



Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011

Volume 17 | Number 1

Article 11

1-1-2005

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Parkinson, Dilworth B. (2005) “We Have Received, and We Need No More,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 17 : No. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol17/iss1/11>

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title “We Have Received, and We Need No More”

Author(s) Dilworth B. Parkinson

Reference *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 255-71.

ISSN 1550-3194 (print), 2156-8049 (online)

Abstract Advancing in gospel knowledge is compared to the slow and frustrating process of learning a foreign language. Obstacles include acquiring facts without applying them in one’s life and being satisfied with one’s present state of knowledge. Several constructive principles of active and effective learning are reviewed.

“WE HAVE RECEIVED, AND WE NEED NO MORE”¹

Dilworth B. Parkinson

Dilworth B. Parkinson has a PhD in Arabic linguistics from the University of Michigan and is a professor of Arabic at Brigham Young University.

Learning a new language as an adult can be a very difficult and frustrating process. Languages have a huge, seemingly endless supply of new words, idiomatic expressions, and unpredictable grammatical constructions, and they come from unfamiliar systems of politeness and culture. Students, even very advanced ones, often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of material left to learn.

To be perfectly honest, teaching a foreign language to adult learners is just about as frustrating as learning one is. We are a profession with an almost spectacular level of failure. Large numbers of bright-eyed, excited students enter our classes every semester, eager to “learn Arabic” or some other language, but despite our best efforts something doesn’t click with a good percentage of those students, and they end up quitting at some point well shy of reaching their goal.

I would like to refer specifically to two of the major sources of frustration in learning a new language as an adult. The first is that direct teaching and learning of the facts about the language has limited usefulness in actually learning the language. This realization dawns on students slowly, and at first it can even anger them. When they have put in hours memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules, they really

1. 2 Nephi 28:27.

Dilworth B. Parkinson presented this devotional address at Brigham Young University, 2 March 2004.

expect there to be an immediate payoff, but it doesn't happen that way. Knowing a language is not just knowing facts about the language (that's a kind of knowing we refer to as "knowing *that*")—it goes well beyond that to being able to understand and use the language like a native speaker does in real time and in authentic cultural situations (this kind of knowing could be referred to as "knowing *how*").

This latter kind of learning is much harder to teach. The fact of the matter is, we don't really know how to do it so that it is 100 percent successful—thus our spectacular failure rate. It does seem clear, however, that the methods that work the best are a combination of a little direct teaching of the facts and a lot of creating situations that allow students to practice using the language inside and outside of class. These latter methods are relatively indirect, and they don't have an immediate payoff. Students often feel frustrated and feel they are not making progress. The students who eventually do make the break to a kind of fluency, however, are the ones who throw themselves into these activities and simply try to communicate with abandon, working around and through their frustration until a breakthrough finally comes. There is a kind of mystery involved here: moving from a theoretical knowledge to a practical one, figuring out how to develop those habits of tongue, mind, and heart that allow them to function as native speakers do. It is not a direct process.

Three of my children have served foreign language missions, and in each case the first few letters home from the field were full of language frustration. They didn't understand anything, even after studying the language intensively in the MTC. One of them had studied the language throughout his school years, had done very well on the high school AP test in that language, and was a "star" at the MTC. It came as something of a surprise to both him and us that during the first month in Chile he still understood very little of what people said to him. It turns out that for him to "know Spanish," he needed something more than what he had learned in a very long and intense period of Spanish study. He needed to get beyond knowing Spanish just in his head to knowing it "in his bones." Those first months of a foreign language mission—being dragged by your senior companion to one situation after

another where you are forced to try to understand and communicate somehow—usually provide those indirect learning experiences that allow the initial breakthrough to fluency.

I like to compare it to the process of learning to ride a bike. Our teacher may or may not give us a minimal explanation about the principles of balance, but no amount of explanation is going to do the least bit of good unless we actually get on the bike and simply try it. We will certainly fall off many times before something clicks and we somehow “get it,” but if we don’t get up and get back on, we will certainly never get it. With language it is the same. If we throw ourselves into the language both inside and outside of class, although no one activity seems to make much of a difference, insight does come, and we make discrete jumps of understanding. If we don’t keep getting back on the linguistic bike, however, we certainly will never achieve mastery.

The second frustration of adult language learning I would like to refer to is the dawning realization that comes to honest learners—even after they are very good at the language—that there is an almost infinite amount left to learn. Even very fluent speakers are constantly made aware of how imperfect their accent is, how many words they still don’t know, how awkward their constructions are, and how unnatural their production is. The gulf between even a very proficient speaker and a native speaker seems huge indeed.

I give myself as an example of this phenomenon. People tell me that I speak Arabic well, and I happen to be an expert on the complicated system of Arabic case markings. Arabs have often told me that I know Arabic better than they do when they notice my proficiency at the case markings. But, of course, they are completely wrong, and this becomes embarrassingly apparent as soon as I open my mouth. I do things that I know are wrong. I find myself using incorrect forms in the heat of a conversation, breaking rules that I’ve known for years. I know the rule as well as I know anything, but somehow I still don’t know it well enough. Why do native speakers never make mistakes like the ones I make? What is the difference between their knowledge and mine? Why does theirs seem to be so “deep wired,” so much a part of their very beings that nothing can come out of their mouths that isn’t

in accord with it, whereas my knowledge seems to be more superficial, more imposed, less a part of me? Even when I manage to produce something that is grammatically perfect, why does it take so much intellectual and emotional energy from me to do so, so much active managing and monitoring of my performance, whereas native speakers produce perfect language without really thinking about it at all?

Now this second source of language frustration is related to one of the major frustrations of being a language teacher at BYU. Language teaching research clearly shows that when a student becomes satisfied with what he knows, when he feels he “knows the language,” he almost immediately ceases to make progress. We call this the “returned-missionary syndrome.”

Missionaries become fluent and proficient in their language in a very limited sphere. Unfortunately, many of them decide somewhere deep within their souls that they know enough and that they don't need to know any more. They come home and enter our classes and don't make progress; they already know enough. They are seemingly oblivious to all the things they don't know, both in the overt know-that sense and in the more subtle know-how sense. It is also frustrating that other professors and administrators often seem to agree with the students that they know enough and that there is nothing else important to learn, making it even more difficult to figure out ways to help them make progress in their language. Returned missionaries who manage to keep in mind how little they know and how much they have still to learn end up being the ones who ultimately make the most progress and find the most joy in the journey. Being reminded of the huge gulf between one's own language abilities, no matter how advanced, and those of a native speaker appears to be a prerequisite for further progress.

I believe there are important lessons we can learn by comparing the process of trying to learn a language to the process of trying to learn the gospel.

When we gain a testimony we feel certain in ourselves, and we have a desire to declare to the world that we “know the gospel is true.” But the question I would like us to consider today is: “Once we know

the gospel is true, once we have received that witness of the Spirit, is there anything else to know?” Of course nothing is more important to know than this basic witness. But I am asking, “Once we get that basic witness, is that enough?” Missionaries know that new converts can get this witness quite early in the process of learning about the church, sometimes during the very first meeting. It appears to be quite possible to know the gospel is true with only a minimal understanding of the gospel, perhaps just a few basic facts. Thus coming to “know the gospel is true” and coming to “know the gospel” are quite different processes.

Listen to how Brigham Young described the state of our knowledge, remembering that he is describing the people of the church, who already know the gospel is true:

The people [cannot receive the laws] in their perfect fullness; but they can receive a little here and a little there, a little to-day and a little to-morrow, a little more next week, and a little more in advance of that next year, if they make a wise improvement upon every little they receive; if they do not, they are left in the shade.²

Brigham Young also said:

The fullness of perfection . . . was couched in the character of our Savior; although but a scanty portion of it was made manifest to the people, in consequence of their not being able to receive it. All they were prepared to receive He gave them. All we are prepared to receive the Lord gives us; all that the nations of the earth are prepared to receive He imparts unto them.³

I believe that the most important piece of knowledge that we can receive is the testimony that the gospel is true and that Jesus is the Christ. But in light of these quotations from Brigham Young, as well as from many scriptures, I believe it is also clear that it would be

2. *Journal of Discourses*, 2:314.

3. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:25.

wrong to stop once we have gained a testimony. The Lord has said he wants us to continue to grow in knowledge and understanding until we come to a perfect understanding, and he has made it clear that coming to that perfect understanding will be a slow process requiring patience, faith, and hard work.

I call this the line-upon-line principle, and I believe it has important implications for our understanding of the gospel.

Listen first to Nephi:

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. (2 Nephi 28:30)

I would like to summarize the doctrine of “line upon line” in this way: Even after we receive a testimony of the gospel, our understanding of it is incomplete—according to Brigham Young, woefully so. Even after years of Primary and Sunday School classes, scripture reading, and missionary service, our understanding is still not perfect. However, like the returned missionaries in our language classes, many of us have the returned-missionary syndrome. They are fluent and they do know a lot and it is hard for them to imagine that there is something important about the language that they don’t know—even though the gulf separating them from what a native speaker of the language knows is deep and almost unbridgeable. Similarly, we feel that we know the gospel quite well, and it can be hard for us to imagine something about the gospel that we don’t know. We don’t expect there to be another hidden law of tithing waiting for us just around the corner or some as-yet-secret law of sacrifice. We’ve had at least thirty Sunday School lessons on faith, and we didn’t hear anything new in the last twenty. What is there left to learn?

Well, according to the line-upon-line doctrine, we are not yet native speakers of the gospel. Even though we may have developed some gospel fluency, there is a huge gulf between where we are now and where we could and should be. How can this be? I believe there are at least a couple of ways that we can conceive of.

First, it may not be the case that there are any whole new areas of doctrine out there waiting to be discovered. Rather, it is possible that we have an understanding of the whole gospel, but it is in schematic form, like an outline that hasn't been entirely filled in yet. We may know the basics but may not see all the deeper connections both between specific doctrines and how the gospel is an interconnected whole.

Second, there may be ways of understanding the gospel that are beyond what might be called *knowing-that* understanding—ways involving action, commitment, and the heart. These cannot really be explained or grasped intellectually but give a kind of clarity that must be experienced to be understood—a true *knowing how*. We may be able to explain love, sacrifice, selflessness, justice, and mercy but still may have only the most primitive understanding of them, since we have not yet found a way to bring these principles into actual practice in our lives. We know them in a sense—just like I know those Arabic grammar rules—but we don't consistently do them, and our doing of them is “monitored” and “forced”; we are not yet proficient “speakers” of the gospel.

We won't, in fact, know the gospel fully until it is deep wired, “written in our hearts” (2 Corinthians 3:2–3; see also Jeremiah 31:33), incorporated so deeply into our being that living it is as natural as breathing—so that nothing can come out of us that is not in accord with it. This does not happen quickly, and it happens as an indirect rather than a direct result of study and practice and applying the atonement in our lives to change our hearts. It is, in fact, that lifetime process of getting a little here and a little there—of falling off the bike and getting back on again until we finally “get it”—that Brigham Young was referring to.

I would now like to expand on this summary by deriving some principles from the line-upon-line doctrine and investigating how they affect our lives.

Principle 1: We Don't Know It All Now

This follows directly from the line-upon-line doctrine. If we are to continue to learn here a little and there a little throughout much of our lives, then we don't know it all now. This principle is more important than it seems. It seems obvious—and therefore not worth stating—but as much as anything else the idea that we do know it all now, or at least the idea that we know enough, keeps us from making progress on the line we're on in order to progress to the next line. This is, in fact, a real danger, since when we do achieve a new insight, a new cohesion, we are almost immediately tempted to think: “Wow! I finally have it all figured out. I know it all.”

This reminds us of those language students who believe they have mastered the language and who then don't progress beyond that point. The feeling that we have it all figured out is a kind of pride and is a clear roadblock to our progress. It may be true that we have it figured out better than we used to and that the old outline looks pretty skimpy compared to our current understanding, but we need to recognize in the same thought that even our current understanding will look skimpy in a few years as we move on to further lines. It is a lifesaver to keep reminding ourselves: We don't know it all now.

Listen to Jacob:

O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, *supposing they know of themselves*, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. (2 Nephi 9:28–29)

Being willing to accept that we currently “see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12), that we don’t know it all, can save us from a multitude of griefs. It can literally settle our troubled souls over many noncentral gospel issues that we may find troublesome and that the General Authorities have counseled us to place on the “back burner.”

Are we worried about the age of the earth or the literality Noah’s flood? It helps to remember that our current understanding of both the facts and of the relevant scriptures is partial, and that as clear as our current view of the world seems, new facts and new scriptural understandings could come along to shake the very foundations of that view. We just don’t know enough to come to a certain conclusion now.

There are, of course, some partial, hazy answers to issues like these that can help somewhat, but what will help more than anything else is simply a recognition that “I don’t know this right now.” We can remember what we do know, what witness we have received, and what our current understanding of the gospel is and be grateful for and cling to that. We have no guarantee, however, that at any particular point in the process we are going to be able to fit in every stray piece of information.

Remembering this first principle, then, can help us keep our bearings as we work on the line we’re on. That it is a real temptation to think we have things figured out, and that it is dangerous to do so, is evidenced by King Benjamin’s sermon. He said:

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. (Mosiah 4:9)

Can you see that King Benjamin is not just telling us that we don’t know everything; he is asking us to believe it, to make it a matter of faith. It is so easy to forget that we must make it an article of faith, something we need to keep reminding ourselves of. Believe that

you don't comprehend everything the Lord comprehends. Make that belief a cornerstone of your life, bringing its insights to bear on the problems you encounter. I don't have it all figured out right now. There are some things that still don't fit in, but I have a witness that the Lord understands and knows the answers to those things and that they do fit in, so I can be satisfied with where I am in my progress right now. Although it sounds paradoxical, I would like to suggest that if we can get a witness of this point, a testimony that we don't know (along with our testimonies of the things that we do know), our progress in this line-upon-line test will be much smoother.

Principle 2: You Get What You Are Ready For

Most of us appear to have an insatiable curiosity about things. We want to know everything and have trouble figuring out why we have to wait, why we aren't allowed to know the answers now. But both the scriptures and Brigham Young's teachings make it clear that it isn't just the Lord's petulance that keeps him from telling us right now. He isn't playing games with us, enjoying our pain while we writhe around for a time. He gives us what we are ready to hear—and no more—because he loves us. Getting more than we are ready to accept or understand either does no good at all or actually does harm.

There will be a constant interplay in our line-upon-line progress between the various kinds of knowledge I have been talking about. Sometimes progress in one area seems to be suspended until we catch up in other areas. For every principle it seems that we need to get a spiritual witness that it is a true principle, we need to get some kind of understanding of it and of how it fits into the rest of the gospel, and we need to deep wire it, incorporate it into our behavior and our inner lives. If we concentrate on only one of these areas—say, just on the intellectual understanding of the principle—we may be confused as to why we don't make more rapid progress in our gospel knowledge. That confusion would clear itself up fairly quickly if we simply asked ourselves how we are doing on the other two kinds of knowledge of this principle (getting a witness and “knowing how” to do it). It may be impossible to make more progress in the one area without catching

up in the other two. It may feel disappointing to realize that although we’ve been working on some of the most basic principles for many years, we still don’t really know them yet. But that realization can be a lifesaver if it motivates us to do what it takes to get ready to actually move on to the next line. The next line may not even make sense to us until this one is deep wired.

Principle 3: What You Know Now May Look Different When You Get to the Next Line

This, too, is an important and overlooked principle. When we get added knowledge of any of the kinds we are discussing today, it throws new light on what we already knew, recontextualizes it, and helps us understand it differently and see better where and how it fits. The relative importance of things can change. This does not mean that there was anything untrue in what we knew before, but now we know more precisely, more perfectly. These changes can be disconcerting, so it is wise to expect them as we continue to get a little here and a little there.

When I first introduce an unusual structure like the cognate accusative to students in an Arabic language class, it seems more of an oddity than anything else. But as students grow in their knowledge of the language and start seeing this structure as it is integrated into real text, they gradually come to understand how it relates to other aspects of the language and how it fills a particular, but important, niche in a coherent system.

I believe that whenever we experience progress in any area—whether by getting a witness of a principle, coming to a better understanding of it, or better incorporating it into our lives—the other areas are clarified as well. One of the best examples of this involves Alma the Younger. He must have heard his father explain the atonement many times throughout his life, and he must have had a fairly good intellectual understanding of it as a principle. However, he attached no importance to it whatsoever. It simply didn’t mean anything to him more than an intellectual curiosity. However, the angel didn’t just knock Alma to the ground, he also demolished the world that Alma had so carefully built

up for himself. For the first time in his life Alma saw himself for what he really was, and he was appalled—horrified. When he then thought about those teachings of his father about Christ, they all of a sudden made perfect sense to him. The atonement as an abstract concept had barely interested him, but when he desperately needed it, it became the most important event in the world for him. I believe that we will experience similar radical realignments as we continue to work on the lines of the gospel.

Principle 4: The Only Way to Get to the Next Line Is to Take the One We're On Seriously

To take it seriously means to take a serious look at ourselves and our hearts. King Benjamin calls this “an awful view” (Mosiah 3:25), and it can be awful, because when we take an honest look at our hearts, as did Alma, we often find things we aren't proud of and would just as soon ignore. Just as a good learner can manage to produce a grammatical sentence by sheer force of will and by heavy monitoring and managing of his tongue, we can, through force of will and effort, bring our gospel performance into line so that from the outside we are “in compliance” with the rules. However, we know in our hearts that this is not enough. The Lord requires overt obedience, but that is only the beginning. The Lord also requires the heart. Throughout the scriptures he makes it perfectly clear that a gift hypocritically given is not counted as a gift. Sitting politely and looking “spiritual” in church is nice, but it doesn't make up for the cynical thoughts screaming through our heads about the bishop. The Lord doesn't just expect us to perform our callings as if we had faith. He wants us to actually have the faith and act out of that faith. He doesn't just want us to behave toward people as if we loved them. We need to actually learn to love them. Getting these principles into our hearts is not easy, and working on them is not necessarily a direct process; but taking the process seriously requires us at a minimum to take an honest look at ourselves, recognize where we are now, and figure out what line we're on. Any such honest look, I can assure you, will immediately convince you why you so desperately need the Savior's help in this process.

Taking seriously the line we are on implies choosing to accept some things we don't understand yet. Instead of chafing under current rules and policies or current understandings, let's accept them as a reflection of where we are right now; make something of them, as Brigham Young says; capitalize on them; learn from them; incorporate them; deep wire them; and find a way to get them written in our hearts so we can move on to the next line.

Taking seriously the line we are on also means getting a lot of practice. Kids who don't keep getting back on the bike never end up learning to ride, and students who don't keep plugging away at learning a language and practicing it never end up mastering it. Students who do end up learning to ride and speak experience frustration along the way because no one thing they do seems to get them closer to their goal immediately, but, as they keep trying, the bike and the language eventually give themselves to them. Something is happening below the surface that ends up making a difference.

I believe that working on the line we are on in the gospel can be similar. Once we have recognized where we are now and where our hearts need to be, it will be clear where we need to direct our energy in both gospel study and gospel practice. There is a sense in which we simply need to throw ourselves into gospel practice, making sure we are placed in many situations that call for gospel responses. No one thing we do will create the quantum leap of understanding that we are searching for, but if we don't keep plugging away at it with a lot of consistent study and practice, no leap will ever come. With study and practice, imperceptible changes happen beneath the surface that end up making a difference.

Principle 5: We Must Do All We Can and Then Ultimately Rely on the Grace of Christ to Get to the Next Line

Taking seriously the line we are on means recognizing the huge gulf between where we are and where we need to be and realizing that we probably are not going to be able to fill that gulf through sheer force of will. Just as a language learner can diligently study a language for many years and still be so far from being speaking like a native

speaker that it is almost pathetic, likewise our own diligent efforts to change our hearts by ourselves will prove useless until we come to rely on the grace of the Savior and his atonement. It is the Savior who sees and recognizes our efforts to change and who makes it possible for that change to really happen. We do need to do all we can, but we also need to be patient and recognize that the ultimate breakthrough depends on his grace.

I don't have time to tell the story here of how I learned Arabic on my mission in Lebanon, but I will say that although I studied it for many months, I had been told that it was too difficult for a missionary to learn and I believed that I would never learn it. Then one day we were invited into a home to speak with a family that spoke very little English.

After the visit my companion said: "I didn't know you could speak Arabic."

I replied with surprise: "I didn't know either."

I had experienced that coveted breakthrough to fluency, but I experienced it as an act of grace, a literal gift of God to me for his purposes—something that could not have come just from my study, even though the study may have been necessary for it to come. I have come to believe that in most, if not all, instances of that miracle and mystery of having some piece of knowledge move from the head to the heart—whether in language learning or in the gospel—grace is involved. As we do all we can do, grossly inadequate as it is, the Lord in his time, and when we are ready, can and will make up the difference and actually change us, writing on our hearts the knowledge that we have so carefully stored in our heads.

Principle 6: It's Quite Possible to Get Stuck on a Line, Stop the Flow of Lines, or Even Forget Lines

One possible reaction to the line-upon-line doctrine would be to feel that since we're just going to get a little here and a little there anyway, since it is basically random, I won't worry too much about it but just kind of float through life. This is clearly a mistake.

The scriptures warn us that it is quite possible, even probable, to end up with no lines at all. Listen to Alma:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.

And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:9–11)

This is almost a reverse line-upon-line process. If we get one line completely wrong and become convinced that we have it all figured out, we will on the basis of that incorrect understanding go on to line upon line, on the basis of the first false one, to continue to construct false, even evil, understandings of the way the world is, until our understanding is twisted and dark.

The Book of Mormon gives a wonderful detailed example of Laman and Lemuel figuring out—“knowing—that Nephi’s motives are evil and that the whole point of the game he is playing is to fool them so he can get power over them. This leads them from one bad decision to another until they literally lose contact with God or anything spiritual and become more and more angry, finally becoming murderers. The problem was the first thing that they thought they had figured out, that they thought they knew. It seemed logical, and they were pretty sure of it, but they were wrong. Nephi’s motives weren’t evil, and he wasn’t in it just for the power. But look how sure they were:

We *know* that he lies unto us; and he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes, thinking, perhaps, that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure. (1 Nephi 16:38)

And later:

We *knew* that ye could not construct a ship, for we knew that ye were lacking in judgment. . . .

And we *know* that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people. (1 Nephi 17:19, 22)

Look how many times they used the word *know*, how sure they were of what they had figured out. Are we ever as wrong about what we know and what we are sure we have figured out as Laman and Lemuel were?

One bad line may not seem so serious, but it can have eternal consequences if it stops the line-upon-line process. Remembering that we don't "know of ourselves" (2 Nephi 9:29), and forcing ourselves to remember this, may be the only thing that can keep us from falling into the Laman and Lemuel trap of losing lines right and left until we know nothing of the things of God. It is a kind of wonderful paradox that to ever really know, we must accept that we do not know.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I'd like to refer to that wonderful chapter in which Nephi mocks those who say they don't need any more Bible: "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible" (2 Nephi 29:3).

We Saints find it pretty annoying when others respond to the Book of Mormon with "We already have a Bible. Why would we need another scripture?"

We ask ourselves: "Why wouldn't they want more of God's word? Why wouldn't they be happy that God has chosen to speak again?"

Nephi summed up his condemnation with the words “Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more!” (2 Nephi 28:27).

I’m not sure he is just referring to nonmembers and nonbelievers when he said this, however. I wonder if he also isn’t referring to me as I sit in Sunday School class with one more lesson on faith wondering what more I could possibly learn about faith. No matter how much progress we have made, no matter what line we’re on, we need more. We need a firmer witness, a clearer and deeper understanding, and a more practical, heart-changing incorporation of almost any gospel principle we could contemplate. If we are satisfied with where we are, if we are pretty sure we have the whole thing figured out, we are in effect saying: “We have received, and we need no more.” The point of this life is to grow and progress, to become something so unbelievably far from where we are now that it almost seems ridiculous to contemplate. Learning the language of the gospel to the point of real native fluency—just like learning a foreign language as an adult—is difficult and can seem impossible when we contemplate the gulf between where we are and where we want to be. But God has given us a way to do it, and if what Brigham Young says is right, we get to it a little at a time by consistently working at it throughout our lives until the gospel gradually—and through his grace—becomes a part of us, truly “written in our hearts,” one line at a time.

