

The Book of Mormon

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Something to Take Seriously (Mormon 1)

We've met him already. His name appears on the cover of the book. He inserted a note (after the Book of Omni) to explain why he was choosing specific plates as input for the book. He commented briefly in 3 Nephi and 4 Nephi on what was happening in the part of the story he was relating at that time. He is, of course, Mormon, the Nephite historian who organized, abridged and edited approximately 1000 years of Nephite history such that it could be presented in a single book which is entitled The Book of Mormon.

Part of the history that was published includes the events that occurred during Mormon's lifetime – it's in essence Mormon's own personal story. This segment is also called The Book of Mormon. OK, maybe it's a little confusing to have the Book of Mormon in The Book of Mormon but this happens to be the only book title that is actually mentioned in the text so it was not really an option to call it anything else:

"And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon" (Mormon 1:1)

Mormon's story begins where 4 Nephi ends – the sacred records have just been hidden by the record-keeper Ammaron due to the wickedness of all the people at that time. Knowing he won't live forever, Ammaron needs someone younger to share this information with so he chooses Mormon – even though he's only 10 years old at the time! He tells Mormon where the records are hidden and instructs him to retrieve them when he's an adult (about 24 years old) and then be responsible for them going forward.

Why would anyone choose a 10-year-old boy for such a responsibility? When Ammaron gives him the assignment, he comments, "I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe" (verse 2).

The key word here is "sober". In this context, it doesn't mean lack of drunkenness. Rather, a sober person is someone who is generally serious, solemn, focused, etc. It's someone who doesn't take things light-heartedly and is not easily distracted – especially when the matter is something to be taken seriously.

In general, soberness is a personality trait. It's not something where you would typically say, "From now on, I'm going to be a sober person". You may not even want to be. But if you want

something to get done, who better to turn to than someone who will take it seriously and remain focused on what has to be done?

Rather than trying to change our personality types, perhaps we can just try to be more sober-minded when the situation calls for it. Each of the items listed below is something that some people take light-heartedly but is really something to take seriously:

- **Marriage** – For some, a spouse is someone to be criticized, insulted or taken for granted. Unhappy? Just get a divorce – it's no big deal. Instead, let's take our marriages seriously – valuing the person and relationship that God has provided for us. Even as imperfections become apparent, your spouse should be the person you can't live without – and who can't live without you.
- **Church Membership** – Sadly, some people treat their church membership as they would a membership in any club or organization – I'll stay in as long as I'm having a good time and then drop out when it's not working for me anymore. Instead, let's be serious about our church membership – being as active as possible in church activities and considering the church as something we'll be part of for the rest of our lives (which is what we promised at the water's edge when we were baptized).
- **Sharing Christ with Others** – It's very easy to minimize this as there are many obvious challenges to being successful at this. However, if we seriously consider that each missed opportunity to share the Lord may result in someone missing out on salvation for eternity, we will hopefully realize that this is something to take seriously.
- **Salvation** – People will sometimes debate over how much you can get away with and still receive salvation. While it's true that Christ purchased our salvation and the Lord forgives our sins, let's still do our best to serve the Lord and keep His commandments to the best of our ability. Our eternal home is something to take very seriously so let's make sure we are staying on the path that leads to eternal life with God.

There are many things in life that don't need to be taken seriously. When it comes to those things, we can feel free to goof around if we want to as it's really no big deal how those things turn out. However, for the items on the list above – and perhaps others you might add to the list – let's be sober-minded with the outcome of these as each is really something to take seriously.



The Body of Christ (Mormon 2)

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

As part of the discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul brings out the concept that we as individual members of the Lord’s church form “the body of Christ”. The metaphor is developed by relating the members of the church to the parts of a physical body – any of us could correspond to the head or the hand or the foot or the eyes or the ears, etc.

The main point to be understood is that we shouldn’t focus on exactly which part of the body we are but rather appreciate that it takes all of us to make up the full body of Christ. Some of the logical questions asked in that chapter to make this point are:

- Can the ear say if I’m not the eye, I don’t want to be part of the body?
- If everyone is an eye, how will the body hear (or smell)?
- Should the head tell the feet I don’t need you?
- Are there any parts of the body that are not needed? (Even the parts we hide and don’t talk about have very important functions)

A metaphor that I like to use to illustrate this point is a puzzle. If you’ve ever made a puzzle, you know that you start with a box of individual pieces – perhaps 1000 pieces. If you examine the pieces, you’ll find that no two are exactly alike – they are different shapes, sizes and colors; some are corner or border pieces, some form the part of the picture that everyone will look at while others blend into the background.

Which of these puzzle pieces would you say are unnecessary? Well, if even one piece is missing, the picture is incomplete and it won’t look right. When this happens – and I speak from experience – you’ll leave the 999 other pieces on the table and literally crawl around on the floor with a flashlight, looking for the missing piece. And, when you find it – HOORAY! It doesn’t matter what type of piece it was – what matters is that the picture was incomplete and now it’s complete.

Now, think of yourself as one of those puzzle pieces. Regardless of how different you may be from any other piece of the puzzle, you’ve been selected (by God) to be part of the big picture – part of the body of Christ.

Which of us is an unnecessary part of the body of Christ? Each of us has been given spiritual gifts and each of us has a role to play. And, the more we connect with each other and the more that each of us contributes to the overall effort, the more successful we will be as the body of Christ.

In Mormon 2, Mormon assumes the position as “head” of the Nephite army. Clearly, his gifts have been recognized in spite of him being only 16 years of age. During the first year of Mormon’s leadership, the Nephites find themselves under attack by the Lamanites in various cities. Instead of allowing the Lamanites to pick off the individual small groups, Mormon gathers the Nephites together:

“And it came to pass that we did gather in our people as fast as it were possible, that we might get them together in one body” (Mormon 2:7)

Forming a single “body” puts the Nephites in the best position to take on the enemy. As it turns out, many Nephites are killed anyway but it is noted that this is because “they did not repent of their evil doings” (verse 8). Clearly, this body of Nephites was not the body of Christ.

We, however, are the body of Christ. So, let’s be the best eye/ear/hand/foot we can be – appreciating that we are in fact part of the body of Christ. Also, let’s do our best to stay connected to each other – the other parts of the same body. As a unified body, we will be in the best position to take on the enemy. We already know that the victory will go to Christ but let’s do our best to be a part of that victory as the present-day body of Christ.



Schlemiel or Schlimazel? (Mormon 3)

If you're in my age bracket, you may remember a popular television show whose theme song began with the words "Schlemiel, Schlimazel". In case you were ever wondering what these words mean – "Schlemiel" is a Yiddish word that is typically used to describe a clumsy person who often spills soup on someone else. And "Schlimazel"? Well, he's the poor guy who the soup gets spilled on.

The question for today is: Who do you want to be – the schlemiel or the schlimazel? Now, if we were really talking about spilling soup, perhaps many of us would be kind enough to prefer the soup in our own laps rather than spilling it on someone else.

However, suppose we're talking about something else in our "bowl". Let's picture a bowl filled with our beliefs, our values, what we have been taught by the Lord, what we stand for, etc. Now, if the choice is to "spill" these beliefs and values onto others – influence them to be more like us – or have others influence us with their beliefs and values, which would we choose? It may seem like a no-brainer that we would choose the first option (the schlemiel path) but how often do we actually allow others to influence us rather than the other way around?

- Do we exhibit Christ-like qualities in our lives and encourage others to do the same? Or do we allow the behavior and beliefs of unbelievers to alter – however slightly – our own views and behavior?
- Do we acknowledge God in all aspects of our lives, letting others know that we believe that God hears and answers prayers and that we are thankful to Him for all the good things in our lives? Or do we allow the "don't mention God outside of church" way of thinking influence us to behave that way?
- We could ask many similar questions of ourselves but it all comes down to – Are we allowing the world to change us or are we seeking to change the world? Are we trying to spill our soup on others or are we allowing them to spill their soup on us?

In Mormon 3, Mormon resigns his position as the leader of the Nephite army. He has done his best to influence the Nephites by displaying the love of God to them, praying for their protection and exhibiting faith. However, the Nephites instead choose to emulate the murderous behavior

of the Lamanites so Mormon refuses to lead them in their quest to “go up unto their enemies to battle, and avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren” (verse 14).

Seeking revenge against someone is a clear case of allowing someone else to spill their soup on you – he did this to me so I’m going to do the same thing (or worse) back to him. As God tells Mormon at this point, “Vengeance is mine, and I will repay” (verse 15). If someone needs to be punished for what they have done to you, let God be the one to do the punishing. Bad behavior toward someone else doesn’t become more acceptable just because we think we have a good reason or we think the person deserves it.

The last few verses of Romans 12 covers this topic well:

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” (Romans 12:17-19)

The final verse of Romans 12 reads, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”. In other words, when it comes to good vs evil: Don’t be a schlimazel; be a schlemiel.



Blessed are the Peacemakers (Mormon 4)

In Mormon 4, Mormon describes the continuing battle between the godless Nephites and the godless Lamanites, commenting that “there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel...as was among this people” (verse 12).

Mormon observes that although the judgments of God are being carried out against this people, it is actually “by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed” (verse 5).

It’s an interesting observation that wicked people can get others stirred up to do wicked things. Think of riots or brawls where it starts with just a few people and then many others jump in. Slogans like “We don’t have to take this anymore!” can easily get people going – even those who have no idea what it is they don’t have to take anymore.

The New Testament gospels tell us of people being stirred up to shout, “Release Barabbas!”. Maybe the people thought they were joining in on a just cause, showing mercy to a prisoner. Instead, they were being duped into helping to bring about the crucifixion of the Son of God.

We all deal with people who are – well, something other than peacemakers. For example:

- Those who seem to bring drama into every situation, raising everyone’s stress level
- Those who seem to criticize you at every opportunity
- Those who approach conflict by “pouring gasoline on the fire” instead of seeking peace
- Those who try to undermine our faith in God (“no intelligent person would believe that”)
- Those who vehemently try to change our views on situations covered by the Word of God (“just love everyone and, if you don’t agree, don’t ever speak to me again”)
- Those who try to get us to do things that we know are wrong (“everybody does it”)
- Those who seem to focus on the negative in every situation, making it difficult to maintain a positive attitude (“why do you put up with that?”)

Depending on the person and the situation, these people may range from annoying or “Debbie downers” to tools of the enemy or even outright children of Satan. As a child of God, how do we react to these people and these situations?

One possible approach is to respond in kind, giving people “a taste of their own medicine”. This is clearly not the right approach for a child of God (however deserving it may seem) and in fact plays into the exact strategy used by the enemy in the verse above as “the wicked stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed” (or whatever other inappropriate acts are taken in anger).

Another approach is (as the song says) – “Turn your back on those who ‘gender strife”. If it’s an option to remove people from your life who raise stress and anxiety levels, this is clearly something to consider. However, this is not always possible – for example, what if the person is your boss at work? Also, by walking away, you are removing a godly influence (you) from that person’s life.

Which brings us to the best approach – be a peacemaker. Is that even possible in day-to-day life? Well, maybe not 100% of the time but, as children of God, we are encouraged to “if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).

You can be the one to diffuse drama and conflict rather than escalating it. You can be the one who accepts and gives criticism graciously. You can be the one who lives your faith, does the right thing regardless of what others say and shows love to everyone – even the people who disagree with you. You can be the one to counteract negative attitudes with positive statements – pointing out the best in people instead of the worst and spreading hope and optimism rather than pessimism and despair.

The above actions don’t come automatically – typical human responses tend to be negative – but by following the prompting of the Holy Ghost, we can allow others to see us as different, as children of God. Don’t allow the world to stir you up to evil actions; be a peacemaker and make a difference in the world around you – a positive difference for the cause of Christ.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9)



We've Been Spared the Gruesome Details (Mormon 5)

In Mormon 5, Mormon resumes command of the Nephite army but he makes it clear that he is without hope, knowing that it's not going to end well for the Nephites due to their refusal to repent of their iniquities. And, they are in fact massacred so badly that Mormon decides to spare us the gruesome details:

"I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in casting before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes...therefore I write a small abridgement, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen...that ye might not have too great sorrow because of the wickedness of this people" (Mormon 5:8-9)

It's enough to know that the Nephites were slain in battle – we don't necessarily need a graphic description of how body parts were damaged or how much blood was spilled. It might add shock value to a contemporary movie, but it wouldn't really add any value to this account.

All four New Testament gospels record the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Here are the descriptions of the crucifixion in each of the gospels:

- "And they crucified him" (Matthew 27:35)
- "and they crucified him" (Mark 15:25)
- "there they crucified him" (Luke 23:33)
- "Where they crucified him" (John 19:18)

Clearly, this is another instance where we've been spared the gruesome details. Of course, people of the time who would have read this would have known in detail what was meant by saying someone was crucified. They would have been able to envision it without it being described graphically.

However, since none of us has ever witnessed an actual crucifixion, there is value in recognizing and reflecting upon some of the details of what Jesus Christ, our Savior, suffered while in human form – especially since He did it to purchase our salvation. When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we partake of the bread and wine in remembrance of what He did for us. Let's make sure we remember this:

- Although Jesus was the Son of God, His human body felt pain as much as any of ours does. Think of His hand and arm being held over a board and then a spike driven through it – and as He is reacting to that intense pain, the same thing is done to His other hand and then to His feet as well. And then the whole contraption is lifted up so a group of spectators can watch and even shout insults as He hangs there in agony, struggling for each breath, until He mercifully dies. This is what we should remember when we partake of the bread.
- The holes made by the spikes would have been bleeding freely with blood dripping down His body, onto the cross and onto the ground. In John 19:34, it says that when His side was pierced with a sword, blood and water came out. The water coming out indicates that He was completely bled out – all of His blood was spilled for us. This is what we should remember when we partake of the wine.

Although the writers spare us the gruesome details, let's not gloss over them when it comes to understanding and remembering what Jesus did for us. The most evil murderer today is put to death in a much more humane manner than Jesus was. And, of course, Jesus was not guilty of any crime Himself. The crimes He was executed for were not His – they were ours. And now, through our faith in Him, we are forgiven of our transgressions and are on the road that leads to eternal life because of what Jesus did for us. These are details worth knowing and remembering as it was all done for our salvation!



The Righteous Need Not Fear (Mormon 6)

In Mormon 6, the Nephites face what they know will be the final destruction of their people at the hands of the Lamanites. Knowing the end is near and that God has commanded that the Nephite records not fall into the hands of the Lamanites, Mormon buries all but a few of the records in the Hill Cumorah. He then describes the attitude of the people as the Lamanite armies approach:

“And it came to pass that my people...did now behold the armies of the Lamanites marching towards them; and with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they await to receive them” (Mormon 6:7)

How different the above would read if the Nephite people were serving the Lord at this time. First of all, they might not be facing death at all but, even if they were, they would know that they would soon be on their way to paradise so either way they would have no need to fear.

As I am writing this, there is a disease known as the coronavirus that is making its way through the world, causing considerable fear for many people. After all, nobody likes to be sick and this particular disease is highly contagious, you can be a carrier for up to 14 days without even showing symptoms and some number of people are dying from it.

However, even as we take certain prescribed precautions to limit the spread of the disease, we should keep in mind that ultimately God is in control of the situation. So, if you believe in God and you are serving God righteously, you have no need to fear.

By saying that the righteous need not fear, are we saying that anybody who serves God will not get the coronavirus? No, each of us is living in the flesh so we're all subject to the perils of life and some number of us could possibly get the virus. However, we still don't need to fear. Here's why:

- **We are blessed with God's protection** – Whether God chooses to preserve us in our mortality or to simply embrace our souls, we can be courageous through His power. When we are working for the Lord, we can be confident of His protection. For example, it's been our experience that ministers typically don't get sick as a result of anointing the sick. So, while it's not a time to be reckless – especially with the threat of a 14-day quarantine looming – it's also not a time to totally forget about the work of the Lord. Even while the church is

cooperating with the nation in temporarily suspending gatherings, we don't need to fear to be in each other's presence if the Lord is so directing.

- **We have an additional resource when we are sick** – If we happen to get the virus, there is medical attention that can be sought plus the large majority of people do recover. However, in addition to that, we can look to the Lord and seek healing from Him. “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:15-16).
- **Even in the worst case, we don't need to fear** – We of course don't want this to happen to any of us but, even if we were to be facing death, we wouldn't face it with “that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked” but rather with the peace and confidence of knowing that we are on our way to the paradise of God (where we all hope to be someday).

So, in the face of a threat such as this (or anything similar that comes in the future), be wise and take appropriate precautions but don't live in fear. God's got this. And, in terms of being able to spread the gospel, remember that the way we live our lives in a time of crisis goes a lot further toward demonstrating who we are as people of God than how we live our lives when everything is good. Showing that we are not fearful when everyone around us is having a meltdown will go a long way toward showing that we have something that others should desire.

“The righteous need not fear” (1 Nephi 22:17)



To-Do List (Mormon 7)

Mormon 7 contains the final words of Mormon before he is killed in battle. Perhaps knowing that this will be his last opportunity to share words of wisdom with future descendants of Lehi who will read his book, he gives them a “To-Do List” to consider. He instructs them to know that they are part of the House of Israel and to do the following:

- Lay down weapons of war
- Believe in Jesus Christ
- Repent of sins
- Be baptized in the name of Jesus
- Receive the Holy Ghost
- Stand up for the gospel of Jesus Christ

This same To-Do List applies to all of us today, whether or not we are part of the House of Israel.

As I am writing this, many of us are more or less confined to our homes as part of the effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Clearly, this is extremely inconvenient for most of us. Many people are unable to work or operate their businesses, supplies for our homes are in short supply, etc.

For me personally, I had a temporary crown placed in my mouth a few weeks ago and the permanent crown is now sitting in my dentist’s office but the office is currently closed. So, since I can’t have it put in my mouth this week, I instead have to do what I can to make sure nobody steals it from the office (you know, like the song says – “Don’t Let Anybody Take Your Crown”).

Yes, there are many things we would like to be doing right now that we are unable to do. However, instead of focusing on what we can’t be doing, perhaps we can take advantage of the unexpectedly available time to do things that we don’t normally have time to do. Here is a sample To-Do List of some spiritual activities to consider:

- Study a passage of scripture on your own or with your family
- Watch some faith-based or scripture-based movies
- Spend time in fasting and prayer (many of us are doing this on Wednesdays currently)
- Call some brothers and sisters on the phone to uplift them

- Watch recorded sermons or scripture lessons
- Attend “virtual church meetings” – several branches of the Church are holding these using Zoom, Facebook or Livestream
- Assist your branch in setting up a virtual church meeting (perhaps nobody else in the branch knows how to set it up)

Time is a precious commodity for each of us. Perhaps the finances we lose during this unusual period of time will be restored to us someday but the time we lose will never be restored. So, take advantage of the opportunity to do things that you don't normally have time to do. Who knows? – you may find a way to incorporate some of them into your regular To-Do List even when we return to our normal way of life.



Not Good to be Alone (Mormon 8)

In Mormon 8, the narrative is picked up by Mormon's son Moroni who reports that his father Mormon has been killed along with all of the other Nephite people. As a result, he makes the sad statement that "I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people" (verse 3).

At the beginning of the Bible, after God had created one person, "God said, It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18) so He created a second person. Although we typically use this verse in reference to marriage, it can also be applied generally to observe that people were not created with the intention that they would be totally alone in life.

Moroni gives a little insight as to how it might be to be totally alone in the world as He states that His only purpose in life is to complete the writing of the Nephite record (for the benefit of future generations) and "whither I go it mattereth not" (verse 4) and "how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not" (verse 5). How sad to be that alone such that it doesn't matter where you go or how much longer you live.

For us today, we may occasionally have the opportunity to do things that affect future generations but, most of the time, our primary purposes in this life involve other people who are also still living this life. Once we have given our lives to the Lord – the most important thing to be accomplished in this life – God uses the remainder of our lives to affect other people. Whether it's family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, people seeking the Lord or whoever, we are here for other people. It's not God's intention for us to be alone in life.

Sadly, over the past few decades, there has been a disturbing trend in the direction of isolation from each other. Impressive technological innovations have made it less and less necessary to actually be in the company of other people. We can work from home, shop from home, eat out from home, attend church from home, etc. While these capabilities have proved invaluable during the coronavirus crisis (which is still ongoing as I write this), it does create a disturbing view of a world in which we may eventually never have to leave home for anything.

And now, due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, the concept of "social distancing" has been created. While the concept of maintaining distance between people and not touching each other may slow the spread of this particular virus, my own fear is that this will become the new

normal even after the crisis is past, that it will be the next step in the trend toward isolation from each other.

I've already heard that some people are saying they'll never shake hands with anyone again. After developing the mindset that touching is bad and distancing is good and safe, will people be able to break through and touch each other again? I hope so – God created people to be socially close, not socially distant.

Imagine what a socially distant church would look like:

- Holy kiss replaced by a holy elbow bump
- Pews replaced by chairs six feet apart from each other
- Live sermons replaced by livestream viewing
- Surgical gloves required for anointing
- Curbside pickup of the Lord's Supper

And the next step is that we don't have church at all. Everyone participates remotely and then we're essentially alone. And you know what God said about being alone.

So, during this crisis, let's observe the guidelines and be responsible and cooperative in the effort to defeat the virus. But when the crisis is over, we as the people of God need to be at the forefront of turning back the clock on what will otherwise be the next step in the trend toward total isolation. Let's demonstrate that togetherness is good and touching is good. Distancing and being alone – not good.

As we go through this period of temporary isolation, let's envision the day when we'll be able to once again go to our church buildings. How exciting it will be to see each other again! I'm envisioning tears of joy and embracing all around. The day is coming – get excited and get ready to be a part of it!



God is Still the Same (Mormon 9)

With the Nephite story essentially complete, Moroni addresses a few additional topics in Mormon 9 for the benefit of those who will eventually read the book. Among the topics covered is the concept of an unchanging God. His central statement is one that is similar to other parts of the scripture:

“God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing” (Mormon 9:9)

One area where people tend to think that God has changed is regarding miracles. While it’s one thing to believe the stories in the scriptures, it’s apparently too much of a leap to believe that God still performs miracles today. Has God gone out of the miracle business? Is He retired? Moroni stresses that if you think that God is not still a God of miracles, then “ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary” (verse 10).

I have been blessed in my lifetime to witness and even be used as a participant in several of God’s miracles. Whenever it happens, it reinforces my feeling and thankfulness that God is still the same. Here’s one example:

Some years ago, my daughter Leanna came to me one day and told me that one of her friends was in the hospital, in a coma and on life support, perhaps close to death. Leanna asked me if I would go with her to the hospital to pray for her friend. We arrived at the girl’s hospital room and saw her lying unconscious in the bed, connected to equipment that was forcing air into her lungs. My tenderhearted daughter started to cry as she saw her friend in this condition.

The girl’s mother was sitting nearby. She knew Leanna but she had never met me so she asked me what I was doing there. When I told her that I was there to pray for her daughter to recover, she replied, “Well, I guess this is a good time for a smoke break”, and she picked up her purse and left the room. Leanna looked at me and said, “What just happened here?”. I told her to recall the Bible story where Jesus went to pray for the girl lying in the bed and the unbelievers had to leave the room before the girl could be raised from her bed.

With the unbeliever out of the room, I anointed the girl in the bed. During the prayer, her eyes popped open and she sat up and looked at us. Then, a peaceful expression came over her face

and she laid back down and began sleeping normally. We left then but before we even arrived at home, we got word that the girl was completely awake.

In addition to marveling at the power of God displayed in this miracle, I have often reflected at how similar the details were to the raising of the daughter of Jairus as recorded in Matthew 9, Mark 5 and Luke 8. Read those accounts and compare it to the above – God is still the same!

Knowing that God is still the same allows us to have courage, knowing that what He did for the people in the scriptures, He is able to do for us today. Here are just a few examples:

- In Exodus 12, the Israelites survived a plague by applying the blood of a lamb to their doorposts. We can face a plague (as we are currently doing) with no fear by applying the blood of Christ (the Lamb) to our hearts.
- When sinful people in the scriptures repented of their sins, they were forgiven and became disciples of the Lord. When we repent of our sins, we are forgiven and become disciples of the Lord.
- The people in the scriptures who died before the resurrection of Christ resurrected at the appointed time (when Jesus resurrected). We can face death knowing that we will also resurrect at the appointed time (the first resurrection).

People change, customs change and what's considered good or bad in the world changes. There are no absolutes in the world so you can't depend on those. But God is still the same. He is an unchanging absolute that we can always depend on. And thank God for that.