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## PREFACE

**M**ark Twain reportedly said, “The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them.” Perhaps a similar statement could be made regarding the Book of Mormon: The person who reads the Book of Mormon but does not follow its teachings is no better off than the person who does not read it. The 2007 Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, *Living the Book of Mormon: “Abiding by Its Precepts,”* focuses on how the Book of Mormon can immeasurably bless our lives as we strive to live what it teaches.

In this volume are papers presented at the Sidney B. Sperry Symposium held on the Provo campus of Brigham Young University, on October 26–27, 2007. The symposium is held each year in honor of one of the great gospel scholars of the Church and provides an excellent opportunity to study particular topics concerning the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This year the symposium takes its theme from Joseph Smith’s statement: “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (introduction to the Book of Mormon).

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Readers of this book will quickly see that while the topic is centered on *living* the principles, or *application*, one cannot write about application without writing about the doctrines and teachings themselves. Topics include a history of Joseph Smith's statement, the literary power of the book, agency, covenants, the Fall, the Atonement, charity, and the building of Zion. Sometimes authors interpret events or scriptures differently, and we as editors may not always agree with the author's interpretation, but such is the nature of the scholarly endeavor when good students of the gospel seek to pursue and understand truth. It is our hope that while the readers may see differences in understanding, they will also see the great, overarching similarity: the authors love the Book of Mormon and believe in it as divinely inspired scripture that can bless our lives.

We are particularly pleased to have the keynote address of the symposium as the first chapter. In his address, "Abiding by Its Precepts," Elder Joe J. Christensen shares with us his memories of his years in the Church Educational System when the Book of Mormon began to take a more prominent role in CES curriculum. He also discusses particular areas in which following the teachings of the Book of Mormon will help each of us to draw nearer to God. We are grateful to Elder Christensen for his contribution to both the symposium and this volume.

The 2007 Sperry Symposium committee consisted of Patty Smith, Thomas R. Valletta, and Professors John B. Stohlton, Gaye Strathearn, and Charles Swift. Professors Swift and Strathearn carried out the editorial responsibilities. We express our appreciation to each of those who contributed to the Sperry Symposium and to this volume of papers. And we thank our colleagues at Brigham Young University who reviewed the many manuscripts submitted. We consider it a great blessing to have been able to spend such time immersed in studying this great book of scripture, the Book of Mormon.