means that every person, the people that would have become Nephites, they will actually become Lamanites as well.

So Nephites may cease to exist, but the people will survive, the seed will survive. And that the remnant of his own people will be mixed in with the Lamanites. And so part of the reason at least – and maybe not the whole reason – but part of the reason he cares so much about whether the Lamanites are eventually converted, is because he recognises that it’s his own people.

So those are the three levels of priority that Enos has as he prays.

First, “God, forgive my sins. Please, see to the salvation of my own soul.” And when he has a faith in Christ about that, then he can ask about his people. And when he feels like God has that well in hand, then he has the faith to ask about his enemies as well.

Obviously, Enos had been taught, not just the principles of God, of following the commandments of God, but Jacob had also communicated to Enos some level of charity, and of loving kindness, and of forgiveness. Because he demonstrates these right away, the first time he’s called as a prophet.

Now he goes on to talk about the many efforts. In [verse 20](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/enos/1?lang=eng&id=20#p20) he says:

“20 And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain.”

And even the Nephites, he says, they needed really harsh preaching to keep them righteous.

One of the promises that God made to Nephi was, “Your brethren will be a scourge unto you.” To prick them up into the remembrance of the Lord their God, they had to have some sort of constant reminder, they had to have danger, and they had to have the threat of destruction, in order to keep them remembering God.

We’ll talk about some of the context around that promise and that curse, as we get going here in just a little bit.

## The book of Jarom: “the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land”

So Enos also gets old. And they talk about how much time has been passing. And as we turn the page into the book of Jarom, who is the son of Enos, he’s also a righteous man and a prophet. But he doesn’t have a lot to tell us. He says, “Look, there is only so much you can say about the gospel, and Nephi, and Jacob, and Enos, they’ve all said it so much better than I could, so look, please read the scriptures, and keep praying, and keep following what you know the commandments are.” And he says, “There are many prophets among our people. And two hundred have passed away since the time that Lehi left Jerusalem.”

So here’s the point at which we can start to look a little bit into what is missing from the record of the people of Nephi.

First of all, I want to point out, in verse 5 of Jarom:

“5 And now, behold, two hundred years had passed away, and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land…”

And verse 6:

“6 And they were scattered upon much of the face of the land…”

So the Nephites are not only strong, meaning they have, presumably, a large civilisation built up, but they also have a lot of people. So they’ve scattered. They’ve multiplied in number, and they’ve multiplied in wealth. And these things have happened in two hundred years, and it says also in verse 5:

“They observed to keep the law of Moses and the sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme.”

These were his measures of the righteousness of his people. “The laws of the land,” he says, “were exceedingly strict.” Now you might look at this – if you were to read quickly through these three chapters – you might look at this as the pinnacle of earthly Nephite civilisation. Two hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem, they’ve reached a point where they were righteous, they were wealthy, they were numerous. And they were expanding. And they’d been blessed exceedingly by God for it. They also had a lot of prophets, so they were blessed spiritually, they were blessed mentally, socially, and they were also blessed economically.

So this was the state of the people – at this mid-point in today’s lesson – this is the state of their society.

## The lost 116 pages: how many pages were actually lost?

Now let’s talk a little bit about one of the things that I want to say about the lost manuscript. And this is a very important and very interesting – and to me – fascinating point, that was made by Don Bradley in his book. Incidentally, this book is really hard to get hold of physically; they’re sold out in some of the Deseret bookstores, but you can get it on Amazon. And I recommend it, because I’m going to be referencing it for many weeks, if not months, to come. And also, just simply because it’s amazing. It’s really opened my eyes to a lot of possibilities.

But one of the main possibilities, one of the most interesting assertions by the author, is that the lost 116 pages were not actually 116 pages. And I’ll talk about why this is important.

So I mentioned in earlier, the preface written by Joseph Smith to the first edition of the Book of Mormon. And the author of this book, The Lost 116 Pages, Don Bradley, he assumes that Joseph Smith had to write this preface – and it’s a pretty reasonable assumption – because of what I said, right? The title page says it’s written by Mormon, and we get right into the first chapter, and it’s written by Nephi. So he had to explain what had happened, what had gone on.

Today we have a document there that talks about the different plates that the Book of Mormon is drawn from. And that preface is actually where we get the number 116. That’s the first place it shows up. And if you’re going to talk about why the number 116 isn’t exactly the right number, that’s where you would begin.

## How the manuscript was lost

So the author says, look, Joseph Smith, was the translator, he was the seer. He was not the scribe. The person who is interacting most commonly with the manuscript is the scribe. There were several scribes for the first part of the Book of Mormon, but most of them were, they would come and go quickly. And then in the spring and early summer of 1828, Martin Harris was Joseph’s scribe for most of this first part of the Book of Mormon.

And then what happened was, Martin Harris had given up a lot, to be Joseph Smith’s scribe. That year was an extremely warm winter, and so they had an early spring. And Martin Harris was a farmer, as was Joseph Smith, they both missed planting season, in order to translate the Book of Mormon. Which is basically like saying, “Honey, I’m going to take an entire year off, and not go to work.”

And so Martin Harris was feeling a lot of pressure from his family: “Why are you doing this? Why are following somebody? Are you crazy? Have you taken leave of your senses?” He felt a lot of pressure to show them that he was doing something worthwhile.

Now Joseph had had to learn, through hard experience, that he could not fear man more than God. One of the lessons was learned when… There were four years when he went to Hill Cumorah, to try to retrieve the plates, the golden plates, for the first time. And one of the lessons was, he actually achieved removing the plates from the box that held them, and he set them on the ground, and he looked back at the box, and he turned back and they were gone. And Moroni said, “You just lost your chance again, because, look, I have given you very specific directions. You cannot take your eyes of these plates.”

Now it probably was never intended for Joseph to take the plates at that time. Moroni would have known that he wasn’t ready. He was just watching for a teaching moment. And the point was, Joseph has to pay very, very strict attention to the words that are told him about this record, and to follow them with exactness. And so Joseph had had to learn that lesson. And Martin was given very specific instructions.

So, Martin begged and begged and pleaded with Joseph, “Please, let me take what we’ve been working on, our work product, that’s taken us now three months to bring into existence, and let me show it to the people who are supporting me the most, my family. And let me tell them that I’m not a crazy person, and that I’m doing something not only worthwhile, but essential to mankind. It’s bigger than our family, it’s bigger than a single planting season.”

Joseph went to the Lord, and he was given a “no” twice, but finally the Lord said “yes” and gave him very specific instructions. Martin is to show it to these five people. Martin is to make sure that he never lets this record go out of his possession. Now sooner did Martin get the record – I shouldn’t say ‘no sooner’ – but it didn’t take long for him to get home, and then break the instructions that he’d been given.

And part of the reason why Joseph had been given a “no,” was that God knew that Martin had not yet had beaten into him these same lessons that Joseph had. Which was, when God gives you an instruction like this, if you don’t follow it with exactness, then you don’t have the protection of God’s covenant. He makes a covenant with you, that you can take this record, and then as soon as you depart from your part of the covenant, God is not bound. And Satan is free then to work on you.

So Martin showed it to more people, he bragged about it. He had a lot of pride, he was puffed up about it, and he also left it in his wife’s possession, he left it in other people’s possession. And the record turned up missing.

He actually left town, and left it behind, and when he came home, couldn’t find it.

Now many people assume that it was Martin’s wife who stole it, because it was in her possession. There are other candidates for the thief. But the important part is, what happened next?

## Doctrine and Covenants, section 3 and section 10, and the missing manuscript

Well obviously, Joseph Smith had his translating gift taken away for a time. And God expressed his frustration. There are two sections in the Doctrine and Covenants that I think are very essential to this week’s lesson in the Book of Mormon. And those sections are section 3, and section 10.

Section 3 is what God told Joseph at the time when he took away the gift. He said, “Look, my designs, my work, cannot be frustrated. But you can lose your place. If you’re not willing to fear me more than man, then what can I do through you? I’m limited to what I can accomplish with you as my representative on earth.” That section is one of the most telling, and I think, most faith promoting sections, because it is so condemnatory, on that young prophet. It is an act of supreme humility for him to have included it in the list of his revelations.

Joseph is including something that is basically humiliating. And it is a reminder of his single greatest lapse in judgement in the early restoration, in that he trusts Martin Harris with this manuscript, knowing that God had told him “Don’t do it.”

So that’s Doctrine and Covenants, section 3.

Then we read section 10, and section 10 talks about, “Look, you’ve lost this manuscript, and I’m going to tell you now what we’re going to do about it.” And God tells Joseph, “Look, you’ve taken an abridgement from the plates of Nephi…” Incidentally, there are two plates of Nephi mentioned in succeeding verses, and they’re mentioned with the same name. If you look in Doctrine and Covenants, section 10 verse 38 and 39, in one section God is seemingly talking about the large plates, and then in the next he’s talking about them being replaced with a record from the plates of Nephi, which we can presume is the small plates, or what we still have.

The reason I bring all this up is to let you know, look, the Book of Mormon had an author – Mormon – who had a master plan for how it would be laid out. In the Bible we have an example, we can kind of guess, at to what Mormon had in mind. We have two examples, actually. Well we have more. But we have the book of Kings, and the book of Chronicles, both written by prophets. And we also have the five books of Moses, written by a prophet. And these are historical works which cover centuries of history, and they do it in a way that mentions the reigns of kings, and it mentions their wars and their contentions. But it also includes a spiritual element.

These records are exactly what Nephi describes, when he talks about his larger plates.

And the book of Chronicles would certainly not have been included in the brass plates. But it’s possible that the book of Kings was, because many scholars believe that Jeremiah wrote the book of Kings. So Mormon, reading from the brass plates, could have thought, “Ok, at some point there was a prophet,” – and he could have known in fact it was Jeremiah – “at some point, Jeremiah took all of the records that he had available to him, and he wrote a divinely inspired summary of their history, so that people later could see what their history looked like from God’s perspective.”

Now every time that Jeremiah wanted to talk about a past event, he can’t bring up all the context around it. He has to assume that somebody reading the second half of what he wrote – the book of Kings, 2 Kings as we know it – would already have read the first half. And therefore he can’t keep bringing things up again.

So that’s the same way that Mormon would have written his record. He would have introduced very important ideas in the first part of his manuscript, in the first part of his abridgement. And then later on, not felt the need to go into it again. Because he would have assumed, if we’re reading the second half of the Book of Mormon, we would have already read the first half.

We have a ton of very strong indications, as to what the content would have been, to the early part of Mormon’s record. We also have some references to something we should already know, and that is not covered completely.

One example is when the – and I’ll just go forward a few weeks – to when Alma the Elder escapes from the reign of the wicked king Noah, and they go into the wilderness, and they gather by the Waters of Mormon. And what Mormon says about this place is that it was given its name by the king, and then he doesn’t talk much more about the place, or about the name. However, in many places in the Book of Mormon, when Mormon is trying to introduce an idea, or a place, or a person for the first time, he’ll – as you would expect – give a little bit more information, to let you know this is who this person is, this is where he fits into the story, and he doesn’t seem to do that as much with some of the other places. And then we wonder, why?

So, one assumption could be that, it’s because he already gave them a complete treatment in the first part of his record.

## Where did the number 116 come from?

So, all of that leads us to think, “Wow, there’s a lot more going on than you could cover in 116 pages.” So as I mentioned, one of the assumptions that we make is that this 116 page figure, given by Joseph Smith, accurately describes what Martin Harris took with him when he went to show this to his wife.

Now Don Bradley, in his book, he talks about where this number might have come from.

So Joseph Smith wasn’t the one who was interacting the most often with the manuscript. That would have been Martin Harris. What Joseph Smith knew – he wrote this preface nearly a year later – and what he did know, was that he had at this point made a new translation, which had content in it that would replace, in a sense, the content which was lost. Now that portion of the manuscript Joseph Smith did know the length of. And it turns out that that portion was exactly 116 pages.

There were a couple of lines that spilled over onto the 117th page. These are very large pages. They were not typical letter size as we use today, they were 16 by 13 inches, on average. And so these large manuscript pages of the original translation of the Book of Mormon had taken place at the very end. Joseph Smith finished them last.

So, what happened was, the structure – as we can now gather, as we can put back together, as we reassemble the structure of the book as originally intended by Mormon – was what Joseph Smith referred to in his preface as the book of Lehi, “written upon the plates of Lehi.” And I’ll talk more about why he used those terms in a second.

And then the rest of the Book of Mormon as we have it.

And then, at the very end, Mormon, the Words of Mormon, appeared after everything else. And Mormon wrote, “Look, I’m now including these other records, because God has prompted me.” Similar to what happened to Nephi to write the records. He says “and thus it worketh with me in the Spirit, and I’m going to put these records in here at the end.”

Joseph Smith actually translated the book of Lehi first, the lost manuscript first, and then he translated everything else. And when he got to the end, that’s when he translated the books that we have today, 1 Nephi through Omni. When he was done with that, he had just finished translating it, he’d seen the manuscript, and he knew exactly the length. And then he realised “I’ve got to write this preface.”

He also realised it would be confusing to talk about the plates of Nephi being lost, and then we are going to replace them with an account taken from the plates of Nephi. Because those two sets of plates have the same name, he decided to give one of them the name “the plates of Lehi.” Even though that name had not been given within the scriptures themselves, it still accurately described that record. And it helped people keep straight in their minds exactly what was going on.

## How many manuscript pages are missing?

So let’s talk about what was missing.

He named specifically the book of Lehi, so we know that’s how the work began, the lost manuscript began. But what Don Bradley has done, is he’s taken the rest of the Book of Mormon, and he’s done some extrapolation. For example, how much of the Book of Mormon is actually missing? If we take that number, 116, it would seem like a very big coincidence for Joseph Smith to have translated this whole record, lost it, and then at the very end of the Book of Mormon there’s another smaller – from all indications – record to replace it. Translated that, and have it come out to exactly the same length in manuscript pages.

And so, if we start from the assumption that maybe, that number, Joseph Smith didn’t exactly know how many pages were in that manuscript. That he just used an assumption that they were the same size, and wrote 116 pages.

Then, what can we guess about how long that manuscript would have been?

So, let’s go on with what this author says, because I think it’s really fascinating. First of all, we take the record that Mormon created, from the beginning of Mosiah, up through the beginning of Christ’s ministry to the Nephites in 3 Nephi. And the reason for that is, obviously, Mormon is going to take a lot more time to talk about Christ’s ministry with the Nephites. And so, he spends 20 pages on two weeks’ worth of time.

And then in 4 Nephi, he spends one chapter on 400 years’ worth of time. So, the amount of time that Mormon spends, the amount of pages that Mormon spends on Nephite time changes wildly, once you get to Christ’s appearance to the Nephites.

So before that time it’s fairly uniform, it’s more uniform. So what the author does, is he says, we can look at this and see an average of around eight pages of what would have been the manuscript for every ten years of Nephite time. And if we take that same amount of time that Mormon would have spent, and we go back all the way back to Lehi leaving Jerusalem, we get a number that is closer to 350, 330, 390. Depending upon his method of measuring, he gets different numbers.

We would have had a lot more manuscript!

Then he does something else that interesting. He says, “Ok, let’s try to reconstruct how much time did Martin Harris and Joseph Smith spend together. And how many days did they spend translating.” And he comes up with a lower bound, and an upper bound. The lower bound is somewhere around 42 days, and the upper bound is somewhere around 67 days.

Using the lower bound of that time – what is the minimum amount of time they would have spent together – and then looking at the amount of work Joseph later accomplished once his gift returned: how many pages did he put out per day, given how many days did we know he translated, and how much is there in the rest of the Book of Mormon. And the number there is surprisingly similar.

Once again, using these different measurements, we get a number that’s either 330, 350, all the way up to 390. So, somewhere in the mid-three-hundreds is a pretty good guess, if you didn’t already know that there were 116 pages in that lost manuscript. It’s a pretty good guess that there would be 350 pages, 330 pages, in that lost manuscript. And then he does a calculation: what is the average number of modern Book of Mormon pages that come from each manuscript page. And that number is somewhat greater than one, it’s between one, and one and a quarter pages per manuscript page.

Using all of these measurements – now I go through this for reason – using all of these measurements, what we then realise, is that it’s possible – in fact this argument, everything that I’ve just told you, I find it extremely compelling, and I find it convincing. And I’m convinced – you may not be, there is obviously plenty of room for disagreement – I’m convinced that Joseph Smith did just assume that he had 116 manuscript pages in his first translation of this story, because he had 116 manuscript pages in the second time he did it. And he didn’t interact with the manuscript. He may not have exactly known how many manuscript pages were gone out of his possession.

So I’m convinced by this argument. And I recommend you read the book if you have a problem with it.

## What could be in the missing content?

So what would have been the content of that? And what would have been the impact of that, if we still had it in our scriptures? Well, basically, think about the length of that amount of… That volume of text, would be the equivalent of taking out everything from 1 Nephi all the way to the end of the book of Alma. Roughly.

So if you can imagine the Book of Mormon, except you don’t have 1 Nephi through the end of Alma, and you start the book reading at Helaman, and then you wonder, “Am I missing anything?” The answer from any person who has read the Book of Mormon would be, “Yes, of course! You’re missing a great deal.”

## God covenants with Enos to preserve the record of the Nephites

Now interestingly enough, we have a commentary by God, from this. Now one of the requests of Enos – I’m going to read this again to you. When he gets an answer from God, “Yes, Enos, I’m going to make sure that I preserve the records of the Nephites, and I’m going to bring them to your descendants one day, so that they might be perhaps brought unto salvation.” And God said unto him, “he covenanted” – in verse 16 of Enos:

“…he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time.

17 And I, Enos, knew it would be according to the covenant which he had made; wherefore my soul did rest.

And now we’re in verse 18:

18 And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine. ([Enos 1:16-18](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/enos/1?lang=eng&id=16-18#p16))

Now I want to point out something. So, God has now promised to Enos, and he makes mention that he’s promised to several people, that he will preserve the records, and bring them to the descendants of the Lamanites, so that one day, not only them but anyone else who might come into the land, so that they could be the means of bringing the truth to the descendants of the prophets of the Nephites.

Isn’t that interesting? They were so worried about their descendants in distant centuries, that they prayed to God and obtained a covenant that he would preserve all of their words, and bring these scriptures back to their descendants, so that they could once again have knowledge.

It was very important to them that their seed have access to these covenants, that they realised were so important. It shows a very firm awareness, that they understood how closely tied we are all together as the family of mankind. That as modern prophets are pointing out and teaching slowly, as we do temple work, we are actually binding all of mankind into one unbroken chain, so that we can have – this is my own personal interpretation – so that we can all have access to the covenants of Abraham. Because you and I don’t have a covenant with Abraham. But we have access to that covenant, and in fact God renews that covenant with us, when we are adopted in, according to the covenant God made with Abraham. He would say to Abraham, “Look, anyone who is thy seed, also partakes with you in this covenant.” So when we are adopted in, through baptism – so not necessarily adopted – but when we are *ratified* into that covenant through baptism, confirmation, and then sealing to parents, or being born in the covenant, then we have access to the blessings of Abraham.

## D&C 10:46 – God testifies he will keep his covenant to bring forth these parts of his gospel

And I believe, that these early Nephite prophets were aware of this principle, and it was so important to them that they were part of an unbroken chain with their descendants, that they were hoping that one day that their descendants would become aware of all of these covenants. So in Doctrine and Covenants, section 10 – now this is really interesting, we’re in verse 46 – this is really interesting, because if Joseph Smith made all this up – which as you study the Book of Mormon and all of the context around it, that should be an increasingly incomprehensible idea to you, around just how complicated this thing would have been, for it to be a work of fiction.

For Joseph Smith to dream this up, then he has to remember, “Oh my gosh, yes, not only did God replace the original part of the Book of Mormon with another part, but also, the second part is enough, according to this covenant. There was a covenant that God would bring forth the words, but God isn’t breaking his covenant,” right? This just really opened my eyes, because I hadn’t even thought of this aspect of it.

But what God promises Joseph, is:

“…behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people.” ([D&C 10:46](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/10?lang=eng&id=46#p46))

So this is God testifying to Joseph Smith – and this is important to God, right? – “I’m keeping my word, I have promised so many ancient prophets that their words would come forth unto their seed one day, and I’m letting you, Joseph, know, that even though you’ve lost this huge portion of what I gave you the power to translate, what is still there is sufficient to keep my covenant.”

Now the consequences to you and me of the first part of the Book of Mormon being lost are very real. So we don’t realise – if you were to read the book of Kings, and you were to say, “Let’s take 40 percent, 45 percent of the book of Kings out, the first part of it, and then supplement it with some words that were written by Isaiah. And Isaiah sort of wrote a little bit of his own history, and we can reconstruct the book of Kings.”

You would not have a very complete history of the children of Israel, from the time of the Judges, from the time of the reign of David, unto the exile. You just wouldn’t have it. What you would have would be a very fragmentary history for the first part of it, and then you would have the second part of the history, and it would be missing a lot of context.

So those consequences to us are real. Nevertheless, God is saying, “I’ve done what I can, and I’ve done what I said I would, which is to keep my covenant, and bring forth my words.” Now we can read all the way through to verse 53, along these same lines.

“47 And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers;”

And I made this point in an earlier lesson. If you think your prayers don’t matter, think about what God was willing to do for these ancient Nephite prophets, who kept praying and praying, “Please God, preserve our records.” And he’d made a promise that was so unshakeable, that he was willing to miraculously intervene, not only to bring the records forth, not only to do everything that Mormon and Moroni did, and Joseph Smith did, in translating and bringing forth the record, but also in providing redundancy for the human mistakes that would get in the way.

And he was willing to do all of those things, simply because – obviously because it coincided with his purposes – but simply because, people had been willing and faithful enough to ask him in their prayers. So think about that the next time you pray, and you say “God I have a righteous desire.”

It took thousands of years for those prayers to be answered! And yet, God had made a covenant, and they relied faithfully upon it. Enos reports “As soon as God told me it would be done, then my soul did rest. I knew he would keep his covenant.”

And so, think about that. I know I do. This is very comforting to me, this is a comforting idea to me, that God is a keeper of his covenants, and our prayers are powerful. They’re so powerful with him, that he will move heaven and earth to keep his covenants with us. And he will make covenants with us, when we learn how to ask in the right way.

That’s a process, right? Because Enos himself, he asked for the Nephites, he prayed for the Nephites, and God said, “Well look, yes, I’ll bless them according to their righteousness, but I also have to curse them and punish them, according to their wickedness.”

“Behold,” verse 52:

“52 …[B]ehold, according to their faith in their prayers will I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people. Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up.

53 And for this cause have I said: If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them. ([D&C 10:52-53](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/10?lang=eng&id=52-53#p52))

Now, interestingly, the word “generation” might remind you of D&C section 3, when Joseph Smith was told – well, actually, it’s part of this section. So this talks about the reason why Joseph Smith wasn’t being given the gift to translate again.

This valuable, important part of the record, which is now lost – it’s because some people have gotten hold of this manuscript. And their plan, according to God, is to make changes in the manuscript, and then if Joseph Smith should ever publish that portion of the book, then they can bring forth, presumably an original - which is actually and altered form – and say “Joseph brought forth this record, but we have the same record, and look, it’s older than the Book of Mormon,” because they have access to the manuscript before the Book of Mormon was published – “it’s older than the book of Mormon, but it’s different! Why did you change it, Joseph Smith?”

And this was part of Satan’s plan to discredit Joseph. And as God says, it was part of his plan that the truth might not come forth, in this generation. Meaning that God, presumably – now this is a guess on our part – that God had another plan. If Joseph Smith had somehow failed, and Satan had succeeded in discrediting his work, that God had a way of bringing it forth, but it would have taken another generation or two, to bring that forth.

Now, personally when I think about this, I don’t think, “Ok, God had another Book of Mormon, there was another people somewhere.” I think he would have found another way to bring forth the Book of Mormon. And, unfortunately, it wouldn’t have included Joseph Smith. God very specifically threatens Joseph Smith, “If you do not pay attention, if you do not fear God more than man, you will fall. You will become as other men; you will lose your gift.”

And God was prepared to do that. That definitely would have followed. And Joseph Smith had the free agency, he had the agency to choose to leave God’s service and God would have been able to recover from that. “His purposes cannot be frustrated,” as he says, and luckily for us, that’s not what happened.

But unfortunately for us, and for Joseph Smith, for everyone involved, the first part of the Book of Mormon was lost.

Now this constitutes very nearly half of what Joseph Smith would eventually translate from Mormon. From the hand of Mormon, which includes everything – not 1 Nephi through Omni, and not the book of Ether, and actually, paradoxically, not a large part of the actual book of Mormon, the small book of Mormon within the Book of Mormon, because that’s written in many cases by Moroni – so everything that Mormon wrote, this is about half of it that’s missing. If you accept this 350-page number.

Now what does that include? One of the things that we can assume it includes – now what we know, that Nephi made the point to his brothers, that we are like the ancient children of Israel. And so there would have been many more parallels between the Exodus and their first journey.

Here’s another interesting parallel. In the book of Jarom, and in the book of Omni, we have reference to some time periods. So, I mentioned that at two hundred years after they left Jerusalem, they’re at the height of their civilisation. Now let’s look in 4 Nephi. In verses 22 through 26, it talks about, number 1, they’ve been blessed spiritually, they’ve been blessed temporally, they’ve been blessed socially, and they’ve been blessed economically, and their height, the pinnacle of their civilisation was two hundred years. And very quickly then, they began to decline.

Again, three hundred and twenty years – so in the case of 4 Nephi, it’s two hundred years after the coming of Christ to the Nephites – in the case of Jarom, it’s two hundred years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. But in either case, that’s their calendar.

And then in the book of Omni, verse 5, we have him talk about three hundred and twenty years. And in that time period they began their decline, or their decline was very clearly marked. And in 4 Nephi verses 48 through 49, we also have an example of three hundred and twenty years into their calendar, their decline was very clearly marked to them. Their wickedness was advanced to the point where God was beginning to take away their blessings. In the case of 4 Nephi, that was when the records were hidden up.

In both cases, there is a man named Ammaron involved. I don’t always know how to pronounce all these names in the Book of Mormon, but I’m going to get better at it, because I’ve not often had to talk about them aloud. I’ve usually just read them, so, this year is my time to read the pronunciation guide, which is included in the scriptures.

But in any case, there was the example of a prophet transmitting the record to his brother, instead of from father to son, that was three hundred and twenty years in their calendar.

So what happened was, Mormon was looking at the two histories, and seeing “Oh, my gosh, our history now has close parallels with the early Nephite history.” And enough of that – luckily for us – enough of that was also in the small plates, that he was able to notice it. And then he included it in his abridgement.

So, incidentally, Joseph Smith was not translating from the large plates. He was translating from Mormon’s abridgement of the large plates. The large plates of Nephi included history all through what we know as the Book of Mormon. So there were actually probably several sets of plates that made up the large plates, because they just continued along.

Another question you might have, when you realise that this lost manuscript was replaced, is: how was it that the missing part of the Book of Mormon, the part at the end, that Mormon included at the very end of his record, was exactly the length that Joseph Smith lost?

So Joseph Smith and Martin Harris were translating for a certain amount of time. And then they chose to stop, they ran out of time in the middle of summer, in the middle of June there, and Martin Harris wanted to show the manuscript. Isn’t that a coincidence that that exact length of the manuscript was included in Nephi’s small plates? Isn’t that coincidental that they happened to stop at that exact point?

Well, if you’re thinking that, there is an answer to that question. And it’s found in Doctrine and Covenants, chapter 10. God actually tells Joseph Smith were to take back up his translation. He doesn’t say “Take it back up from the exact point you left off.” What God says was “Resume your recounting of this story from the middle of the reign of King Benjamin, according to that which you already have.” So this is an indication that some of the manuscript, some of the work that Joseph had produced, remained behind with him. He might have had just a few pages of that. And therefore, he may have had what we have today as Mosiah chapter 1 already in his possession, and what God was saying was, “Begin the translation there.”

So, I guess my point is that the historical record covered by the small plates of Nephi, and that which was lost in the lost manuscript, they don’t necessarily end at exactly the same point. That’s my opinion – I didn’t find that in this book – but it seems to me like there is room there for a little bit of a gap there in those two records.

Finally, the book of Mosiah, as we have it – now the original chapter divisions in the Book of Mormon are different than we have them today, than they were originally. So the Book of Mormon was divided – in the ancient record – was divided into chapters. But, some years after the first edition of the Book of Mormon, the chapter divisions that we now have were put in place, and the verse numbers were also put in place, to make it more familiar to readers of the Bible.

So those chapter divisions, the hope was that the length of the chapters and the length of the verses would make this something that somebody who had grown up reading the Bible would feel comfortable and familiar with. Enough to keep reading.

And perhaps that was done based on experience with people reading the book of Mormon and saying “Why are these chapters so long!” Because they would take up several chapters of the current Book of Mormon.

So with that in mind, it might interest you to know that that the Book of Mosiah as we have it begins with chapter 3. Showing us that it was more than the book of Lehi that was missing. There was also a book of Mosiah.

We learn about Mosiah in the book of [Omni](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/omni/1?lang=eng). He says, “I want to tell you about this King Mosiah, who was made king.” Now we know from – I think it’s the book of Jacob – yes Jacob chapter 1, when he says, the kings according to Nephi’s dynasty, they were named second Nephi, third Nephi and so on. And you can guess that after hundreds of years of this dynasty continuing, that these kings, they derived a large amount of legitimacy from the name of Nephi. They could basically lay claim upon all of the blessings of kingship, because of their descendancy from their ancient fore-father Nephi.

And then all of a sudden, we have a record of a man named Mosiah, who is not named Nephi. And it doesn’t say that he was the king, or that he was born king, but that he was *made* king. We don’t have a lot of information about Mosiah the first, as he is called, or Mosiah I as sometimes he’s referred to.

He’s the father of King Benjamin. We do have some references to him. King Benjamin – as we’ll discuss next week – makes some references to him in his address. And he says, “My father spoke of an evil spirit which can come upon people, and motivate them to do evil things.” And the second time he says, “The evil spirit was that was spoken of by our fathers.” And so, Mosiah had been a spiritual teacher, as well as a mighty king and warrior.

And during Mosiah’s time, as we learn in the book of Omni, there was another exodus. So the first exodus, you might say, at least the first exodus that came after they reached the promised land, was when Nephi had to pick everyone up, and remove himself in a hurry from the land where the Lamanites ruled, and they went to the land of Nephi, which was later called *the land of their first inheritance*.

Then, during the time of Mosiah, they had to do it again. We just have a few verses abut it. We’re lucky to have even those. But, in [verse 5](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/omni/1?lang=eng&id=5#p5), we learn about that in year 320 the more wicked parts of the Nephites were destroyed. In other words, the Lamanites were finally victorious, in a huge way, in a battle against them.

And then we learn that the Nephites had to actually separate themselves from the rest of their brethren. So either the more wicked part of the Nephites were physically destroyed, in other words killed, or they ceased to become Nephites, and they started to become Lamanites.

Ans so at that point is when Mosiah takes over. So he is the spiritual leader. Presumably there was a wicked King Nephi, that we don’t even know about. And that king would have been refusing to listen to voices of the prophets, to the point where God had to call someone else from the people and say, “You are now the leader of this people. You are also a prophet. I want you to take the Liahona, I want you to take the brass plates, I want you to take all of the relics from the Temple. I want you to take all of these things, and get into the wilderness, and take everyone who will agree with you to go.”

Now it’s not likely that they could have done so in as much secrecy as the Nephites originally did, because the more people you have, the harder it is to just sneak away in the night-time. So there was probably a battle associated with that. We don’t have records of that. And then they established the land of Zarahemla. They encountered the Mulekites, and their leader was named Zarahemla.

Mulek was one of the sons of King Zedekiah, who incidentally, was the king when Lehi left. So here’s another people. And we can contrast them with the Lehites. Here’s another people who left Jerusalem around the same time, but instead of bringing brass plates with them, they brought nothing. So their language had been perverted, and they had lost the spiritual knowledge of the covenants that God had made with their fathers. They were basically just one step above the Lamanites.

Luckily, they were peaceful. So when the Nephites encountered them, they were friends, they united themselves into one people. And they were willing to learn what we can presume was Hebrew, they were willing to learn the language of the Nephites, and have Mosiah be their king, Mosiah I.

Now this would be a phenomenal story, and you can’t imagine Mormon abridging this record without giving it a huge amount of space. So it wasn’t just the book of Lehi – that’s another piece of evidence, that’s why I’m going into all this – it’s another piece of evidence that it wasn’t just the book of Lehi that went missing. There would have been a significant treatment of Mosiah I and his exodus and some of the events leading up to that, and the reigns of kings and the wars and contentions among my people.

Knowing that the Book of Mormon does not today have the structure that it was originally intended to have, for me makes it a much richer experience, because then I’m thinking, there is so much knowledge that God has that has yet to be revealed. And he chose to preserve a record of all these things. And because of the wickedness of men, and because of the unwillingness of Joseph Smith to take his first and second “no,” we don’t have access to that.

So that’s another very important spiritual lesson for us. In spite of the blessings we may have received in the past, in spite of God having guided us spiritually in the past, if we begin to fear man more than God, then we can begin to make mistakes that will have a huge impact upon those who come after.

And it may be that we’re saved. I have no doubt that Joseph Smith has received a powerful place in the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the consequences of his choice remain. And we don’t have access to the scriptures today, as Mormon originally intended them. And what a powerful spiritual lesson that is for us. And I believe that’s why Joseph was prompted to include Doctrine and Covenants 3 in the record of his revelations, to teach us that very lesson.

So, we learn one lesson from Enos, that our prayers matter, that our little prayers can actually have a huge impact on the history of our posterity, of our world, for generations and thousands of years, millennia to come. Secondly, although God can save us from our sins, he cannot undo the effects in all cases of our sins. He cannot take away every consequence of our poor choices. And so, in spite of how many blessings we may have received in the past, we have to be constantly vigilant. And we have to learn – as Martin Harris had to learn – we have to learn that when God gives us a commandment, we’re only protected if we obey it exactly.

So to me, this week, is sort of a beginning of a comparison between the Book of Mormon as we have it from the hand of Mormon, and the Book of Mormon as it might have been. And I’m definitely fascinated by this book that I have read, and I’m going to be pointing out those indications. There are actually more of them than I would have guessed. And to me, it enriches immeasurably the study of the Book of Mormon, and makes it – as all other scriptures are – the product of human effort. Meaning, although the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, if God could reach down his finger, and pick up a pen, and write a book that was the perfect book, then it would be different than what we have today. And that’s just interesting to know. I just love to know that. I love to know that the book of Mormon is the product of human effort, and therefore it has flaws, it has mistakes, it has omissions. And, nevertheless, as God said, “It is the fulfilment of my covenant. It is me, transmitting all of the knowledge that you need have, in order for me to keep my covenant to your ancient fathers, and to bring you unto Christ.”

And that makes me realise I’ve got to make sure that, number one, I can learn enough about the covenants of God, that if there is something missing then God can teach it to me, personally. That I can find it somewhere, in some other work of scripture, in some other word of a prophet, in some other life experience, in some other whispering of the Holy Ghost. That eventually, all of the knowledge that God needs me to have will come unto me.

And secondly, that I can make sure that my choices don’t have an adverse effect on those who will come after.

So those are the important and powerful lessons from the books Enos through the Words of Mormon. And so, remember the order of this would have been: the original book of Lehi, all the books that followed, down to the first part of the book of Mosiah – those are all missing. Then the rest of the Book of Mormon as we know it, and then the Words of Mormon. And then, what we have today, as the books of 1 Nephi through Omni. So that is the order in which Joseph Smith translated them, and they’ve been shifted around.

The Book of Mormon, just like the Bible, is a complex work. The product of human effort, and God’s striving with man, working as he does, within their agency, to accomplish his work, to make known his covenants, and to provide for our profit, our learning, our salvation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.