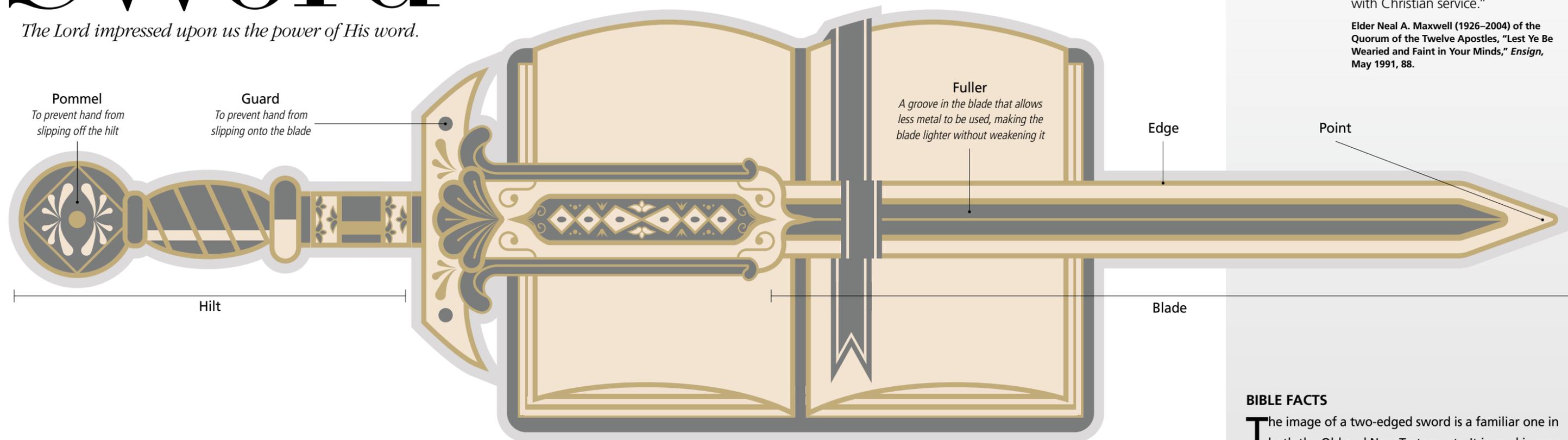


A Two-Edged Sword

The Lord impressed upon us the power of His word.



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

“In a hardening world, the Lord can pierce our consciousness by using ‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’ (Eph. 6:17; see also Jarom 1:12.) However, hearing must be ‘mixed with faith’ (Heb. 4:2) and with Christian service.”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Lest Ye Be Wearied and Faint in Your Minds,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 88.

A Two-Edged Sword

Swords were developed thousands of years ago as tools and weapons for thrusting and cutting. They evolved from daggers as material became more readily available (shifting from copper to bronze to iron), leading to longer blades and more widespread and versatile use.

Two-edged swords have been around about as long as there have been swords. A sword whose blade is sharpened on both sides is able to penetrate and cut at every contact point and with every movement. This means that it can be thrust more quickly and deeply and can cut more easily.

What We Can Learn

A two-edged sword:

Penetrates. Through the Spirit, God reveals things “to our spirits precisely as though we had no bodies at all” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 475). His word can also cut through culture, habits, biases, preconceptions, and doubts to speak to the innermost part of us, whether we are righteous or wicked. When people hear His word preached with power, they are often “pricked [or pierced] in their heart” (Acts 2:37) and desire to repent. In fact, the word of God has a more powerful effect on people’s

“My word . . . is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow.”

Doctrine and Covenants 6:2; 11:2; 12:2; 14:2; see also 33:1; Hebrews 4:12

minds than the literal sword (see Alma 31:5) and is one of the catalysts for developing faith (see Romans 10:17).

Divides. God’s word can separate truth from error and “divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil” (Helaman 3:29). It can help us identify the half-truths and complications that cloud our thinking by setting them up against God’s plain and precious truths.

Cuts in any direction. The word of God as revealed in the scriptures and teachings of living prophets is versatile and applicable in many situations for our blessing or condemnation, our edification, inspiration, instruction, or chastisement. And as we “treasure up in [our] minds continually the words of life” (D&C 84:85), the word of God is then “quick and powerful,” “lively and active” as we share it with others and apply it in our own lives.

BIBLE FACTS

The image of a two-edged sword is a familiar one in both the Old and New Testaments. It is used in many contexts. (See Judges 3:16; Psalm 149:6; Proverbs 5:4; Revelation 1:16; 2:12.)

In his analogy of the armor of God, the Apostle Paul compared the sword of the Spirit to the word of God (see Ephesians 6:17).

In the Bible, both the Greek and Hebrew words for *two-edged* mean “two-mouthed,” referring to how the blade consumes what it touches. But because the mouth is also where speech is produced, the original Bible languages inherently contain an association between a two-edged sword and the word.

In Hebrews 4:12, God’s word is said to be “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” The Greek word for *quick* means “alive, living, lively.” The Greek word for *powerful* means “full of energy, energized, active, effective.”