

# The Second Book of Nephi

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## Never Give Up on Someone You Love (2 Nephi 1)

As 2 Nephi begins, Lehi is on his death bed and he takes some time to share some final words of wisdom with various members of his family as recorded in Chapters 1-4. In Chapter 1, he speaks primarily to Laman and Lemuel, his oldest sons, who had given the family the hardest time as they traveled in the wilderness and had never really accepted the Lord into their lives. Here's a summary of the points Lehi makes as he pleads with his sons:

- Shake off the chains that bind you (verses 13, 23)
- Soften your hardened hearts (verse 17)
- Keep the commandments of God (verses 16, 20)
- Do the above to avoid eternal destruction (verse 22)
- Ultimately, the will of God will be done (verse 19)

The interesting thing about Lehi making this impassioned speech is that he already knew that Laman and Lemuel would never accept the Lord. He knew this from his dream (in 1 Nephi 8) in which he called to Laman and Lemuel to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and they refused. Yet, he didn't give up on them, trying with all his might to persuade them, right up until the end of his life.

When we consider people we know and love who have not accepted the Lord, the temptation may be to write them off, assuming they will never accept. However, unless God has specifically told us that such a person will never accept Him (and Lehi didn't give up even then), we should recognize that "while there is life, there is hope" and continue to pray for such people and encourage them as much as possible in the direction of serving God. None of us wants to even entertain the thought of someone we love suffering eternal destruction so this should give us incentive to pray for them.

- How about people who make it clear they don't want to hear about God and have nothing good to say about Him? Clearly, these are people whose hearts are hardened – pray for them to be softened.
- How about people who are caught up in sinful activities? Or people who are so busy with the pursuits of life that they have no room in their lives for God? These are people who are bound with "chains" – pray for those chains to be broken.

If you want to encourage people to keep the commandments of God, make sure you're keeping the commandments yourself. Although someone with a hardened heart may not be open to being

preached to, showing the love of Christ to them and sharing the joy that comes with serving God will make a powerful statement to anyone and could make a difference over time.

After we've done all of the above, we can leave the results in the hands of God. If there is any little opening to soften a heart or break chains, God will certainly do so. After all, He loves the person even more than we do so He has incentive too!

I remember a story about a sister in New Jersey who had a wayward son. As the years went by, everyone she knew told her to cut him off but she was resolute in continuing to love him and pray for him, insisting that someday he would turn his life around. When this sister was near the end of her life, her son came back to church, gave his life to Christ and was baptized. The sister got to see her prayers answered before she died.

Perhaps you know someone who came to Christ late in life, after holding out for many years. These were surely the result of someone loving them enough to not give up on them. Who do you know now who might benefit by you not giving up on them?



## We Need Opposition (2 Nephi 2)

In 2 Nephi 2, Lehi shares his insights on the weather in Southern California, arranged marriages and winning a major sports championship. What? You say you didn't see any of those insights in this chapter? Let's take them one by one.

### The Weather

The date is January 15. You walk outside and it's a gorgeous sunny day, temperature about 75 degrees. Would you have a bigger smile on your face if you're a resident of San Diego or a resident of Detroit? I would venture to say that a resident of a cold weather climate would be much happier as you probably had a foot of snow last week and the typical temperature for this date would be below freezing. You can truly appreciate the nice weather as opposed to the alternative.

As Lehi explains to his son Jacob, we can only truly appreciate something when we understand what the opposite would be. We most appreciate good health after a time of being ill or in pain. Times of misery give us an appreciation for times of happiness. In the spiritual realm, if there was no such thing as sin, what would it mean to be righteous? Even spending eternity with God would have less perceived value if there was not an opposite place that we will be happy to have avoided.

### Marriage

There was a time (and is perhaps still the case in some cultures) when your spouse was selected for you by your parents. I'm sure getting married was still a happy occasion but contrast this with the excitement of marrying the love of your life, the person you've chosen to spend your life with. It doesn't mean everybody makes the right choice (as evidenced by the high incidence of divorce and unhappy marriages) but I don't think any of us would want to give up the ability to choose for ourselves, right or wrong.

In this chapter, Lehi introduces the concept of "free agency". Each of us gets to choose between serving God or not serving Him, between living a sinful life or a righteous one, between heaven as our final home or eternal destruction. Although God recognizes that not everybody will make the right choice, He has chosen to set up opposite choices and allow each of us the freedom to choose Him or not.

## The Thrill of Victory

Imagine that you're playing on a professional sports team and you take the field (court, ice, whatever) for the championship game. As you look around, you realize something's missing – the opposing team! For whatever reason, the other team didn't show up today so it's a forfeit – your team is declared the champion. As you return to your home city and perhaps ride in a ticker tape parade, how much excitement can you really feel? After all, you won the championship against nobody! Is that really a victory to be excited about?

Lehi goes back to the beginning, recalling the story of Adam and Eve and remarking that it actually was necessary for them to eat of the fruit and introduce sin into the world. Otherwise, they would have just stayed in the Garden of Eden, *“having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin”* (Verse 22). They also would have had no children so none of us would have ever been born. Lehi sums it up in the oft-quoted verse 24: *“Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy”*.

So, if you choose to serve God (rather than the alternative), of your own free will (since you are a free agent), you get to experience the joy of salvation. It's only because there is opposition that we are able to experience this joy. The next time you go through a period of misery, think about how much happier you'll be when it's over. And, for real joy, think about what it will be like to spend an eternity with God because Jesus won the victory over the opposition.



## The Choice Seer (2 Nephi 3)

A key belief of The Church of Jesus Christ is that a man will come forth in the future who will play an important role in the Church's mission among the Seed of Joseph and the House of Israel. The title used for this man is the "Choice Seer". Most of the information regarding the Choice Seer is contained in 2 Nephi Chapter 3.

If you read Chapter 3, you'll see the name Joseph used quite frequently. In fact, almost everybody referenced in the chapter is named Joseph so here's a "scorecard" of who each Joseph is:

- Lehi's Son – This chapter summarizes what Lehi shared (shortly before his death) with his youngest son Joseph. Young Joseph's name is mentioned at the beginning (verses 1-3) and end (verses 22-25) of the chapter.
- Joseph from the Bible – Known as one of the 12 sons of Jacob/Israel and for having the coat of many colors, Joseph was also a prophet. Joseph's prophecy of the Choice Seer is not included in the Book of Genesis but it was recorded on the brass plates that Lehi and his family carried with them from Jerusalem. That prophecy is what Lehi shares with his son Joseph in this chapter (verses 5-21). So all of the places in those verses where it mentions Joseph saying something, it is referring to Joseph of old, Lehi's ancestor.
- The Choice Seer – In verse 15 (part of the prophecy of Joseph), it says that the Choice Seer's name "shall be called after me". Therefore, his name will also be Joseph. The same verse states that his name will be the same as his father's so his father's name will also be Joseph.

How will the Choice Seer be used by God?

- He will bring forth the Word of God to the Seed of Joseph (verse 11)
- He will have the power to convince the Seed of Joseph of the truth of the Word of God (Bible and Book of Mormon), **which shall have already gone forth among them** (verses 11-12)
- He will be instrumental in bringing about the restoration of the House of Israel (also known as Zion) (verse 13)

In addition to being named Joseph, other attributes of the Choice Seer shared in this chapter:

- He will be part of the Seed of Joseph (verse 11) – not a Gentile and therefore not Joseph Smith (as some restoration churches believe)
- He will be a good writer but not a gifted speaker; he will require a spokesman, similar to how Moses needed Aaron to be his spokesman (verses 18-19)

It will be an exciting time when the Choice Seer comes, especially since it will mean that Zion is about to begin. The description of the Choice Seer given in Chapter 3 (and summarized above) will help us to recognize him when he comes.

The Church of Jesus Christ is doing our part to prepare for the Choice Seer by bringing the Word of God to the Seed of Joseph – it is not our job to convince them but to bring the word to them. The Choice Seer will then convince them of the word “which shall have already gone forth among them”.

We look forward to the fulfillment of the latter day prophecies, one of which is the coming of the Choice Seer!





## Awake, My Soul! (2 Nephi 4)

Here's the scene: You're at church on Sunday and you've invited several brothers and sisters to come to your house after church. When you arrive home, you're met with quite a sight – your teenage son and several of his friends have taken over your house! They've made quite a mess of things and are currently passed out on sofas, chairs and the floor. What do you do?

It probably goes something like this: WAKE UP EVERYBODY!! Clean this room right now! And to your son – Don't ever do this again!

Now, suppose the house is your heart and the random teenagers are some type of sinful thoughts or feelings that make it difficult to fully focus on serving God. Perhaps we would say something like this:

***Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul. (2 Nephi 4:28)***

If you're familiar with the hymn "Awake My Soul" (Saints Favorites #8), this verse will sound familiar to you. It is a quote of Nephi that occurs shortly after the death of his father Lehi in which Nephi is in essence preaching to himself.

What is the sin that Nephi is berating himself for? Earlier in the chapter, we find out that Nephi admonished his brothers regarding the things of God and they became angry with him. Apparently, Nephi became angry with them in return and that's why he's upset with himself.

Our first thought when reading this might be – What's the big deal? Many of us are angry with people on a regular basis, from the girl who takes too long to prepare our gourmet coffee to the guy who cuts us off on the highway to our family/friends/fellow church members who say or do things that get under our skin. What's wrong with a little anger? Laman and Lemuel certainly deserved it and perhaps some of the bothersome people in our lives deserve it too.

Well, it's not about the other people and what they deserve. It's about us and how carrying these types of feelings can disturb our spirit and limit our usefulness to God. Just as the home in the example at the beginning of this article was rendered less useful because an opposing force came in and occupied a portion of it, so it is with our heart if we allow the opposition to occupy any portion of it.

Nephi knew he had a calling to serve God in a great way so he didn't want to handicap himself by giving away even a small portion of his heart to the enemy. How about us? Do we want to serve God in a great way or in a mediocre way? Let's not be asleep at the wheel and allow the enemy to gain even little strongholds in our heart. Be awakened to the tactics of the enemy and dedicate your entire heart to the things of God. Let Him use you in a great way!



## Follow a Good Example (2 Nephi 5)

After the death of his father Lehi, Nephi finds his life threatened by his brothers, Laman and Lemuel. Heeding the warning of the Lord, Nephi takes the members of his family who are supportive of him (hereafter known as Nephites) and separates from Laman and Lemuel and their followers (hereafter known as Lamanites).

After establishing their new home in a different part of the land, the Nephites set to work on a couple of projects:

- Using the sword of Laban as a model, Nephi made additional swords just like it so the Nephites could protect themselves against potential attacks from the Lamanites.
- Using the temple of Solomon (as described on the brass plates) as a model, the Nephites erected a temple for themselves to worship God.

In both cases above, the examples that were chosen to follow were the best known examples of each. Perhaps it took more time or effort to produce these things this way (surely there were quicker or easier options) but the desire of Nephi was to wind up with the best swords and the best temple so he selected the best examples to follow.

Almost all of the choices we make in life are influenced by the examples of other people. Which of the following examples are we more likely to follow as we make our decisions in life?

- The college student who studies and gets A's or the party animal who is fortunate to get D's?
- The man who makes his wife feel like a queen or the man who pays just enough attention to his wife so she doesn't leave him?
- The church member who attends every meeting or the one who attends just often enough to be classified as an "active" member?

In each of the examples above, the end result is more or less the same (a college degree, a lengthy marriage, a continuing church membership) but the quality of each is vastly different. Although most people want to be the best they can be, it's easy to be tempted to be something less when we see "lots of people" settling for less and still seemingly being OK.

When choosing our role models in life, let's choose people who are among the best at whatever activity we are seeking to perform. When it comes to serving God, seek examples among people whose lives exhibit the attributes of Jesus Christ (the best example of all). The Apostle Paul wrote: *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

When the Nephites went into battle against the Lamanites, they were glad to be armed with swords that were fashioned after the example of the sword of Laban. When we go into battle against the enemy of our soul, we will be best equipped if our lives are based on the examples of Jesus Christ and the people we know who are truly following the Lord to the best of their ability.



## Ordained of God (2 Nephi 6)

In 2 Nephi 6, Nephi's brother Jacob shares some prophecy regarding the role of the Gentiles in restoring the House of Israel. In order to provide some credibility for his words, Jacob begins with some words of introduction: *"I, Jacob, having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order, and having been consecrated by my brother Nephi..."* (2 Nephi 6:2).

Even as Jacob was ordained into the priesthood at that time, we have people today who occupy "ordained offices" in The Church of Jesus Christ. These ordained offices are Apostle, Evangelist, Elder, Teacher, Deacon and Deaconess. How is a member of the Church placed in one of these offices? The steps are outlined in Jacob's statement above.

**Called of God** – A very important distinction between an ordained office and any other position in the Church is that a person must be called of God into the ordained office. *"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God"* (Hebrews 5:4). A person can't volunteer or apply for such a position nor can he be elected – a calling from God is the only way. Spiritual experiences and/or the discernment of the ministry are the primary instruments used to identify that the calling of God is upon a person for an ordained office.

**Consecrated** – To be consecrated is to be "set apart or dedicated to the service of God". To be dedicated is to be "exclusively allocated to or intended for a particular service or purpose". These definitions illustrate the seriousness of accepting an ordained office as the person is thereafter expected to be exclusively allocated for the function of that ordained office. When a person is being ordained, he first has his feet washed – the purpose of this action is to "set apart" (dedicate, consecrate) the person for the ordained office.

**Ordained after the manner of His holy order** – The final step of the ordination process is to have the ministry lay hands upon the person and pronounce the office upon that person. By utilizing the priesthood (or the Evangelists or Apostles if those offices are involved) for this purpose, the continuity is maintained back to those who were first called by God into those offices. The priesthood authority is thereby passed on from one generation to the next.

If you are one who has been called into an ordained office, recognize the significance, honor and responsibility that comes with the position. It means you were selected by God for a specific purpose so He expects that you will do your best to fulfil that purpose. If He has called you, He will help you to succeed so have confidence in performing the duties of the office. Allow God to work through you such that it will be evident to all that you are called and ordained of God.



## Who Moved? (2 Nephi 7)

You've probably gone through something like this at some point. You have a close friend who lives near you (or works with you, attends the same church, goes to school with you, etc.). The day arrives when your friend moves away (leaves the company, church, school, etc.). Promises are made that you'll still be close friends. Perhaps that lasts for a while but as time passes, contact is less frequent. The closeness is no longer there. The day may come when your friend calls and says, "What happened? We used to be so close but now we hardly even speak anymore". Rather than hurt your friend's feelings, you may choose the typical meaningless reply ("Things have been so busy, you know how it is") but what you really want to say is, "Hey, who moved? I'm still in the same place I was before – you're the one who moved away. Why would you expect our relationship to be unchanged?"

In 2 Nephi 7, Jacob shares a prophecy (from Isaiah 50) in which God scolds Israel. Before getting into the scolding part, the Lord begins by asking Israel questions like "Did I cast you off?", "Did I sell you to someone?", "Has my arm gotten shorter that I can no longer reach out to you?". Or, did you do this to yourself? In other words, "Who moved? You or me?"

On the day of our baptism, we're perhaps as close to God as we can be. We can't get enough of church, we're anxious to read the Word of God, we pray about everything, we tell everyone we can about the goodness of God in our lives.

Then some time passes. We don't feel so close to God anymore. We may be tempted to ask the Lord, "Why don't I feel the same connection with you? Why aren't my prayers being heard? Why have you turned your back on me?" The Lord's response may be something like this:

- Who can't seem to find time to attend church anymore?
- Whose scriptures are gathering dust on the shelf?
- Who only prays when they want something?
- Who never mentions or thinks of God outside of church?
- In other words – Who moved?

The scriptures tell us that God does not change so if anybody is moving away from the other, it is us moving away from God. The good news is that the opportunity to move back toward God is always available to us. We can always rededicate our lives to the Lord, eliminating the things that come between us and Him, lowering the priority on activities that affect our closeness with God. He doesn't hold a grudge and is always open to a closer relationship with us.

So, if you want to make a move to enhance your spiritual life, consider a move in God's direction.  
Who needs to move? You do! Who will benefit? You will!



## Redeemed of the Lord (2 Nephi 8)

### **REDEEM**

- To save (a person or soul) from a state of sinfulness and its consequences
- To set free, as from slavery or kidnapping, by providing money or other compensation
- To recover ownership of by paying a specified sum
- To restore the honor, worth, or reputation of

In the passage from Isaiah that Jacob shares in 2 Nephi 8, he refers to the “redeemed of the Lord”: *Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy and holiness shall be upon their heads; and they shall obtain gladness and joy; sorrow and mourning shall flee away* (2 Nephi 8:11). This particular verse refers to those of the House of Israel who will one day accept Christ and be gathered into Zion.

However, there are many people today who are counted among the “redeemed of the Lord”. If you have given your life to the Lord and gone through the waters of baptism, your soul has been saved from its state of sinfulness and the eternal consequences you would have been facing – you have been redeemed!

Consider the other definitions of the word “redeem” above and appreciate what our redeemer (Jesus Christ) has done for us:

### **WE HAVE BEEN SET FREE**

*For the ransom was paid, I was freed! (from verse of “I’m Free”)*

We were once slaves to sin. If you doubt that, think how difficult it was (and is) to break out of sinful habits on your own. Numerous scriptures refer to the “chains of sin” that can bind us. When we give our lives to Christ, the chains of sin are broken – we are redeemed!

### **WE ARE UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP**

*He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood (from chorus of “Victory in Jesus”)*

When we are born as innocent babies, we belong to the Lord. However, as we grow and finally reach the age of understanding, our sinful natures take over and ownership shifts to the enemy. This is the bad news. But the good news (the “gospel message”) is that Christ has already paid the price (by shedding His blood on the cross) so that the way exists for ownership of our souls to be



recovered by the Lord. When we give our lives to the Lord and are baptized, we become His and, unless we walk away from Him, we are His for eternity. This process is also referred to as the “plan of redemption”.

## **VALUE HAS BEEN RESTORED TO OUR LIVES**

*He made something beautiful of my life (from chorus of “Something Beautiful”)*

Although many wear sin as a badge of “honor” today, we are thankful that the day arrived for us when we recognized sin for what it was and felt shame for things we had done and how our lives had devalued as a result. Whereas the value of our lives may have been approaching the value of the “filthy rags” referenced in the Bible, our value now as a son or daughter of God is beyond comprehension! This is not to encourage pride in ourselves but rather gratefulness to our redeemer who has restored value to our lives.

If you are among the redeemed of the Lord, praise God for this! If you’re not, consider the plan of redemption – take advantage while this redeeming offer is available to you.



## Power of the Resurrection (2 Nephi 9)

*Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er his foes! (from chorus of "Christ Arose")*

If you've watched any movies that depict the life of Christ, they almost all end with Jesus returning from the dead. It makes for a nice ending – the hero is alive, the good guys (the disciples) were sad but end up happy and the bad guys who had appeared to have won didn't win after all. Of course, the same description can be applied to the ending of many other movies that have nothing to do with Jesus.

It's important to understand that the resurrection is not just a happy ending to the story. For one thing, when Jesus rose from the dead, He didn't return to this mortal life (if He did, He would have had to die again) but rather he rose to a life form that will last forever. And, most important to you and me, His resurrection paves the way for us to resurrect as well. If Christ didn't resurrect, none of us would be able to either but because He did resurrect, nothing can hold us back after death:

*Death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other: and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel (2 Nephi 9:12)*

*The paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous, and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls (2 Nephi 9:13)*

For centuries prior to the resurrection, the souls of many righteous people were barred from the kingdom of heaven. After Christ resurrected, *"the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many"*. (Matthew 27:52-53)

So, the resurrection is not just a random event in the Bible or a fun fact or just a happy ending to the gospels. It is something that bestows great power upon those who believe – the power to actually overcome death and live forever. It represents the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ as the path to God's kingdom was barred to us but now the gates are wide open for those who desire to enter in.

We praise God for all we stand to inherit in the life to come, made available to us by the power of the resurrection.



## Land of Our Inheritance (2 Nephi 10)

Today, many of us routinely buy and sell homes and move around frequently. For Israelite families during the time period covered by the Book of Mormon, this was not the case. Such families were typically allotted a parcel of land that would remain in the family for generations, being passed from father to son and perhaps divided up as necessary. This land was referred to as the “land of their inheritance” and was clearly a very valuable commodity. As a clear indicator that Lehi was “all in” for God when he left Jerusalem (in 1 Nephi Chapter 2), it is noted in the record that “he left his house, and the land of his inheritance” (1 Nephi 2:4).

In 2 Nephi 10, Jacob shares a prophecy in which God indicates (in several different verses) that He will grant unto the descendants of Israel a land to be the land of their inheritance. That land is a portion of the land of the Americas which will be known as New Jerusalem or Zion. It is noted in the prophecy that it is not the original land of inheritance for these people but a new land given as a gift by God. Israel will inherit this land when they come to Christ and are then gathered in from the various parts of the world.

Although all (Israelite and Gentile) will have the opportunity to share in the blessing of Zion, we have an even greater land of inheritance reserved for us:

- *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3-4)*
- *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34)*

Similar to the land of inheritance described above:

- The land of our inheritance will not be any land that we (or anyone else) has previously owned but it will be a new land given as a gift by God
- We will qualify for this inheritance as a result of coming to Christ
- We will receive the land of our inheritance when the believers are gathered together from the world (at the time of the resurrection)

Our mansion in the kingdom of heaven, purchased by the blood of Christ, is one which we will own for all eternity, easily surpassing the length of time that any parcel of land on earth remains under the ownership of any family. Compared to how important it was for Israelite families to retain the lands of their inheritance, how much more critical is it for us to do whatever is necessary to retain the rights to the land of our inheritance.



## Called as a Witness (2 Nephi 11)

In 2 Nephi 11, Nephi briefly comments on the preceding chapters in which he included the words of his brother Jacob. He points out that since Jacob has also been a witness to the coming Christ, his words are valuable alongside the words of Nephi since the combination of their words is more effective in proving the case of Christ to others. Nephi states, “*God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words*” (2 Nephi 11:3).

There are several places in scripture where it states that the testimony of multiple witnesses is more valuable (or even required) as compared to the testimony of a single witness. Along these lines, note the following:

- Three witnesses were selected to confirm that the plates of the Book of Mormon existed and were as Joseph Smith described them. In spite of later differences between these men and the church, they never recanted their testimonies of the Book of Mormon plates.
- The Book of Mormon itself is a second witness of Jesus Christ. Instead of trying to discredit it, Christian people would do well to place this book next to the Bible as a distinct witness to the rest of the world that Jesus is the Messiah.

You and I have been called today to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. What does this mean? Does it mean we need to be ready to debate scripture, represent our views and express our opinions? If we were called as a witness in court and did any of those things, the testimony would be dismissed as irrelevant or hearsay. No, being a witness means relating what you have personally seen or experienced. When it comes to the things of God, this includes:

- Giving testimony in church of what God has done for YOU. Not what you have done but what God has done. Relating what He’s done for others has some value but your testimony is much more impactful when it’s about what He has done for you personally.
- Relating to others outside of church what God has done for you or what you have experienced in the church or in conjunction with your service to God. Your views on scripture or doctrine or how people should behave can easily be up for debate but nobody can refute what happened to you personally. As happened when Jesus restored the sight of the blind man in John 9 – The doctrinal “experts” were trying to discredit Jesus and the man finally admitted that he didn’t know how to answer what they were saying but he added “*one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see*” (John 9:25).

In any court case, a steady stream of witnesses telling the same story will make a compelling case for the side supported by that story. On the other hand, having a court room filled with witnesses is worthless if those who are called don't present testimony relevant to the case.

Jesus is on trial today. You have been called as a witness. Are you prepared to testify on His behalf?



## The Peaceful Reign (2 Nephi 12)

***We believe in the fulfillment and ultimate establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth while men are still in the flesh. We refer to this period as the “Peaceful Reign”.***

(From Article 23 of the Faith & Doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ)

Chapters 12 through 24 of 2 Nephi consist of the prophecies contained in Isaiah 2-14. Nephi included these prophecies in his record as he felt they were important for his people to be familiar with.

2 Nephi 12 (from Isaiah 2) includes a vivid description of a period of time (still in the future) that we refer to as the “Peaceful Reign” or Zion. The prophecy states that at that time, people *“shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks – nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”* (2 Nephi 12:4).

Imagine a time when there is so little need for weapons that they will be redeployed as farm equipment! Military training will be a waste of time – why learn how to fight a war when none will be fought? No wonder this period of time is referred to as the Peaceful Reign!

Instead of focusing on fighting each other, many people, representing all nations, will make their way to the Lord’s house which shall be established in the top of the mountains. *“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (2 Nephi 12:3).

Compared to today when so many find it challenging to get in their cars and drive a few minutes to be in church, how refreshing to think there will be a day when people will be willing to climb to the top of the mountains in order to learn the ways of God and apply them in their lives.

We sing two different hymns about singing on the mountain of the Lord – this is the time period that is being referred to. Another hymn encourages you to run ‘til you reach the mountain top while another urges the sheep (the people) to taste the grass on the summit and breathe the pure mountain air. In another, a blind man waits around to ask one question: How tall will the mountains there be?

It’s difficult to even imagine the majesty of the city at the top of the mountains that will draw people from all nations, including the gathering of the tribes of Israel, to a place referred to as the Lord’s

house. This is the Zion that we sing about and look forward to as a church, to occur at a period of time referred to as the Peaceful Reign.

***“Keeping step, God’s beautiful children, marching to the Peaceful Reign” (Songs of Zion #103)***





## You Reap What You Sow (2 Nephi 13)

I once preached a sermon in which I said that I went to a seed store and bought seeds to plant orange trees. The package said the seeds were for orange trees and the salesperson confirmed that these seeds would grow nice orange trees. I told the congregation that I was so proud of the oranges that I grew that I brought one to show them. I then reached into my briefcase and held up a banana! As everyone looked at me shaking their heads (or SMH as they say on social media today), I went on to explain that if you plant seeds for a banana tree, that's what you will get regardless of what anyone else says and how convincing they may sound.

In other words – “You Reap What You Sow”.

This same thought is expressed to Israel in 2 Nephi 13: *Say unto the righteous that it is well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, for they shall perish; for the reward of their hands shall be upon them! (2 Nephi 13:10-11)*

The actual saying “You Reap What You Sow” comes from Galatians 6:7-9:

*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Sometimes, people confuse the above, thinking that it means if you do good things in life, good things will happen to you. Although this does happen often (God does bless your life when you live for Him), there are many occasions when “bad things happen to good people”. There are also many people who live unrighteous lives and seem to have everything going well for them.

In order to minimize discouragement, look closely at the verses above (especially the Galatians verses) and you will see that the true reaping of what you have sown occurs in the life to come. If you are suffering setbacks or tragedy in your life, don't assume it is a punishment for doing something wrong. It could be that there is a reason for what you are going through or perhaps you may not understand until the next life.

Regardless of our circumstances in life, we need to follow the advice in the verse above and “not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”. Keep doing what is right in the sight of God (sowing good seeds), don’t stop because things may not be going as you would like in this life (faint not) and you will eventually reap what you have sown. God sees all and He will reward you in His time.



## Holy, Holy, Holy (2 Nephi 14)

The prophecy in 2 Nephi 14 indicates that the people who will be in Zion “shall be called holy” (2 Nephi 14:3). What does it mean to be holy? Can we be holy today?

Definitions of the word “holy” include sacred, sanctified, set apart, dedicated to God, etc. These are all good things to be however they make it sound like we should be shutting ourselves off from the world. Describing ourselves as holy can cause some challenges – people may think we consider ourselves perfect or, at the least, better than other people. Thus the term “holier than thou”.

Jesus is referred to as the “Holy One of Israel”. God the Father is referred to as holy. In fact, of all the attributes of God, holy is the only one that is listed 3 times in a row. It’s sometimes said that when Jesus wanted to emphasize something, he said “verily, verily”. However, the Lord of Hosts is “holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3). Sounds like He’s really holy! For comparison purposes, the only other instance I could find of the same word 3 times in a row was when the Lord said “wo, wo, wo unto this people” after Christ was crucified (3 Nephi 9:2).

So, if being holy is something typically associated with God, can we as people be holy? There are some people in the scriptures referred to as holy (Elisha, John the Baptist, King Benjamin, Alma, to name a few) so it is possible to exhibit that attribute. It seems that the more that we take upon us the attributes of God (the one who is truly holy), the more we can be referred to as holy ourselves.

Clearly, we’re not of our own ability going to start performing great miracles as God does (although He can on occasion use us as instruments to make them happen). We’ll never be as perfect as God in never doing anything wrong (but we should certainly try our best). There is one attribute of God though that it is within our power to emulate – loving His creation.

When God views people, He looks past their faults and loves them regardless. Can we do the same? God’s primary desire for mankind is for them to be prepared to live with Him for eternity. Is it a priority for us to help people (in addition to ourselves) be prepared to live with God for eternity? If we can answer yes to these questions, we are people who can be used by God and classified as holy people of God.

How can we accomplish the above? How can we act more like God than our human tendencies would typically allow? If you have given your life to the Lord, God has given you a portion of His spirit, suitably named the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost). If we follow the leadings of the Holy Ghost, it will prompt us to behave as God wants us to and love others as He wants us to. In short, the Holy Ghost will teach us how to be holy.

So, allow the Holy Ghost to direct you in your decisions – not to be holier than thou but to be a holy person of God.



## En La Viña Del Señor (2 Nephi 15)

The prophecy in 2 Nephi 15 relies heavily on the metaphor of the vineyard. It mentions planting in the vineyard, fencing it, pruning it, digging in it, putting in a wine-press for the grapes that would grow, etc. An actual vineyard is typically a collection of grape vines, used to grow grapes to make wine with but when the term is used in prophecy, it of course means something else. In this particular prophecy, the vineyard is used to represent the House of Israel (2 Nephi 15:7) so everything that is done to the vineyard in this chapter is something that was being prophesied would be done to the House of Israel.

In our church vernacular today, the word “vineyard” is used in a more general way. We have actually generalized the term somewhat such that it represents anywhere in the world where we are working to spread the gospel (planting the seeds of the Lord’s Word, harvesting souls, etc.). It could be another part of the country, it could be overseas or it could be in our own neighborhood. Going by this definition, it is accurate to say that all of us are called to work in the vineyard of the Lord.

The title of this article is also the title of a popular Spanish hymn that many of us are familiar with that talks about working in the vineyard of the Lord (en la viña del Señor). Would it be presumptuous of me to guess that many of us who have sung this hymn over the years may not know what the words actually mean? In case that describes you, here’s a quick (admittedly amateur) translation:

*Yo quiero trabajar por el Señor,  
Confiando en su Palabra y en su amor:  
Quiero yo cantar y orar,  
Y ocupado siempre estar  
En la viña del Señor.*

Translation: I want to work for the Lord, trusting in His Word and His love. I want to sing and pray and always be busy in the vineyard of the Lord.

*Yo quiero cada día trabajar,  
Y esclavos del pecado libertar:  
Conducirlos a Jesús,  
Nuestra guía, nuestra luz,  
En la viña del Señor.*

Translation: I want to work every day, freeing those who are enslaved by sin: Leading them to Jesus, our guide, our light, in the vineyard of the Lord.

*Yo quiero ser obrero de valor,  
Confiando en el poder del Salvador:  
El que quiera trabajar,  
Hallará también lugar,  
En la viña del Señor*

Translation: I want to be a valuable worker, trusting in the power of the Savior: I want to work and find my place in the vineyard of the Lord.

Chorus (Coro)

*Trabajar y orar  
En la viña, en la viña del Señor;  
Sí, mi anhelo es orar,  
Y ocupado siempre estar,  
En la viña del Señor.*

Translation: Work and pray in the vineyard, in the vineyard of the Lord. Yes, my desire is to pray and always be busy in the vineyard of the Lord.

Now that you see what the words mean, can you still sing this? Is it your desire to work every day to free those who are enslaved by sin – praying and singing and trusting in the Lord? If so, sing it out and find your place in the vineyard of the Lord (en la viña del Señor)!



## Send Me (2 Nephi 16)

2 Nephi 16 includes the account of Isaiah's calling as a prophet. In a famous scene, a heavenly being takes a hot coal and touches Isaiah's tongue with it, purging him of his sins and preparing him to do the Lord's work. Then the Lord speaks to him: *"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said: Here am I; send me."* (2 Nephi 16:8)

In the work of the Lord today, we often hear the equivalent of the question, "Who will go for us?" The actual question could be any of the following:

- Who will go on foreign missionary work?
- Who will tell the Native Americans about their heritage?
- Who will share the gospel or their testimony with a friend?
- Who will work with the youth, teaching them about the Lord and serving as a mentor?
- Who will visit the sick, the widows, those who are lonely?
- Who will sacrifice their time and/or their money to help the work of the Lord move forward?

When these questions (or others) are asked, those who are asking would love to hear a resounding "Here am I, send me"! Even a tentative raising of one's hand would be welcome.

Instead what is too often heard is anything ranging from crickets (nobody saying anything) to a plethora of excuses such as "I'm too busy", "I can't do that" or "I can't afford that".

What is preventing us from saying "send me"?

Is it lack of desire? On the day of our baptism, most of us would have agreed to go anywhere and do anything we could for the Lord. If that desire has waned, let's think back to how we felt when we gave our lives to the Lord and pray that He stirs up the spirit within us so that we are on fire once again.

Are there obstacles in our lives? Perhaps we need a purging as Isaiah did – not necessarily of sin but of activities or obligations that eat up our time, money and focus such that we have to say "send someone else".

The call is going out today more than ever! Are we content sitting idly by, watching others answer the call or even seeing the call go unanswered? Were we called into the church to be spectators? Hear the voice of the Lord in your life and give the answer He seeks: "Send Me"!

Verse 2 and Chorus of Hymn #205 – “Speak My Lord”

*When the coal of fire touched the prophet,  
Making him as pure, as pure can be,  
When the voice of God said, “Who’ll go for us?”  
Then he answered, “Here I am, send me”.*

*Speak my Lord, Speak my Lord,  
Speak, and I’ll be quick to answer Thee;  
Speak my Lord, Speak my Lord,  
Speak, and I will answer, “Lord, send me”.*





## God With Us (2 Nephi 17)

*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:22-23)*

The above passage is often read as part of a Christmas sermon as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The prophet referred to in the passage is the prophet Isaiah and the quote comes from Isaiah 7:14 which is reproduced in 2 Nephi 17:14.

The recognition that the birth of Christ created a condition of “God with us” is an important concept in understanding why Jesus took on flesh and lived as a man among us.

In today’s world, we have many ways of connecting with people from a distance. We can call their home on the phone, we can call their person via cell phone, we can send a text message, we can send an email, we can even still send a letter or card via U.S. Mail.

Yet, with all of these ways of connecting, if the person you are trying to reach doesn’t want to connect with you, it’s virtually impossible to do so. Messages (text, email, letter, card) can go unanswered. Once upon a time, you could call anyone’s home and be able to talk to them when they answered the phone. But today, with caller ID, the person knows it is you calling and can choose to not answer the phone if they don’t want to speak with you.

So, what option is left if you want to connect with someone who has erected this type of barrier? You have to physically go where they are. Now, we’re not encouraging anyone to be a stalker, staking out someone’s home, but rather to understand that sometimes your physical presence is the only way to overcome a barrier.

From the time sin entered the world, a barrier was created between man and God. Although some long distance messaging still existed between heaven and earth, God desired a closer relationship with us, even one that would last for eternity.

In order to overcome this barrier, Jesus Christ (“God the Son”) was sent to be physically present among people. Of course, it wasn’t just for the 33 years that Christ was on earth that people experienced “God with us”. When He departed, He sent the Holy Ghost to represent Him and abide with us, creating an ongoing opportunity to have “God with us”.

And finally, by dying on the cross and resurrecting, Jesus paved the way for us to be with God for eternity. No path existed that would bring us to the kingdom of heaven until that event occurred.

So, when we hear the name Emmanuel, whether at Christmas time or any other time, let's remember that the event being recognized was the beginning of a period that would result in the barrier of sin being torn down and replaced with the opportunity to live our lives with "God with us" and to spend eternity where He is ("us with God").



## Is Christ Offensive? (2 Nephi 18)

The prophecy recounted in 2 Nephi 18 indicates that Jesus Christ would be *“a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel...many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.”* (2 Nephi 18:14-15) The prophecy seems to be saying that Christ would be offensive. Was this accurate? See for yourself:

- *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said...Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15:12-14)*
- After stating that His followers should eat His flesh and drink His blood, *“many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him”* (John 6:66).
- The Jewish leaders were so offended with His claim to be the Son of God that they caused Him to be crucified.

So, Jesus was considered offensive to some people while He was on the earth. But is He still offensive today? Here are a couple of His quotes that should make any politically correct person cringe:

- *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). He didn't say His way is a good way or one of the ways; He said His way is the only way.
- *“He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh”* (Matthew 19:4-5). No gender neutrality here – He's talking male and female, man and wife.

We are living in a challenging era of time. People today are being taught to be easily offended, especially when it comes to things of God. Public prayer is considered offensive. Public display of the 10 Commandments or a Nativity scene is considered offensive. Any statement that indicates that marriage is intended for a man and woman is considered extremely offensive.

Perhaps you who are reading this article are offended by what you are reading. Why would that be? If I believe one way and you believe a different way, does that make us enemies? If you know that I believe in Christ, why should you be offended if I believe and teach what He taught?

Now, I'm not saying that we should go out of our way to be offensive in presenting the gospel. Christ taught us to love everyone and that should extend to people who don't believe the same way we do.

However, if we are being loving to others and they choose to persecute us for believing what Christ taught, that doesn't mean that we have to stop believing it. Jesus said to rejoice if you are persecuted for His sake as your reward in heaven will be great. And what type of persecution do we face today? Getting unfriended on Facebook? Being called names? Jesus and His disciples were regularly threatened with stoning for their statements.

So, if you're looking for someone to follow who is uncontroversial and politically correct, Jesus is not the choice. In today's environment of being easily offended, the teachings of Christ are considered offensive. But Jesus said, "*Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me*" (Luke 7:23). Consider yourself blessed for being among those who are not offended by the teachings of Christ. Keep believing them and teaching them and love all people whether they agree or not. However, prayerfully seek out others who will accept the Lord without being offended such that they can be among the blessed also.



## His Name is Wonderful (2 Nephi 19)

*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

*There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ...And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. (Mosiah 5:8-9)*

Based on the verses above, is it any wonder that we say (and even sing) His name is wonderful? It's a powerful name that brings salvation and casts out the enemy.

In the prophecy in 2 Nephi 19, five different names of Jesus are listed, one of which is in fact "Wonderful": *"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* (2 Nephi 19:6) Here is a brief description of the other four names in this verse:

**Counselor** – Although it is accurate to think of Jesus as someone who we can counsel with (bring our concerns, receive advice, etc.), we should also be aware that Jesus serves as our counselor (advocate, lawyer) before the Father. *"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).* This is why it's important to stand up for Jesus – He said, *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."* (Mark 8:38)

**The Mighty God** – In the end-times battle described in the Book of Revelation, God the Son will be leading the charge with yet another name inscribed on His thigh: KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:16)

**The Everlasting Father** – We don't typically refer to Jesus as the Father but He represented God the Father in the flesh. In the words of the prophet Abinadi, Christ is *"The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son – And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth".* (Mosiah 15:3-4)

**The Prince of Peace** – *"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7)* helps us through the most difficult times. Think of Jesus as a representative of the "Peace family" – the

Father is the King and Jesus is the Prince. When He came to earth, we had “Peace on earth”. If we become peacemakers, we are considered part of this family – *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”*. (Matthew 5:9)

There are many other names of Christ in the scriptures in addition to those listed above. However, the most important name is Jesus Christ, the son of the living God, a name that the devil fears, a name that is wonderful.

*He's the Great Shepherd, the Rock of all ages, Almighty God is He!  
Bow down before Him, love and adore Him,  
His Name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord!*



## Do As I Say, Not As I Do (2 Nephi 20)

Here are a few hypothetical scenarios:

- Suppose I am a church officer, perhaps a representative of the finance committee, and I come to your branch and present an impassioned plea for all of you to donate as much as you can to the church. During questions and answers, it somehow comes out that I myself don't donate at all. You ask me, "Why should we donate to the church if you don't?" How shall I respond – "Do as I say, not as I do"?
- Now suppose I'm a member of the ministry and I preach on the sinfulness of adultery and then it comes out that I in fact indulge in sexual indiscretions. Do as I say, not as I do?
- I'm a Sunday School teacher, teaching about the 10 Commandments when I regularly cheat on my taxes and am often dishonest in my dealings with other people. Do as I say, not as I do?
- Or I'm a new member of the church (or any member of the church) and I tell my friends about how much the church has changed my life and how thankful I am that I no longer live the type of life I used to. Perhaps my friends still live this type of life and I'm letting them know they would do well to check out the church. Yet, I still frequent the bars, my language is still filthy and I don't even make it to church very often. In short, my life hasn't really changed that much after all. Do as I say, not as I do?

In each of the examples above, the teaching presented is solid. Donating to the church isn't less right because the person saying it doesn't do it. Sin isn't any more acceptable because the person cautioning against it is indulging in it. Coming to Christ is no less life-altering just because some people don't put the "old man" to rest.

However, these messages do in fact carry considerably less credibility when the person saying them does not live by them. There are many people who believe that all Christians are actually hypocrites and every time another example like this comes to light, it reinforces that belief.

It's true that we are all human and we all make mistakes from time to time. However, let's understand that some of the things we may do that are contrary to the teachings of God can affect the faith or potential faith of others. I would feel terrible if my actions caused someone else to decide that church is not for them. At that point, it would sound hollow to say that it's nobody else's business but my own if I want to live my life that way.

We are each representatives of the Lord and also of The Church of Jesus Christ. The way we live our lives will cause others to make judgments of either of these. Let's try our best to make those judgments be positive.

The prophecy in 2 Nephi 20 tells of a time when Israel would cheat the poor, the needy, the widow and the orphan by collecting money for them but not in fact helping them at all. It was prophesied that God would use the army of Assyria "*against [the] hypocritical nation...to tread them down like the mire of the streets*" (2 Nephi 20:6). Clearly, God does not look favorably on "Do as I say, not as I do".





## The Lamb & The Lion (2 Nephi 21)

The image of the lamb and the lion lying down together is a familiar one, typically representing “peace on earth”. Many Christian groups use this image and there are many organizations which have “Lamb & Lion” as part of their name. This phrase is based on the prophecy in Isaiah 11 which is reproduced in 2 Nephi 21:

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young one shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. (2 Nephi 21:6-7)*

As you read this beautiful prophecy, you may notice one little thing – it doesn’t exactly say that the lamb and the lion will be lying down together. It mentions that the lamb will live with the wolf and the young lion will lie down with the leopard but the familiar phrase of the lamb and the lion lying down together doesn’t actually appear.

Regardless of which species is lying down with which, the prophecy still tells us of a time when there will be complete peace within the animal kingdom. In The Church of Jesus Christ, we refer to that period of time as the “peaceful reign” or Zion. The prophecy in this chapter gives some additional detail of that time that we look forward to, going on to say that even the most dangerous species “shall not hurt nor destroy in all [of God’s] holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (2 Nephi 21:9).

Although the lamb and the lion don’t appear together in the Isaiah prophecy, there is a noteworthy mention of a lamb and a lion in Revelation 5. In that chapter, there is a book that is sealed with seven seals and no man is found worthy to open the book. Finally, the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” agrees to open the book. A few verses later, the same man is referred to as “the Lamb that was slain”. Who is the lion and the lamb of this chapter? Of course, it’s Jesus Christ, the “lion” of the tribe of Judah (his earthly lineage) and also the Lamb of God who was slain for our sins.

So, even as we look forward to a time of peace on earth signified by the lamb and the lion being together, let’s remember that we can have peace in our lives today by following Jesus Christ who can also be referred to as both the lamb and the lion.



## Sing Unto the Lord (2 Nephi 22)

In the brief chapter of 2 Nephi 22, the prophet encourages us to “*Sing unto the Lord: for he hath done excellent things*” (2 Nephi 22:5). Singing to the Lord is a large part of our worship of God. We have quite a diversity of hymns available to us, enough to express almost anything we might want to say regarding our relationship with God. To illustrate this diversity, I gathered the titles of about 70 of our hymns and fashioned them into something that sounds a lot like my personal testimony. Here it is:

I was first brought to OUR CHURCH when I was LIKE A CHILD. I’m thankful that I had someone to TELL ME THE STORY OF JESUS. I didn’t like the part when Jesus was AT THE CROSS but I was happy to hear that CHRIST AROSE and that HE LIVES today. Although I was still TOO SMALL FOR GREAT THINGS, I did TAKE SOME TIME TO PRAY that I would eventually find MY PLACE in the church. In my teenage years, I can’t say that I was always LONGING FOR THE GATHERING on Sunday but I did my best to BE OF GOOD CHEER and do it GOD’S WAY for at least that one day in the week.

Finally, the day arrived when THE INVITATION finally penetrated – IS ANYONE WILLING TO LET JESUS IN? My first thought was that I needed to be MORE LIKE THE MASTER before being baptized but then I prayed, “GIVE ME UNDERSTANDING, LORD” and I realized that I could come in JUST AS I AM. At that moment, HEAVEN CAME DOWN AND GLORY FILLED MY SOUL, I said “I SURRENDER ALL” and HE HELD HIS ARMS AND I RAN IN. O HAPPY DAY! There’s A NEW NAME IN GLORY and it’s mine. BLESSED BE THE NAME of the Lord!

As time passed, I came to appreciate that SINCE JESUS CAME INTO MY HEART, HE CHANGED MY LIFE COMPLETELY and I was developing A HIGHER SPIRITUAL MIND. As I was now LIVING FOR JESUS, I did my best to put other activities SECOND TO GOD. I learned more about JESUS, MY WONDERFUL FRIEND – and WHAT A FRIEND He is! BECAUSE HE LIVES, because JESUS IS ALWAYS THERE, I am NEVER ALONE.

I was feeling that I OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING FOR JESUS, if for no other reason than to say “THANK YOU LORD”. I understood that THERE’S NOT ANYTHING THAT JESUS CANNOT DO Himself so it’s not that He needs me (rather, I NEED JESUS) but I still wanted to do my little part to bring JOY TO THE WORLD and BRIGHTEN THE CORNER WHERE YOU ARE so I asked Him to MAKE ME A BLESSING to others.

Today, as a minister of THE GOSPEL RESTORED, I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY of how JESUS SAVES. Whenever I am to stand before a congregation, my prayer is “SPEAK MY LORD” and the result is WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE that come from Him. WE’VE A STORY TO TELL TO THE NATIONS so IF

JESUS GOES WITH ME, I'm READY to go WHERE HE LEADS ME – I know that HE'LL TAKE CARE OF ME and I won't be ALONE.

My advice to those who have not yet experienced His AMAZING GRACE: CHOOSE YE THIS DAY who you will serve. Salvation is free since JESUS PAID IT ALL. THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD of Christ so make sure you can answer yes when asked, "ARE YOU WASHED IN THE BLOOD of Jesus?" That's the only way to prepare for what comes after THE LAST MILE OF THE WAY of this life – you'll hear your name WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER and THEN YOU CAN ENTER IN.

To those who are already serving the Lord: DON'T LET ANYBODY TAKE YOUR CROWN. GIVE OF YOUR BEST TO MASTER. Serving God is SWEETER AS THE YEARS GO BY so COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS and hang onto those PRECIOUS MEMORIES. When opposition comes, YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION – remember that GOD'S STILL ON HIS THRONE and GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU. IF YOU WOULD LABOR IN ZION (especially YE WHO ARE CALLED TO LABOR) – Get TO THE WORK!

GOD BE WITH YOU.



## The Day of the Lord (2 Nephi 23)

2 Nephi 23 gives some detail on a future period of time referred to as the “Day of the Lord”, a time of vast destruction that will precede the establishment of Zion. There are many scriptural references to the Day of the Lord, both in Isaiah/2 Nephi as well as in the writings of other prophets. Verses that include the phrase “in that day” generally are referring to the Day of the Lord.

On the one hand, this is not a time to look forward to:

*Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. (2 Nephi 23:6)*

Think of the horror of 9/11 when two buildings collapsed. Multiply that by entire cities with millions of people killed and you start to get a small feel for what the Day of the Lord will be like. It is a time when God will punish the world for their evil and iniquity.

On the other hand, there is a purpose for the destruction – to destroy the sinners out of the land in preparation for Zion to begin:

*Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. (2 Nephi 23:9)*

Since the Day of the Lord means time has run out for the sinners, it becomes all the more important for us to share the gospel with our loved ones. Jesus describes the Day of the Lord as a terrifying time when even members of our own households may be taken:

*In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back...I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (Luke 17:31,34-36)*

The purpose of all the prophecies about the Day of the Lord is not necessarily to scare us but rather to make us aware that a time of destruction will occur so we can make sure we are prepared spiritually and also do our best to prepare others.

The bright side of the Day of the Lord is that it is the dawning of the much-anticipated period of peace known as Zion. One of the Songs of Zion describes Zion as a ship that needs to be set free to sail and this event will accomplish that. Stay focused on that as the Day of the Lord approaches.

Chorus of Songs of Zion #106

*Cut her loose, for she's been tied too long.*

*Set her free, her destiny – To catch the rising dawn,*

*And oh, the Mother-land is weeping for the great ship's safe return,*

*As cities all across the land catch fire and start to burn.*



## Lift Me Up a Little Higher, Self (2 Nephi 24)

2 Nephi 24 describes how the angel Lucifer fell from heaven to become the enemy of God and all mankind. The reason for the fall is given as follows:

*For thou hast said in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High (2 Nephi 24:13-14)*

Whatever Lucifer did or has done or will do, it all extends back to him attempting to exalt himself (lift himself up) to the level of God (or even higher). Keeping in mind that Lucifer was an angel, loved by God and referred to (in verse 12) as “Lucifer, son of the morning”, the penalty that was levied – “thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (verse 15) – indicates how God feels about those who seek to lift themselves up to His level.

On the same subject, Jesus shared an example (in Luke 14) of how much better it would be to attend a wedding feast and take a lesser seat and then be invited to move to a better seat as opposed to the humiliation of sitting in the better seat yourself and then being told to move to a lesser seat. He concluded by stating, “whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

In what ways do we exalt ourselves?

- By taking the position that “what I want” or “what I think is best for me” is more important than doing what is right in the sight of God
- By not seeking/following the direction of God in important decisions (“I can decide for myself”)
- By accepting personal credit/honor/glory for what God has done (we’re especially susceptible to this when God uses us personally to accomplish something)
- By letting pride (even what may be considered “normal pride” in the world) influence what we say or do (praising ourselves, doing things for the purpose of gaining praise, etc.)
- By seeking “important” positions primarily for the purpose of being deemed an important or valuable person (and having others “look up” to us)

To clarify, it’s wonderful to work for the Lord and to be used by Him for great accomplishments. It’s good to have a healthy self-esteem, recognizing the gifts that God has given us and appreciating ourselves as a loved and valued creation of God. If our gifts are such that they can be used in important positions for the cause of Christ, it’s appropriate that we would allow ourselves to be used in that way.

The problem only arises when our motivation for any of the above or our reaction to them is to lift up ourselves. At all times, we should seek to lift up the name of the Lord, more so than people (especially ourselves).

Let's be the people who humble ourselves and allow the Lord to lift us up, rather than the other way around. The song doesn't go, "Lift me up a little higher, self" (you know what the last word really is).



## Second Chances (2 Nephi 25)

Having completed the sharing of Isaiah's prophecies in 2 Nephi 12 through 24, Nephi devotes the remainder of 2 Nephi (chapters 25-33) to his personal observations on Isaiah's prophecies as well as some prophecies of his own.

In 2 Nephi 25:12-16, Nephi describes how God would send His son to redeem Israel but that they would reject Him and crucify Him, resulting in the scattering of Israel throughout the world. However, rather than cutting off Israel, God would give them a second chance:

*And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men. (2 Nephi 25:17)*

The second chance described above is what we refer to as the restoration of the gospel. Occurring almost 200 years ago, this was when the Lord "set his hand again the second time to restore His people", beginning the work that will culminate in the gathering of Israel and establishment of Zion.

Sometimes, second chances are offered to us in our personal lives. Other times we may not get a second chance. Consider these examples in which a second chance may not be offered:

- If we lose in the big championship game, we may not get a second chance to win the championship
- If we lose an election, we may not get a second chance to hold that office
- If we cheat on our spouse, we may not get a second chance to make our marriage work
- If we do things that damage our health, we may not get a second chance to live a healthy (or lengthy) life

Although it's not impossible that a second chance could be offered in the above examples, it's certainly not guaranteed and might well be highly unlikely. However, God always offers us a second chance – perhaps not to receive something on earth but certainly to receive treasures in heaven.

According to the Word of God, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). If God was not a God of second chances, the sins we have committed would result in a spiritual death. However, it is also written that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18) and "your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ" (Alma 5:27).



When we gave our lives to the Lord, we received a second chance to live a life pleasing to God. All of the mistakes we made and the sins we committed were washed away and we were able to start over with a “new” life.

Do we appreciate the second chance we’ve been given? In the examples shared earlier, if we were granted a second chance (to win the big game, make our marriage work, etc.), would we try harder to be successful? Or would we just do the same things and hope for more second chances?

Although God in His mercy will grant additional second chances when we slip up (if we sincerely repent), let’s do our best to take advantage of the wonderful second chance we’ve been given to live our lives for the Lord. With the help of God, we’ll win the prize this time around.



## Salvation is for All (2 Nephi 26)

Although much of what Nephi writes is directed to his people (the House of Israel), he makes the point in 2 Nephi 26 that the gospel is for the Gentiles (everyone else) as well. In verses 25-28, he poses the following series of questions (underlines added for emphasis):

- Doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me?
- Hath he commanded any that they should depart...out of the houses of worship?
- Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation?
- Hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness?

For each of the questions above, the answer is the same – Nay!

For those of us called upon to present the gospel today (which is any member of the Church), the above guidance still applies. Here are some questions we can ask ourselves as we seek to do the Lord's will in spreading the gospel:

**Is there a certain type of person that we prefer to see as a member of the church?** If we're honest with ourselves, the answer is probably: "Yes, someone who is a lot like me". If we say we're only comfortable sharing the Lord with someone who is like us, what do we do when those people are not typically open to the gospel? Give up? What did the Lord do when Israel would not accept Christ? He turned to the Gentiles. We need to be open to sharing the Lord with people who are unlike us (not from our family, circle of friends, etc.) if we want to see the gospel spread.

**Is there a certain type of person that we prefer to *not* see as a member of the church?** If you ever had a "problem member" in your branch, you might be tempted to say, "I don't ever want a member like that again!" However, shutting our doors (even in our minds) to entire classes of people means we are willing to deny the opportunity for salvation to many people because of the behavior of a few. Even if we think poor people "always want money" or addicts "always go back to drugs" or young people are "not like we were at their age", we need to do our best to reach people in these groups (and others) in order for the church to grow.

**Is there anything about our church that makes us hesitant to extend an invitation to others?** Having a church that is "visitor friendly" is a whole topic of its own but clearly if we have concerns that are preventing us from inviting people, those should be raised to the ministry. Our faith is our faith and our beliefs are our beliefs but there are many aspects of our services that can be conducted in a manner that makes our church attractive to a new person – or not. Those are the things to look at to maximize our ability to be able to effectively present the opportunity for salvation to as many people as possible.

**Is there anything about ourselves that makes us hesitant to present ourselves as representatives of Jesus Christ?** It seems like there are many things we do today that are “our business” or “between us and God” – behaviors that others might question as to their appropriateness for a servant of God. One test of how a person feels about his own behavior is whether there is any hesitancy to present himself as a servant of God to people who are aware of said behavior. While it’s true that God can forgive us for our transgressions, are we really comfortable with not being able to offer salvation just so we can “do what we want”?

Even in today’s age when many excuses can be offered for not presenting the gospel, the Lord’s direction that “Salvation is for all” is still valid. Let’s do the best we can to fulfil that and offer His salvation to a world that needs it so desperately.



## Being Unlearned (2 Nephi 27)

A portion of 2 Nephi 27 references a prophecy in Isaiah 29 regarding a learned (educated) man and an unlearned (uneducated) man trying to read a book. The book being referenced is the original manuscript of The Book of Mormon (as inscribed on the plates). According to these verses, the learned man would say that he cannot read the book because it is “sealed” (unreadable) and the unlearned man would say that he cannot read the book because he is unlearned. An actual episode (similar to what is described in these verses) occurred when Joseph Smith (an unlearned man) brought the plates to a university professor (a learned man) and the same basic dialogue occurred.

God’s statement to the unlearned man regarding the words of this book appear in 2 Nephi 27:20: *“The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee”*. Or, another way of putting it is that since the unlearned man knew he was not capable of reading the words himself, he would have to rely on God and just be an instrument to do God’s work.

Who would we rather be today – the one who thinks he’s “educated enough” to figure things out for himself or the one who admits to needing the Lord’s guidance to make proper decisions in life?

I of course need to insert here that education is a very good thing to pursue and is very helpful in living a fruitful life. I count myself blessed to have been able to complete a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree which provided me with sufficient education to have a successful career.

However, let’s be careful to learn the right things from the right people. Just because someone has “Ph.D.” (or any other letters) after their name hardly qualifies them to teach you about God. You may be able to learn a lot about computers (or other subjects) from them but rely on the Word of God (and those who live by the Word of God) to teach you the important lessons about serving the Lord.

If I were to evaluate myself as to how learned of a man I am, I would have to admit that I have failed to learn many lessons that apparently “everybody else” is aware of. For example, I have yet to learn that:

- You can’t take the Bible literally (lots of people who don’t read the Bible will assure you that it’s just made-up stories to teach moral lessons)
- God didn’t really create the world (Darwin and today’s school system tell us how it was really done)
- Any lifestyle is acceptable (lots of famous people say this so it must be so)

- Expressing your faith publicly is offensive (it only takes one person in the town you live in to establish that)
- Attending church is a waste of time (many people will say you can serve God without going to church – how many of them do you think actually do?)
- You can't depend on God, only on yourself (people who don't know the Lord are positive this is true)

As I look at the list above, it becomes obvious to me that I am an unlearned man. I haven't yet "advanced" to the point where I know enough to depend on myself more than God or to discount or disbelieve the Word of God. How about you – can you be content being unlearned in this way?



## All is Well in Zion (2 Nephi 28)

Here's a little quiz for you – Do you know what the phrase “All is Well in Zion” means? The phrase isn't used in the church as often as it was years ago so if you're a younger member, you can perhaps be excused for not being familiar with the phrase. If you guessed that it's some type of prophecy regarding the future gathering of Israel, that would be incorrect. The mention of Zion in this phrase is just an indirect reference – the phrase actually has meaning to us in this day and time.

In 2 Nephi 28, Nephi describes a spiritual battle that was taking place, one that is still going on today – “For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance” (2 Nephi 28:19). To help us be better equipped for this battle, Nephi then goes on to warn us about three different strategies that the enemy is using:

Strategy #1 – Stir up people to anger against that which is good. Would it be accurate to say that this strategy is in full use today? I can't remember any time during my lifetime when people were as generally angry as they are today. The basic feeling seems to be that either you agree with my views or you're the enemy. This is an effective strategy as it makes people forget who the real enemy is.

Strategy #2 – Get people to believe that there is no hell and there is no devil. You probably know how this goes – How could a God who loves all people send them to hell? This strategy causes people to miss the path that our loving God has provided that leads to His kingdom, making them believe that all paths lead there.

Strategy #3 – Lull the servants of God into a false sense of security: “And others will he pacify and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well – and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell” (2 Nephi 28:21).

The idiom “lull someone into a false sense of security” is defined as “to lead someone into believing that all is well before attacking”. In a battle, if you know the enemy is preparing to attack, you're on high alert. On the other hand, if you think the enemy has given up or gone home, you relax and you're less careful about where you go and what you do since “all is well”. If the enemy is in fact hiding nearby, you are then much more vulnerable to the attack.

Let's not allow ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security regarding our service to God. If we're living a good Christian life, praise God for that but it doesn't mean we're immune to potential temptations to go astray. If our church meetings are being blessed, praise God for that but it doesn't mean we stop doing all we can to reach the sinners for Christ or that we ignore the future by not teaching and mentoring our children and young people. Although our church is not currently under direct attack by opposing forces in society, let's not assume that will always be the case (it won't be) and stand by idly as the opposition gets stronger and stronger.

The day will eventually come when Zion will be established and only then can the people say, "All is well in Zion". For now, the battle still rages on so let's not let our guard down but rather do all we can to stand up for the gospel of Jesus Christ.



## Why Must God Be “One and Done”? (2 Nephi 29)

What do the following books have in common?

- “The Mysterious Affair at Styles” by Agatha Christie
- “A Time to Kill” by John Grisham
- “Carrie” by Stephen King
- “Alex Cross” by James Patterson

If you guessed that they are the first books written by these four popular authors, you would be correct. Considering that these are some of the most prolific writers of the past 100 years, publishing many, many books between them, can you even conceive of any of them being told after writing their first book – “OK, you wrote one book; don’t write any more”? On the contrary, if you’ve been a fan of these or any other authors, you would be glad they weren’t “one and done”; you most likely look forward to each new book with great anticipation.

2 Nephi 29 explores the expected reaction of people to the coming forth of The Book of Mormon. Verse 3 says, “Many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible”. Has this prophecy come to pass? Of course – it continues to occur on frequent occasions today when The Book of Mormon is mentioned to people who believe in the Bible but are not familiar with The Book of Mormon.

Volumes have been written about the validity of The Book of Mormon but for the purpose of this article, I will share a rendition of what God has to say in 2 Nephi 29 about this topic:

- Why would you complain because I choose to have more of my words written? You’re anxious for more books about murders, court cases and monsters who eat brains but I have to be “one and done”?
- The testimony of two witnesses is better than the testimony of just one witness. By bringing forth a second book, the truth of my words can be confirmed and all can know that I speak consistently to all nations.
- My work is not yet finished so the complete story hasn’t been told yet. Even as of today, there is more to occur.



- Who even said the Bible contains all my words? I didn't say it – what right does man have to say that I'm "one and done"?

Expanding briefly on the last point above – You've probably been told at some point by some well-meaning person that you shouldn't believe in The Book of Mormon because the last page of the Bible says "don't add to this book". The next time that happens, I want you to smile and nod your head knowingly and then proceed to give them the simple response below.

In the final chapter of the Bible (Revelation 22), it does say, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book". However, remembering that the Bible is actually a collection of 66 individual "books", it's clear that this verse at the end of the Book of Revelation refers to the Book of Revelation itself, a book written by the Apostle John and positioned as the final book of the Bible because chronologically speaking, that's where it belongs.

There's no way that this one statement within a single book of the Bible collection refers to the entire Bible or the word of God in its entirety. If that were the case, the Bible would need to end after Deuteronomy 4 where it says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you". God caused more to be written after Deuteronomy, he caused more to be written after Revelation and there is even more that we have yet to see.

Rejoice that God is not a "one and done" author. We're blessed to have two volumes of His work and look forward with great anticipation to future books as the work of God continues to unfold.



## God is No Respector of Persons (2 Nephi 30)

Since the House of Israel was given the first opportunity to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ, there were many Israelites in those early days who thought it was only for them or that they were somehow special to God or even privileged because of the family they belonged to. After all, they were the “covenant people”! Nephi sought to squash this notion in 2 Nephi 30, describing who the real covenant people are:

*For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel (2 Nephi 30:2)*

This had to be quite an eye opener, that the only factor that mattered was belief on the Lord Jesus Christ and that those who believed (regardless of heritage) would be part of the family of God and those who did not believe (again, regardless of heritage) would be on the outside.

The original Apostles had to learn the same lesson. Peter eventually did when God sent him to the home of Cornelius (a Gentile) and the Holy Ghost fell on everyone in the house. This was when Peter uttered the famous quote, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

What does the message “God is no respecter of persons” mean to us today? After all, we all understand that the gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jews, right? Well, just as Nephi’s quote above has both a message regarding the Gentiles and a message regarding the Jews, there are two messages for us today as well:

1. **The Gospel is for everyone** – As covered in an earlier article, the gospel is not reserved for just people like me or for just my family members or friends. It’s available to every member of the human race.
2. **My salvation is based solely on my relationship with Christ** – God is not going to save me because of my family name. He’s not going to save me because of my position in the church. He’s not even going to save me because He loves me. He’s going to save me because Jesus Christ gave His life for me and, on the day of my baptism, I repented of my sins and allowed the blood of Christ to purchase my salvation.

While it may sound harsh to say that God doesn't respect us, what the statement really means is that we get no special privileges because of who we are on earth. Respect typically elevates one person over another and God does not do that. He loves us each the same and we each have the same opportunity (and must follow the same process) for salvation.

If salvation worked the way the early Jews thought it did, we who are Gentiles would have no opportunity for salvation. Thankfully for us, God is no respecter of persons.



## Why Should I Be Baptized? (2 Nephi 31)

In 2 Nephi 31, Nephi makes a strong case for baptism. If you find yourself in a discussion with someone who is considering baptism (or if you're contemplating it for yourself), here are some discussion points based on the words of Nephi in this chapter:

### Repentance of Sins

(First question asked of a person being baptized: "Do you repent of your sins?")

Although some may say that you can repent of your sins without being baptized, a public profession of your repentance clearly carries more weight than doing it within your own mind. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter instructed the crowd, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Three thousand people did so.

### Humbling Yourself

It takes humility to stand before a group of people in public, confess that you are a sinner and allow yourself to be put under the water. Omitting the act of baptism from our repentance allows us to hold onto a measure of pride – pride we can best do without as we begin our walk with Christ.

### Following the Example of Jesus

The primary reason we typically offer for the need to be baptized is that Jesus did it, thereby setting an example for us. Nephi states it as follows:

*And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water! (2 Nephi 31:5)*

Once we determine within ourselves that we want to follow the example of Jesus, we not only will want to be baptized as He was but we will also want to do it in the same way – by immersion in the water.

## **Following God’s Commandments**

(Second question asked of a person being baptized: “Do you promise to serve God for the remainder of your life?”)

The act of baptism is itself a way of following God’s commandments since the scriptures instruct us to do it. However, it is also an opportunity to make a public commitment before God and several witnesses of your intention to serve God and keep His commandments, to the best of your ability, all the remaining days of your life.

Of course, one can make this commitment to God privately. However, I would compare that to the traditional “New Year’s Resolutions”, in which we make commitments to ourselves to lose weight, stop smoking, etc. and then forget about them a few days into the new year. A public, formal commitment such as on the day of baptism is much more likely to be taken seriously.

### **Why not?**

Instead of asking “Why should I be baptized?”, perhaps people should ask themselves, “Why not?”. Alma did this at the Waters of Mormon – He acknowledged that the people had already expressed a desire to serve God and help others so then he asked them: “If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?” (Mosiah 18:10).

If someone has decided to serve God, why would they not want to get baptized? Is it pride? Is it to hedge somewhat in case they change their mind? Encourage them to take the plunge and follow Jesus!



## The Holy Ghost (2 Nephi 32)

After encouraging the people to consider baptism in chapter 31, Nephi begins 2 Nephi 32 by asking them to consider what comes next after baptism. If you're a member of The Church of Jesus Christ, you know that the very next step after baptism is to receive the Holy Ghost. Whereas the words of Nephi make it sound like the reception of the Holy Ghost may have been a decision to be considered separately at that time, the church today bestows it on you automatically shortly after you are baptized.

Although the Holy Ghost is not considered to be a separate "personage" (such as God the Father and God the Son), it is a portion of the entity known as "God". Baptisms are performed "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" so clearly the Holy Ghost is a part of God. However, unlike the personages of the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost is our own personal portion of God that resides within us and influences us to be servants of God.

Just as with baptism, Jesus set the example regarding the Holy Ghost. Right after He was baptized, the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove and landed upon Him. Being then filled with the Holy Ghost, Jesus was prepared to go into the wilderness and stand up to the temptations of the devil. When the disciples were concerned about Jesus departing from them, He assured them that another "comforter" would be sent to abide with them:

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)*

Is the Holy Ghost necessary for us to serve God? Consider the case of Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus. Prior to receiving the Holy Ghost (even after spending three years with Jesus Christ):

- Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, even using foul language the third time to emphasize his claim that he didn't know Jesus
- After Jesus resurrected and ascended to heaven, Peter went right back to what he was doing before he met the Lord (fishing)

After receiving the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost:

- Peter immediately preached a sermon that resulted in the conversion of 3000 people
- Peter devoted his life to the gospel of Jesus Christ, leading the early church and eventually giving his life for the Lord

The only difference between the first version of Peter and the second version of Peter described above is the addition of the Holy Ghost. How much of a difference can it make in our lives? Imagine:

- Receiving direct instruction from God as to what to do in a difficult situation
- Being warned by God to steer clear of a potentially dangerous situation
- Speaking the words of the Lord (whether in public or in a private conversation)
- Understanding the Word of God and how it can be applied to everyday life

All of this (and more) is available to us as a result of having the Holy Ghost within us. The Holy Ghost is one of the greatest benefits (in this life) of being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ. Be sure to take advantage of your own personal portion of God – The Holy Ghost!



## Because It Needs to be Done (2 Nephi 33)

In the final chapter of Nephi's writing, 2 Nephi 33, Nephi points out that writing is actually not his best skill (he considered himself more of a speaker than a writer). Considering how much he wrote, one could ask, "Why did he do it?" Didn't he have enough other things to do? Shouldn't he have left the writing for someone else to do?

The simple answer to the question of why he did it is because it needed to be done. The history and prophecies needed to be recorded. Writing may not have been his gift, it may not have been his favorite thing to do but he was able to do it and it needed to be done so he did it. Seeing Nephi's dedication to doing what had to be done, God blessed his work. As Nephi puts it, "the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong" (2 Nephi 33:4).

Similar choices face us today. For example, if you are responsible for taking care of a household and/or caring for children, you know there are many tasks to be done that are neither glamorous nor fun. Yet you do them. Why? Because they need to be done. You could choose to do other things, you could wait for someone else to do them (good luck with that) but, in the end, you do them because they need to be done.

Similar opportunities exist in the church. A new sister in our branch noticed one day that the trash in the bathrooms was sometimes forgotten and left there until the next week. She made it her personal job at the end of every Sunday meeting to go around to every trash pail in the building and empty them. Now, I think we can all agree that this sister was not called into the church to empty our trash pails. She misses out on some opportunities for fellowship while she is doing this. Surely, there are other people who could do this. Yet, she does it religiously every Sunday. Why? Because it needs to be done.

It even happens with ministerial duties. If you've ever been a presiding elder, you've probably experienced occasions when you hold out the oil bottle during an anointing and nobody steps forward to take the bottle. You could stand there for 20 minutes waiting, you could try to push the bottle into someone's hand but instead you tip the bottle over the person's head and pray for the person. Why? Because it needs to be done. The person sitting there needs prayer and although someone else could do it, it's not happening so you do it because it needs to be done.



Jesus Christ came to earth for primarily one purpose – to die on the cross to pay for our sins. Yet, when the time came, the human side of Jesus asked God whether there was any other way to accomplish this. With no other option forthcoming, He went ahead and allowed Himself to be crucified. Why? Because it needed to be done. Imagine if Jesus would have walked away, saying He had something else He preferred to be doing or that someone else should do this instead. Thankfully for all of us, He went ahead and did what needed to be done.

So, when an opportunity to do something for the Lord (for the church, for other people) arises, don't let your first thought be that you'd rather be doing something else or someone else can do this. If it's something you can do, especially if nobody else is doing it, do it – even if the only reason is that it just needs to be done.