

The Book of Mosiah

Contents

Passing the Torch (Mosiah 1).....	3
Serving God by Serving Each Other (Mosiah 2)	5
Judgment Day (Mosiah 3).....	7
He Did It to Himself (Mosiah 4).....	9
It’s Just as Good as a Xerox (Mosiah 5).....	11
Kingdom Accounting (Mosiah 6).....	13
When You Assume (Mosiah 7).....	15
Give Me Understanding, Lord (Mosiah 8)	17
Called to Save, Not to Condemn (Mosiah 9).....	19
Wroth I Are, Eh? (Mosiah 10)	21
Parents, Don’t Blame Yourselves (Mosiah 11)	23
Desensitizing of God’s People (Mosiah 12).....	25
He Protects You While You Work (Mosiah 13)	27
Standing Up for Jesus Christ (Mosiah 14)	29
The First Resurrection (Mosiah 15).....	31
The Carnal Mind (Mosiah 16)	33
Denying Your Testimony (Mosiah 17).....	35
So, Now You’re An Orphan (Mosiah 18).....	37
Fighting the Real Enemy (Mosiah 19).....	39
Unintended Consequences (Mosiah 20)	41
God Eases Your Burden - But You Still Have It (Mosiah 21).....	43
Drunk or Filled With the Spirit? (Mosiah 22)	45

As Good as Your Word (Mosiah 23)47
Teaching the Untaught (Mosiah 24)49
Tell Them It Was God (Mosiah 25) 51
Dealing With Sin in the Church (Mosiah 26)53
Your Conversion Experience (Mosiah 27)55
Being Missionary-Minded (Mosiah 28).....57
Majority Rules (Mosiah 29)59



Passing the Torch (Mosiah 1)

One of the traditions associated with the Olympic Games is that a torch is carried from the ancient site of Olympia in Greece (where the Olympic Games were originally held in ancient times) to whatever city (in whatever country) the Olympics are taking place that particular year. Needless to say, the journey, which can encompass thousands of miles and even cross continents, is way more than a single person can accomplish. So, there are designated points where the torch bearer passes the torch to another person who then continues the journey with the process continuing until the journey ends (with the torch being placed at the site of the games).

In Mosiah 1, a man named King Benjamin is nearing the end of his life. Having carried the “torch” of leadership of the Nephite people for quite a few years, King Benjamin prepares to pass the torch to his son Mosiah who will then continue the journey. The people of the kingdom are invited to come and hear King Benjamin speak to them so he can inform them of this change, tell them to treat Mosiah with the same respect, etc. In other words, the journey is still the same, only the torch bearer has changed.

The journey through time is one that is of course way too long for any one person to navigate from end to end. Thus, when people fill certain roles, especially leadership roles, the assignments by definition are only temporary as life only lasts for a finite period of time. If the journey is to continue, the torch must be passed to someone else.

Many of us serve in leadership roles in the church. These leadership roles may be official or unofficial in nature. We may be leaders of small groups in branches or missions or we may be leaders of efforts that affect the entire church. We may be leaders of other people or leaders by virtue of performing valuable tasks for the church.

Regardless of what leadership role we are in, the time will come when we need to pass the torch to someone else. Whether due to death, age, illness or just taking on different responsibilities, our time in the role will come to an end. At that time, either someone else will need to take the torch to continue the journey corresponding to that role or else that particular role will come to an end.

How important to the church is the role we are in? The more important the role, the more critical it is that we ensure that there are candidates to assume that responsibility when the time comes. We don't necessarily need to select a specific successor – it may not even be our choice as to who we will pass the torch to – but we need to do the best we can to engage others, especially

our younger members, in the work of the church such that they will have an interest in assuming leadership roles in the future.

Mentoring the younger members, giving them the opportunity to do real work for the church, letting them assume leadership roles – these are all ways of preparing the next generation of church leaders. They may do things differently than we would but the same Holy Ghost is within them and will lead them in whatever way makes sense for the challenges they will face in an ever changing world. If we choose instead to ignore the younger members, we may find that when we finally reach the end of our personal journey, there will be nobody waiting to receive the torch from us.

King Benjamin chose to pass the torch to Mosiah while he was still living which allowed the Nephite nation to continue to thrive both physically and spiritually. We want the same for the church so let's make sure we are doing the best we can to prepare our younger members to lead the church into the next generation.



Serving God by Serving Each Other (Mosiah 2)

In Mosiah 2, King Benjamin begins his farewell address to his people. So many people come to hear his words that a tower needs to be erected for him to stand on as he speaks. Even then, many of the people are sitting too far away to hear him (no PA system obviously) so his words need to be written down and distributed to the multitude.

As King Benjamin reviews his reign, he reminds the people that he didn't burden them with taxes but rather worked to support himself and even to serve others. He then stresses that he is not telling them this to boast but rather to teach them that serving others is part of serving God. His statement is one that is quoted often in sermons today:

I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God. (Mosiah 2:17)

Of course, the king wasn't saying this just to point out that he was serving God. He goes on to say that "if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another?" (verse 18). He wanted them to follow his example!

There are many things we can do as part of our service to God. Some – such as praying, attending church services and reading the scriptures – can be useful in establishing or enhancing our personal relationship with God. These are all very important activities but if they are used to just help ourselves, the target audience is very limited (to just me).

Can we use these same activities to serve others?

When we pray, do we set aside time to pray for the needs of others? We each no doubt have a long list of things we would like God to do for us but spending time in prayer for others shows God we are not selfish and that we care about others. Also, the more different situations we pray for, the more opportunities we have for answered prayers (and more entries in "The Book of You"). With today's technology, we have access to many prayer requests – nobody is expected to be able to pray for all of these but if the spirit pricks your heart regarding some, do your best to pray for those needs.

When we attend church services, are we asking, "What am I going to get out of this meeting?" or are we asking, "How can I be a blessing to someone else today?" If it's the first, we might be disappointed at times – maybe the message wasn't really for me today, we didn't sing any of my

favorite hymns, my best friend wasn't there to sit with me, etc. However, if our primary goal is to serve others in church, we will rarely be disappointed. There are always opportunities to be a blessing to someone else and we then go home with a blessing as well.

Reading the scriptures would seem to be for our personal benefit. However, if we learn them enough to be able to preach or teach the Word of God (if that's our calling) or to be able to reference scriptural accounts in conversations, our reading can then benefit others. Also, we will hopefully take to heart passages such as Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus says that if we feed or clothe people in need, we are doing it to Him; conversely, if we turn them away, we are turning Him away.

Whether it's serving our brothers and sisters in church or serving people in need who have nothing to do with the church, it's all part of our personal service to God. As King Benjamin said, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God".



Judgment Day (Mosiah 3)

The term “Judgment Day” generally conjures up an uncomfortable image of the end of the world or something similar. There have been several movies with this title and the idea is the same – the end is coming, prepare for the end, etc. If the term is applied to a courtroom, it is still uncomfortable as it indicates the day you find out if you’re innocent or guilty, with your future existence riding on the outcome.

In Mosiah 3, King Benjamin describes Judgment Day as the time when all “shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil” (Mosiah 3:24). It’s basically everything described in the paragraph above except it’s your future eternal existence riding on the outcome of this judgment.

The rest of the chapter is spent describing what happens to people whose works are judged as evil – a state of misery and endless torment, a lake of fire and brimstone, etc. Clearly, none of us wants the judgment of God to go against us on Judgment Day.

So how can we make sure that our good works will outweigh our not-so-good works on Judgment Day? Maybe if we’re really, really, really good, God will be impressed and give us a favorable judgment? Sorry but it doesn’t work that way. Consider these verses:

All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)

There is none righteous, no, not one (Romans 3:10)

There is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:12)

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)

This is really bad news! Are we all doomed to an unfavorable judgment?

No! Happily, there is good news – Jesus has provided a way for all of our unrighteous (even evil) works to not count against us on Judgment Day:

Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel. (3 Nephi 27:20-21)

Imagine being on trial for a crime and all of the evidence against you is thrown out and can’t be considered by the judge or jury. When the judgment day arrives, you will have no fear of the

verdict since there is no evidence against you. Only the favorable points (however meager) will be considered and you will receive a favorable verdict.

Such is the case for the followers of Jesus Christ on Judgment Day. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross so they would no longer need to count against us. When we were baptized, our sins were removed and if we continue to repent and endure to the end, we will find ourselves spotless (no unfavorable evidence against us) when we stand before the Lord on Judgment Day. Therefore we have no need to fear the judgment – only our good works will be considered and those good works (however meager) will easily outweigh the evil works because there will be none of those to be considered.

The verdict on Judgment Day has been made obvious, thanks to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

As Jesus said in the scripture above, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel” or, in other words – This is truly good news!



He Did It to Himself (Mosiah 4)

As King Benjamin concludes his address in Mosiah 4, he touches on the subject of providing assistance to the poor and needy. This is a familiar subject in the scriptures – Jesus taught the same thing – and it’s certainly consistent with the concept of Christian living.

As was mentioned in an earlier article, Jesus taught in Matthew 25:31-46 that if we feed or clothe people who are in need, we are doing it to Him. He told the rich young ruler that if he wanted to be perfect, he should sell all he had and give the money to the poor. James writes that if we encounter someone without food or clothes and we just give him kind words and no other assistance, we haven’t really helped him.

There are many other passages which teach the same thing. The scriptures are all about helping the poor.

What makes the King Benjamin address a little different is that he addresses an excuse that typically enters people’s minds (even today) when confronted with the question of whether to assist a poor person:

“Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just” (Mosiah 4:17)

In other words – Why should I help him? He did it to himself!

While this may sound harsh to some, there are many who would basically agree with this statement. And I can totally understand why.

For years, I worked in the city of Philadelphia. I would get up early, ride the train for an hour, walk to my office building and work for 8 hours. At the end of the day, as I walked back to the train station for the long train ride home, if I would encounter someone begging for money, my first thought quite honestly wasn’t always, “oh this poor hungry person”. It might have been more like, “if you worked an 8-hour day as I just did, you wouldn’t be in this position”. In other words, “you’ve done this to yourself”.

Although an understandable way of thinking, it does have one flaw – It overlooks the fact that God is the ultimate provider of everything we have. He provides the talents we have that can be

used to earn money, He provides jobs for us, He provides the health and strength to make our way to work and work a full day. If we believe that, then how can we look down upon someone who has not received the same gifts from God? Can we really say, “He did it to himself”?

Looking at this spiritually, consider all the sins we have committed in our lives that would disqualify us from residence in the kingdom of God. If we were to be held accountable for these sins, it could truly be said that we did it to ourselves. However, Jesus came along one day and placed a huge gift in our basket – the gift of salvation. We didn’t earn it – it was just given to us as if we were beggars. Considering the immense value of this gift, can we really begrudge a relatively tiny gift to our fellow man?

As to whether you should give money to beggars on the street – you should allow the Spirit to guide you as to what to do. It’s true that some are scammers and others are capable of working and should be doing so. On the other hand, many are legitimately in need. Perhaps you might opt to support established facilities like homeless shelters or soup kitchens. It’s up to you how you assist the poor. Just don’t forget about them – they didn’t really do it to themselves.



It's Just as Good as a Xerox (Mosiah 5)

If you cut yourself, you put on a band-aid. If your nose is running, you use a Kleenex. If you have a headache, you take a Tylenol. If you work in an office and you need to make copies, you use the Xerox machine.

All of the above sound like common sense things that we all do. However, many of us who cut ourselves may use an adhesive bandage that is not the Band-Aid brand and therefore does not have the Band-Aid name on it. Our tissue box may or may not have the Kleenex name on it. We may keep generic acetaminophen in our medicine cabinet rather than the official Tylenol brand. And, of course, there are many brands of copy machines that do not carry the Xerox name.

If you were to have a problem with any of these products that have different names, you couldn't very well go to the companies named above as they have no responsibility for products that don't carry their name.

There was a Xerox commercial years ago that played up this same theme of having the right name. In the commercial, a copy machine salesman ends his pitch by saying, "It's just as good as a Xerox" while the potential customer just nods his head. A second salesman does the same thing. As the third salesman ends his pitch, he says, "It's..." and the customer cuts him off and says, "I know, it's just as good as a Xerox". The salesman says, "No, it is a Xerox" and the customer shakes his hand, signifying they have a deal.

In Mosiah 5, King Benjamin urges all the people who agreed that they would serve God to take upon themselves the name of Christ. As he explains to them (and us), this will make all the difference when they (we) stand before God:

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 5:9)

And conversely:

Whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God (Mosiah 5:10)

So, trying to tell God that we're just as good as a follower of Christ is not going to work. We need to BE a follower of Christ – baptized in His name, praying in His name and living our lives as if we had His name emblazoned across our foreheads.

Carrying the right name is so important to us that our church is named The Church of Jesus Christ. Being active in the church that bears His name is an important part of lifting up that name in this life. Some might offer you some “off brand” alternatives:

- Come to this church where you can believe whatever you want. Believe in Christ or don't. Follow His teachings or don't. It's just as good as The Church of Jesus Christ.
- Don't bother going to church at all. Just live a good life and be good to people. It's just as good as belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ.
- My offer to you – Come to a church where the name of Christ is held high and we follow His teachings, even when unpopular in the world. It's...

As I complete my offer, you say, “I know, it's just as good as The Church of Jesus Christ”. My response: “No, it is The Church of Jesus Christ”. (You can shake my hand now)



Kingdom Accounting (Mosiah 6)

In Mosiah 6, King Benjamin makes a request to all the people who agreed to enter into a covenant to serve God – to put their names on a list of believers. It is happily mentioned that the resulting list of servants of God (a precursor to today’s “RIP System”) contained the name of every adult who had listened to King Benjamin’s address – a 100% conversion rate!

Why did King Benjamin have the people provide their names for this list? Wasn’t it enough that they accepted Christ? Does God need a written list to keep track of His followers? No, of course God doesn’t need a written list kept on earth. God maintains His own list which is referred to as the “Lamb’s Book of Life” – this “book” contains the names of all people who will inherit eternal life.

The purpose of an earthly list of followers of Christ (then and now) is to aid in what might be referred to as “kingdom accounting”. Companies employ accountants to keep track of their financial assets – funds that are unaccounted for are easy to lose track of and knowing where money is being made/spent aids in decisions to help the company grow financially. In the church, we deal with the currency of the kingdom of God – the souls of believers in Christ. How much more important it is that we not lose track of these and that we make use of this currency to help the church grow.

Jesus shared a parable to emphasize the need for good kingdom accounting – the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-26). In this parable:

- Ten servants (think of them as church leaders) are each given one pound to take care of for the Lord. A pound is a unit of money but for this parable, consider it to represent a unit of believers.
- One of the servants adds 10 pounds to the one he was given to take care of and another adds 5. These servants clearly were well aware of the value of the units they were entrusted with and made full use of them. The Lord rewarded them by giving them authority over additional cities.
- A third servant hid his pound to “keep it safe”. He paid no attention to it and did nothing with it – the result was an unprofitable outcome. As a result, the unit was taken from him and given to one who had demonstrated that he could manage units properly.

If we are in any church leadership position (it doesn't necessarily have to be a ministry position), we have been entrusted by God with the currency of His kingdom. Every name on our membership list represents a soul that is valuable to God. We of course don't want to lose any but if our only goal is for our members to "stay in the church", we're setting our sights pretty low and we're basically no different than the third servant in the parable who just sought to give back to the Lord what was initially given to him. Rather, we need to do the best we can to encourage our members to grow spiritually and take an active role in the growth of the church. Growing the church is not just a corporate strategy – it's seeking to give back to the Lord more than what we started with which is a sure way to please Him.

King Benjamin presented his son Mosiah (the new king) with a valuable resource – a list of people who had committed to serve God. We have been given the same thing today. Let's use this resource to bring additional currency (souls) into the kingdom of God such that our kingdom accounting will show a profit.



When You Assume (Mosiah 7)

Assume: To accept as true, without proof.

We all do it. We hear someone say something and we fill in the blanks as to what the statement means, even though the additional words were not spoken. Or we observe someone do something and we immediately think we know the reason why that was done, perhaps based on our knowledge of the person doing it or perhaps based on reasons why other people have done the same thing.

Sometimes, our assumptions are correct. The better we know a person, the higher our success percentage will be for accurately determining the person's meaning or motivation for certain words or actions. (My wife is right about me so often that she says, "I know you better than you know yourself").

However, assumptions made about other people are very often incorrect. And when we take further action or start feeling a certain way based on these assumptions, huge problems can result.

In Mosiah 7, King Mosiah sends out a search party, led by a man named Ammon, to locate a group of Nephites who had not been heard from in many years. As the group nears the walls of the city where the missing people are thought to be, the king of this city (a man named Limhi) is outside the city walls, taking a walk. Assuming that Ammon and his group are approaching as a threat to the king, Limhi's guards capture them and put them in prison.

The normal way of dealing with people threatening the king was to put them to death. However, Limhi decides to question them instead to determine why they were "so bold as to come near the walls of the city" while he was outside the gate. When Ammon explains who his group is and who they are looking for, Limhi rejoices – his people are exactly who Ammon's team has been looking for! Further, Limhi's people are in bondage and he recognizes that the arrival of this team is God's way of delivering them from their predicament.

Imagine how different the story would have gone if Limhi had just had Ammon's team put to death as their normal procedure dictated. When we "shoot first and ask questions later", the wrong action – perhaps disastrous action – can be taken and may not be able to be undone, even if we later find out that our assumptions were incorrect.

How can we avoid making incorrect assumptions about another person that will cause problems in our lives?

- The primary way is to talk to the person involved. Ask questions (as Limhi did). This will allow you to better understand the true motivation or meaning behind what was said or done. This is one of the reasons why the first step of the “law of offense” is to talk to the person who has offended you – quite often, you will discover that the offense was based on a false assumption.
- Don’t automatically assume that a person is doing something for the same reason that you (or someone else) would. Everybody is an individual and has different motivations and influences.
- If you must make assumptions, try your best to attribute a good/positive reason for what has occurred – also known as giving the person “the benefit of the doubt”. If you later learn that this assumption is incorrect, you can take the necessary action at that time.

Jesus said, “The truth shall make you free”. When we know the truth, we are free to act in the appropriate way. When we don’t know the truth, we are guessing and will often take inappropriate actions. This is what happens when we assume.



Give Me Understanding, Lord! (Mosiah 8)

In Mosiah 8, we're introduced to a couple of new items of information that are key to the story:

The 24 Gold Plates

Limhi tells Ammon that his people discovered an ancient extinct civilization, including 24 gold plates with engravings that appear to tell the story of the people who had inhabited the ancient city. The engravings are in a different language however so nobody is able to read the story at this time. We later discover that this civilization was the Jaredite nation – some of the information contained on the 24 gold plates is included in the Book of Ether.

King Mosiah is a Seer

Ammon states that the engravings on the 24 gold plates could only be translated by a “seer” – someone who can look through a special set of “interpreters” and see the translation such that the information could be understood and recorded in his own language. He mentions that King Mosiah is such a seer and would be able to use his gift to translate the engravings.

Although none of us may be a seer today, we all have a need to be able to see clearly in situations that challenge us as servants of God:

- Most issues in our nation today seem to require that we choose one side or the other – yet the information available to us is slanted and conflicting. How do we decide which is right?
- Lifestyles that conflict with the Word of God are popular today. Words like “love” and “acceptance” are used to defend these lifestyles. How do we know whether we're truly standing up for God or whether we're being unloving and unaccepting?
- Each of us faces many life choices throughout our lives. Depending on what stage of life we are in, we may face choices regarding relationships, employment or where to live as well as choices regarding our personal behavior. How do we make the best choices as a servant of God?

It would be nice if we had our own personal set of “interpreters” that we could look into and read the answers to our various questions in life. We don’t have those but we do have the ability to consult God for understanding whenever we need it.

As James writes, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). If we’re prayerful about a particular question, God will give us understanding regarding that question. The understanding may come as a direct revelation, it may come in church (so make sure to attend!) or it may come from reading the Word of God. If you look for the answer, you should be able to recognize it when it comes.

Being familiar with what the Word of God says on a subject is critical to receiving the proper understanding from God. God does not contradict Himself so if you think you’ve received an answer from God that conflicts with His Word, it’s a mistake (yours not His) so keep praying until you receive His real answer.

Let’s do our best to have our life choices and our positions on various issues be in concert with the Word of God. Then we can truly say that we’re receiving our understanding from the Lord.

First Verse of “Give Me Understanding, Lord!” from the Songs of Zion

When the wrong way seems right, give me understanding, Lord!
Lest I hinder the light, give me understanding, Lord!
When I’m falling behind and the race has only just begun,
Wisdom cries at the gate, open up while I wait and
Give me understanding, Lord!



Called to Save, Not to Condemn (Mosiah 9)

In the last couple of chapters, we read about Ammon discovering the people of Limhi who were inhabiting a separate city since the time that they were separated from the Nephites some years earlier. We discover in Mosiah 9 that these people were actually separated for quite a few years – it was Limhi’s grandfather Zeniff who led the original expedition to the Lamanites that resulted in his people not being able to return to Zarahemla.

Chapters 9-22 of Mosiah are used to bring us up to date on the story of Zeniff, his son Noah and eventually his grandson Limhi. This is why the date indicator at the top of the pages of our Book of Mormon appears to go backward from 121 B.C. (for Chapter 8) to “Between 200 B.C. and 124 B.C.” (for Chapter 9).

As the narrative begins in Mosiah 9, Zeniff describes his mission to spy on the Lamanites to help find a way to destroy them. However, after observing them for a period of time, he realizes the Lamanite people have some good qualities as well and his desires change such that he wants to try to save them, not destroy them. He winds up in a severe disagreement with his fellow Nephites who just want to wipe out the enemy.

As servants of God, we are often faced with the same basic choice. We all deal with agents of the enemy and/or observe their actions on a regular basis. We may at times find ourselves feeling frustrated, disgusted and just sick of dealing with these people and their antics. It is at those times that we probably wish they would “just go away” or even that God would smite them down. We may take comfort in knowing that they will reap their just rewards when they depart from this life.

However, as servants of Christ, it is good for us to remember how Jesus described His personal mission:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already. (John 3:17-18)

Many people think that the goal of religion is to condemn people. The fact is – Unbelievers are condemned already! Based on that, there’s not a single thing we can do to condemn or destroy the unbelievers – they can’t be in a worse place than they already are. The only difference we

can possibly make in the lives of unbelievers is to try to save them – to help them repent and receive the salvation that Christ offers.

Do these mean and nasty people deserve the love of Christ and the chance to repent and be saved? Of course not. But, then again, neither did we. Whatever good the Lord saw in us that caused Him to love us and make us part of His family – even while we were sinners – similar good exists in every one of God’s creations. He desires that all would be saved.

If you saw someone trapped in a burning building, you would either do something to try to save them (perhaps call 911) or you would walk away and leave them to whatever’s going to happen. These are the same two choices (and the only choices) we have when dealing with unbelievers – either try to save them or leave them to whatever’s going to happen.

It’s not our calling to condemn unbelievers or root for their destruction. If they can’t be reached for Christ – by us or anyone else – God has already determined their ultimate end. Instead, let’s focus on bringing salvation to the people who we can reach – they’re the only ones whose eternal homes we can influence.



Wroth I Are, Eh? (Mosiah 10)

In Mosiah 10, Zeniff provides some explanation of why the Lamanites despise the Nephites. He explains that it goes back to the original Laman and Lemuel who always felt that they were wronged by their brother Nephi. As a result, it seemed like everything that Nephi did made his brothers “wroth” (or angry) with him. Verses 14-16 of this chapter make the following statements regarding Laman and Lemuel:

- They were wroth with Nephi because they didn’t understand how God was working (and Nephi did)
- They were wroth with Nephi when he instructed them how to behave during the voyage to America
- They were wroth with Nephi when he was recognized as the leader of the people
- They were wroth with Nephi when he took his followers and departed

To state the above in a different way – Nephi’s brothers were angry with him because he was the one who understood the will of God but they were also angry when he tried to teach them about the will of God. They were angry when he was leading the people but they were also angry when he departed, leaving them to be the leaders. In other words, they were angry with him no matter what he did.

For each of us, there will be occasions when we will be angry. However, these should be isolated events; they should not be used as an excuse to act in a non-Christlike manner (“Be ye angry, and sin not”) and should be put behind us as soon as possible (“let not the sun go down upon your wrath”).

On the other hand, there are sadly many people who – similar to Laman and Lemuel – are just plain angry:

- Perhaps I’m not happy with how my life has turned out so I’m angry at life and everyone in it, especially those who appear to be happy.
- Perhaps I’m not happy with my job so I’m angry at the boss, at my co-workers, etc. I try to imagine a day when I can work somewhere else (where I will probably be no happier and just as angry).

- Perhaps I'm not even happy with the church so I suddenly find myself easily offended at what the minister is preaching, I find fault with the brothers and sisters and I may even find that I no longer want to support all of the church's beliefs.

As part of the family of God, it is not God's will for us to lead angry lives; it's His desire that we would lead joy-filled lives. The joy of salvation and the peace that God provides should be enough to overcome any general attitude of anger. If there is something about which we are perpetually angry (whether any of the above or something else), we need to prayerfully consider the source of that anger and what the will of God is regarding the situation – He will direct us as to whether we need to make a change in the situation or make a change within ourselves such that we can cease the attitude of anger.

If we are not currently angry, let's be careful about associating with people who are. Anger is contagious and there's nothing an angry person wants more than to spread that anger to others. In Proverbs, it counsels us to "make no friendship with an angry man" (22:24) and that "an angry man stirreth up strife" (29:22). Let's protect our peace and joy by not letting those who are angry drag us into their world.

God has called us to a life of joy in preparation for an eternal life of joy. Let's not let the enemy infuse us with his anger and steal our joy.

P.S. If you are not familiar with the phrase that inspired the title of this article or if you find it kind of corny – Sorry, I couldn't resist! Don't be wroth, eh?



Parents, Don't Blame Yourselves (Mosiah 11)

In Mosiah 11, Zeniff retires as king and names his son Noah as the new king. Unfortunately, Noah is nothing like his father:

- He does not keep the commandments of God
- He has many wives and concubines
- He is lazy and levies a 20% tax on the people to support his lavish lifestyle
- He fires all the priests of his father and replaces them with men who are like him

Under the leadership of King Noah, the people also become sinful. It gets so bad that God sends a prophet to preach repentance to the king and his people but the words fall on deaf ears and they threaten to kill the prophet.

For however long Zeniff and/or his wife were still alive to witness the above, they were probably embarrassed at what their son was doing. They may have blamed themselves – “Where did we go wrong?” – or even blamed each other – “You were so busy being king that you didn’t spend enough time with him”, “Well, if you didn’t coddle him so much and let him be a mama’s boy, he would have turned out better”, etc.

Maybe Noah’s parents even felt that other people were critical of their parenting skills, saying things like “How could a couple like Zeniff and his wife raise a son who would turn out like this?” or “I guess they didn’t bother to teach him the ways of God”. And there probably were people saying those exact things!

If you’re a parent with adult children, there are probably ways that your children didn’t turn out exactly as you hoped they would.

Perhaps they didn’t go into the profession you would have liked to see them in. Perhaps their choice of a husband/wife wouldn’t have been your choice for them. Perhaps they don’t live where you would like them to live. These are somewhat easy to reconcile as it’s obviously their choice who to marry, where to live, where to work, etc. And just because their choices don’t match yours, it doesn’t mean they’re bad choices.

However, our adult children can also make choices that affect their lives in a negative way. Some may turn to drugs or alcohol. Some may engage in sexual behavior that results in broken or unstable relationships, illegitimate children, disease, etc. Some may commit crimes. Some may

choose to hurt other people. As painful as it is to watch this happening, let's not increase our misery by blaming ourselves, thinking that if we had been better parents, this wouldn't have happened. Once our children are adults, the choices they make are up to them – the way we raised them will influence them but many other factors will too.

This applies to church participation as well. While I would assume that the large majority of our children have grown up to be good, responsible, loving people who are leading productive lives, it is also true that many of them are not active members of the church that we their parents raised them in. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of this particular article but I want to say this to the parents: Don't Blame Yourself!

If you did your best to bring your children to church and teach them the ways of God and to be good examples to them as they were growing up, you have nothing to be ashamed of. As with the other examples above, you are not responsible for the choices made by your adult children. It is their choice whether or not they will serve God and whether or not they will be part of The Church of Jesus Christ. We of course hope and pray that they will and we will always encourage them to do so but ultimately, it's up to them.

I know there are parents struggling with situations similar to the ones described above so I write this with you in mind and I hope you find comfort in these words. We should not blame ourselves for what our adult children choose to do nor should any of us cast judgment on our brothers and sisters for the choices made by their adult children. Let's continue to show the love of God and be good examples to all of the adult children of the church (including our own of course) and pray that they will be open to the influence of the spirit of God in making their choices in life.



The Desensitizing of God's People (Mosiah 12)

The difference between then and now:

- In 1939, some moviegoers reportedly ran out of theaters with their hands over their ears after viewing the movie "Gone With the Wind" and hearing the leading man say, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a d***". Today, it would seem laughable to have such a reaction to hearing that word and we have in fact "advanced" to the point where there are no words that are off limits when it comes to entertainment, regardless of the venue.
- In 1960, people were afraid to take a shower after witnessing the brutal murder of the female star in the movie "Psycho". Today, that scene is considered extremely tame; on-screen murders are now commonplace and are depicted in increasingly graphic ways.
- In 1997, the TV show "Ellen" ended its fourth season with the lead character coming out as a lesbian. The fifth season's ratings were so poor that the show was cancelled. Today, it seems that virtually every TV series has a gay character and story line as well as some poor misguided oaf (or religious person) who needs to be straightened out.

Each of the above illustrates how people become desensitized over time. Something that is shocking or draws a strong emotional reaction today becomes less shocking and even commonplace as time passes and as we are exposed to it over and over again.

In Mosiah 12, after a 2-year absence, the prophet Abinadi returns to preach repentance to the sinful people of King Noah. However, the people have become so accustomed to their sinful lifestyle that they seem completely confused as to why Abinadi would speak to them in this way. Dragging Abinadi before the king, they say, "O king, what great evil hast thou done, or what great sins have thy people committed, that we should be condemned of God or judged of this man? And now, O king, behold, we are guiltless" (Mosiah 12:13-14).

Perhaps there have been occasions in your life when you have done something wrong but have tried to justify your behavior in some way. When people try to justify their actions, it means that they recognize that their behavior is wrong but they feel (or at least say) that there is some valid reason why they did it anyway – even if it's just because they wanted to do it.

Becoming desensitized to sin is even worse than justification. At least with justification, you know that the behavior is wrong; when you're desensitized, you don't think it's wrong at all. At that

point, you will feel free to engage or support the sinful behavior and feel no guilt at all, just as the people of King Noah in the verse above stated that they were “guiltless”.

Take heed! Desensitization is a key tool in the arsenal of the enemy. If people – especially God’s people – can become desensitized to sin, the enemy can make great advances against the kingdom of God.

All of us are potential targets to becoming desensitized – sadly, we all are desensitized to some extent, whether we choose to admit it or not – but our youth is especially vulnerable. With the barrage of sinful behavior, they witness in movies, TV and among their peers, how can they not become desensitized?

The only way to fight back is to reinforce the message of Christ as often as possible, especially among our youth. Use the examples above or any similar ones to show how it’s possible to become desensitized over time whereas the Word of God does not change. Explain how the Word of God can be trusted more than the word of a Hollywood actor.

Sometimes, people we love and respect will make choices based on being desensitized. It doesn’t mean we no longer love and respect them but it doesn’t mean we change our views (become desensitized) either – even if “everyone else” now thinks there’s nothing wrong with it.

Let the Word of God be your guide. Understand it and represent it to others and perhaps we can minimize the desensitizing of God’s people.



He Protects You While You Work (Mosiah 13)

In Mosiah 13, King Noah and his people react to the preaching of Abinadi by attempting to put him to death. However, Abinadi halts their attempt by stating these words:

“Touch me not, for God shall smite you if ye lay your hands upon me, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver...therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time” (Mosiah 13:3)

The people of King Noah feel the power of God emanating from Abinadi so they back off and let him finish his message.

The protection of God was upon Abinadi while he was doing the work of the Lord. Even if the people had tried to kill him, they would have been unsuccessful. As you know if you’ve read the rest of the story, this protection only lasted for the period of time that Abinadi was delivering the message; once the message was completed, the people were then free to do whatever they wanted to do with him. However, during the time of that message, Abinadi was untouchable.

If you are a worker for the Lord, you are eligible to receive similar protection from God while you are working for Him.

For example, in my 30 years in the ministry, I have visited many hospitals as well as homes of sick people to anoint the sick. I can testify that in all those years, I have never caught as much as a sniffle from any of the sick people that I anointed. They cough, they sneeze, they blow their nose, they are hot with fever – I can sense the germs and bacteria all around me. Yet, I absolutely feel God’s protection surrounding me and keeping all these sources of infection away during the time that I am doing God’s work.

There of course have been occasions when I have caught illnesses from other people but those were during the normal course of life.

This brings up an important distinction to understand – The protection of God being described here lasts only long enough to complete the task that God has assigned you to do. If we try to extend it to our entire lives, thinking that this absolute protection is always upon us as servants of God, we will be disappointed. We are all subject to the normal trials of life, be it illness, injury or death, sadly sometimes even unexpected tragic death.

When any of these trials of life occur, it doesn't mean that God doesn't love us or doesn't care. It just shows that God is not a respecter of persons so we are all subject to the same trials of life as anybody else.

However, there will be those special occasions when God assigns you a specific task to do. When He does, approach it with confidence. If He has indeed assigned you to do something, He will intervene as necessary to hold back whatever forces may seek to bring injury during the time that the assignment is being completed.

So, fear not! Do the work that God has given you to do and He will protect you while you work.



Standing Up for Jesus Christ (Mosiah 14)

If you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ, you have probably been called upon at various times to stand up for the restoration of the gospel, the Book of Mormon and various other beliefs of our church. Such conversations most likely occurred with people who are associated with other Christian faiths.

Have you ever had a conversation about Jesus Christ with someone who doesn't already believe in Him? If you wanted to try to convince someone that Jesus is the savior of the world, what approach would you take?

Sharing experiences is always valuable but someone who doesn't believe in Jesus may well attribute our answered prayers or miracles to the same "God" they believe in who has nothing to do with Jesus. Describing our church or our ordinances will not make much of an impression on someone like this. Nor will quoting New Testament scriptures. What to do?

The prophet Abinadi is faced with this challenge as he stands before King Noah and his priests in Mosiah 14. With just a small window of opportunity to present Jesus to this hostile group, Abinadi chooses to quote some of the many Old Testament prophecies (specifically, the ones recorded in Isaiah 53) regarding the Messiah who was to come. In just this short chapter, it is prophesied that the savior would be:

- Not a man of great beauty
- Despised and rejected of men
- Wounded for our transgressions
- Brought as a lamb to the slaughter, opening not his mouth
- Killed with the wicked
- Buried with the rich

As we know from the New Testament accounts, Jesus fulfilled all of the above prophecies and many more. When you consider how many of these we're talking about, the odds are actually quite astronomical that any one person could fulfil all of the Messianic prophecies but Jesus did so. On that basis alone, anyone who believes in the Old Testament should have no problem concluding that Jesus Christ is exactly who He said he was – the only begotten Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Now, if you're an Old Testament scholar – or can at least become expert on the prophecies referenced above – you can make a very effective argument regarding Jesus Christ. Being armed with facts and a solid analysis – and pairing that with your personal testimony – will give you a leg up in any discussion on this subject.

However, what if you're not the type of person to make this type of argument? Is there another way to share Jesus with others?

There is! Jesus lives within each of us so our lives are evidence for Jesus Christ. However, if we want people to understand that Jesus lives within us, we need to be willing to specifically say so.

For example, if somebody recognizes that you're living a good/changed life, how do you respond? Do you say "It's because I go to church" or "It's because I'm a follower of Jesus Christ"? Which response is more likely to provide evidence of Jesus Christ as the savior of the world?

When unbelievers are present in our church meetings, let's make sure to praise Jesus (by name) for our salvation and for changing our lives. While there's of course nothing wrong with saying "Praise God", it's only we who believe in Jesus who understand that He is included in that – to someone who doesn't believe in Him, that phrase will mean something totally different. If people don't come to know Jesus in our church meetings, where else should they go to get to know Him?

We are blessed to be part of The Church of Jesus Christ and the restored gospel (actually, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ). Let's not be bashful about using His name.

Regardless of how we do it, our calling is to stand up for Jesus Christ in today's world. When Abinadi did it, only one man was converted but it was a man named Alma who went on to start the equivalent of The Church of Jesus Christ in his day. Who knows what can happen if we stand up for Jesus today?



The First Resurrection (Mosiah 15)

As the prophet Abinadi continues his message to King Noah and his priests in Mosiah 15, he describes the concept of a “resurrection”, an event during which people who have died are “raised to dwell with God” (verse 23).

This brief description helps us to understand that a resurrection is not an event when a person is restored to life on earth but is something very different.

For example, the Church recently experienced a girl who was brain dead being restored to life – a wonderful miracle but not a resurrection. In John 11, it is recorded that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after he was in the tomb for four days – a magnificent display of the power of Jesus but not a resurrection. In these two examples, the person was restored to life on earth – they will/would later die and then experience a resurrection.

None of us who is living has experienced a resurrection firsthand but from the descriptions in the scriptures, we know that it consists of our soul coming forth after death and being united with a spiritual body that will be able to dwell in the kingdom of God for all eternity.

Sometimes, we like to imagine that our loved ones who have departed have already resurrected and are dwelling in the kingdom of God. Although this is a nice thought that brings us comfort at a difficult time, the scriptures actually indicate that there are only certain times designated for resurrections to occur. At those designated times, all of the righteous who have not yet resurrected will do so at the same time.

In this chapter, Abinadi describes the first designated time when resurrections would occur, an occasion fittingly referred to as the “First Resurrection”:

“And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ” (Mosiah 15:21)

Until the resurrection of Christ (which was still in the future as Abinadi was speaking), nobody in history had resurrected – not the prophets nor any of the spiritual giants of the scriptures who died before Christ. But, once Jesus resurrected, the bands of death were broken and all of the righteous resurrected immediately after Him. In order to illustrate what had occurred, God allowed many of these newly resurrected people to be seen on the streets of Jerusalem:

“And 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)

Of course, there will be future resurrections, one of which will include all of us. Many believe there will be only one more resurrection for the righteous but it's also possible that there will be more than one. In truth, it doesn't really matter. As Alma says:

“Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case – that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead” (Alma 40:5)

The first resurrection from now (not to be confused with the actual first resurrection described above) is described in some detail in Revelation 20. This is the one we all look forward to, when we shall meet Jesus and be reunited with our loved ones who have gone on before us. Since we will all rise at the same time, we will be able to share with our loved ones the joy, the glory, the wonder and the majesty associated with the resurrection and inheriting our heavenly home.

We thank God that Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead (the first resurrection) which has paved the way for all of us to resurrect in the future and dwell with God for all time.



The Carnal Mind (Mosiah 16)

What does it mean to be “carnal”? No, it doesn’t refer to someone who eats meat – that would be a carnivore. It does relate to flesh – not the eating of it but rather the pleasing of it.

There are many things we can do that please our human forms. Many of these are not sinful. In general, there’s nothing wrong with enjoying life and doing things that make you happy. However, when the things of the flesh become foremost in our mind, we then have what is referred to as a “carnal mind”, one that will direct us to seek out things that please the flesh, whether they are sinful or not, typically overriding the prompting of the Spirit of God.

In Mosiah 16, Abinadi continues to speak to King Noah and his priests, all of whom clearly were operating with carnal minds – each had many wives and concubines and were committing whoredoms and all manner of wickedness.

Notice all the references to sexual impropriety in describing King Noah and his priests. Although there are other ways to be carnal, sex typically tops the list. If you look up the word “carnal” on Google, you’ll see the following listed as synonyms: sexual, sensual, erotic, lustful, lascivious. If you were asked to identify a flesh-pleasing activity that can be on people’s minds constantly, that can influence their actions and cause them to do things without any concern for whether they are sinful, sex would be the obvious answer.

It’s no surprise that sex is on the minds of seemingly everyone since it’s in our face wherever we turn. Advertisements tell us we’ll have more of it if we buy their products. Movies and TV shows depict the cool people as the ones who are doing it all the time. Current fashion is designed to show off certain body parts that cause lust. Even the one game show that my family used to watch on TV began including questions that required explicit sexual responses in order to win the game.

Let’s face it – we live in a carnal world that is set up to develop our minds to be increasingly carnal, not spiritual. I especially worry about all of our children who are growing up in this world and are likely developing carnal minds too. On the one hand, it’s part of being human. On the other hand, it’s not a state that any of us should be comfortable remaining in. As Abinadi said to the carnal King Noah and his priests:

“He that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him” (Mosiah 16:5)

Being baptized and receiving the Holy Ghost is a great first step toward bringing our carnal nature into subjection (rather than “persisting in it”). However, it is only a first step. With all of the carnal messages that surround us on a daily basis and the perceived norms of sexual behavior in this day and age, even believers in Christ will be tempted to indulge – sometimes to the point of having to refrain from sacrament – or even worse, partaking unworthily – while doing so.

What can we do if we want to keep the carnal mind at bay? The best approach is to focus on how much we love the Lord. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments”. Do we love Him enough to sacrifice for Him? Can we sing the words of this hymn? –

“My Jesus I Love Thee, I know thou art mine. For thee all the pleasures of sin I resign.”

Who loves Jesus enough to be a “living sacrifice”? Who can answer with a resounding YES when Jesus asks, “Lovest thou me more than these?” Let it be us! Instead of being one of the many who fit in with the carnal world, let’s choose to be the exception who overcomes the carnal mind and has a heart, mind and soul focused on Jesus Christ and living a life for Him.



Denying Your Testimony (Mosiah 17)

In Mosiah 17, the reaction of King Noah to the words of the prophet Abinadi is to sentence him to death. It's not too surprising since Abinadi had called out the king and his priests for their sinful lifestyle, telling them that God is not pleased with them and that they need to repent.

However, perhaps realizing that it wouldn't look good to execute someone for making basically true statements, the king counsels with his priests for three days and finally decides that Abinadi should be put to death for a different reason – because he said that “God himself [in the form of Christ] should come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 17:8). The king didn't really care about this prophecy; he was just concerned about his own image – he makes this obvious by then offering Abinadi the chance to save his life by recalling everything he had said, especially what he said about the king and his priests and their lifestyle.

What would we do in Abinadi's place? On the one hand, he hadn't said anything wrong. On the other hand, he was looking at a painful death. Some justification could be made for accepting the king's offer:

- “I know what I believe”
- “It's just a simple ‘I take it back’ statement”
- “Everyone will know I'm just saying this to save my life; they know what I really believe”
- “This is my life we're talking about; anybody else would do the same thing”
- “Taking it back today will allow me to do more of God's work in the future”

Most likely, we've never been put in exactly the same position as Abinadi. However, we are occasionally faced with situations where it might appear “wise” to compromise our beliefs or even outright deny our testimony. For example:

- Some employers now require employees to undergo “diversity training” – an opportunity to be indoctrinated on certain beliefs of society and sign your name to indicate your compliance and support with these beliefs. If you refuse, you can lose your job.
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend (or even husband/wife) may give you an ultimatum – leave this church or we're through. If you refuse, you can lose your relationship.

- Some of your “friends” or even family members may brand you as unloving if you stand by your beliefs. This especially happens on social media where people are more “brave” in stating their opinions. If you refuse to deny your beliefs, you can lose friends or family relationships.

Although we of course don’t want to lose our job, our spouse or our friends, we especially don’t want to damage our relationship with God. When we’re faced with one of these choices, it’s a time for self-examination. How sure are we that God has called us into His family? Into His church? The surer we are, the less we will want to deny the testimony of what God has done.

*“He that loveth father or mother (son or daughter) more than me is not worthy of me”
(Matthew 10:37)*

*“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it”
(Matthew 10:39)*

Even faced with execution, Abinadi refused to recall his words and he was in fact burned to death. As it is recorded at the end of the chapter, he was “put to death because he would not deny the commandments of God, having sealed the truth of his words by his death” (Mosiah 17:20).

If we are willing to potentially lose something significant by standing by our testimony, we will also illustrate the truth of that testimony. On the other hand, if we compromise or deny that testimony in order to retain something in this life, it detracts from the truth of that testimony.

*“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”
(Matthew 10:32-33)*

Whether it’s to reinforce the truth of our testimony or just to not displease the Lord, it’s never wise to deny our testimony of Jesus Christ. He gave His life for us – what in this life is too much to give up for Him?



So, Now You're An Orphan (Mosiah 18)

In Mosiah 18, Alma (now a former priest of King Noah) begins to meet privately with as many people as possible to preach and teach the words that the prophet Abinadi taught prior to his death. He finds that many are accepting of his teachings and are willing to change their lives to be people of God.

In a famous scene, Alma addresses a congregation gathered at a place called "The Waters of Mormon" and invites them to begin their new lives by entering the waters of baptism. Here is an excerpt of his address to them:

"Now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort; and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in...if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord...that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?" (Mosiah 18:8-10)

After this stirring exhortation, over 200 people come forward and enter the waters of baptism, beginning a version of The Church of Jesus Christ in that day. By so doing, the people begin a new life in which they will not only follow the commandments of God but also be a support to other people – to bear one another's burdens, mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ today, we are also called to be a support to other people. Many people going through difficult times turn to the church – to us – for comfort. Are we prepared to provide that comfort? We don't necessarily need to preach to them or tell them what to do or even have anything profound to say. Often, people in these circumstances are just looking for someone who cares enough to listen and understand, someone who is willing to give of their time, someone who can just give a hug when it is needed.

The most obvious time to provide comfort is when someone suffers the death of a loved one – it's a time to mourn with those that mourn. I often hear people say, "I don't like funerals". Well, if only the people who liked funerals went to them, there would be nobody there. Your attendance at a viewing/funeral means a lot to the people who are grieving.

Don't worry about what to say – just show that you care about the person who is grieving and that you can understand the pain that they are in. If you knew the person who passed away, sharing pleasant memories is also helpful – it lets the grieving person know that their loved one was loved and valued by others too.

When my parents passed away and I was on the receiving end of people's well wishes, I learned what provided comfort and what didn't.

My dad passed away very unexpectedly at the age of 66. When people told me that he was in a better place, it very honestly did not provide comfort to me at that particular time. I already knew he was in Paradise (which of course is a great comfort) but having people say that to me made it sound like my personal pain was unimportant to them. I was most comforted by those who shared in the pain with me and also by those who had good memories of my dad to share with me. What I learned then has influenced my approach to funerals since that time.

By the time my mom passed away, I was a seasoned minister and I figured I had heard just about anything that a person could say at a funeral. Not so. Believe it or not, a brother came up to me as I stood by my mother's coffin and said, "So, now you're an orphan". What did I learn from this? Just don't be the one who says the most insensitive thing possible and you'll probably be doing OK.

Whether it's for a death or any other painful circumstance, let's allow ourselves to be used by God to provide comfort to other people. It's part of our calling as the people of God. Don't worry about what to say – if you let the Holy Ghost inspire your words, whatever you say will bring comfort – at the very least, more comfort than saying, "So, now you're an orphan".



Fighting the Real Enemy (Mosiah 19)

Everything unravels for the evil King Noah in Mosiah 19. After his army is unable to locate Alma's hidden group of converts, Noah's people start fighting among themselves. During this contention, a strong man named Gideon, who is an enemy to the king, takes advantage of the situation to engage King Noah in hand-to-hand combat. Gideon overpowers Noah and chases him up a tower and has his sword drawn, ready to kill the king.

From the top of the tower, the king is able to see in the distance that the Lamanite army is approaching, entering into the Nephite land, ready to attack the Nephite people. The cowardly king uses this as a ruse to prevent Gideon from killing him:

"And now the king cried out in the anguish of his soul, saying: Gideon, spare me, for the Lamanites are upon us, and they will destroy us; yea, they will destroy my people. And now the king was not so much concerned about his people as he was about his own life; nevertheless, Gideon did spare his life." (Mosiah 19:7-8)

Why did Gideon spare the life of the evil king? Because he went to fight the real enemy – the Lamanite army. Gideon and Noah were both Nephites so they were really supposed to be on the same team, united against the common enemy, the Lamanites. By fighting against each other, they would jeopardize the real battle against the real enemy. Gideon, who is one of the heroes of this portion of the story, recognizes this immediately and then focuses his energy on fighting the real enemy, leaving King Noah to be dealt with another day.

As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ today, do we know who our real enemy is?

- Is it the sister who walks past me without acknowledging me?
- Is it the brother who testifies too long?
- Is it the elder who tries to correct me?
- Is it the member who thinks he's God's gift to the Church?

Of course, none of the above are our enemy. We're all on the same team and we should be doing our best to come together to do battle against Satan who is our real enemy. Yes, as humans, we will sometimes disagree, get on each other's nerves, annoy each other or even get each other angry at times. However, if we focus our energy on fighting each other, how can we expect the Lord to use us to defeat the devil and win the victory for God?

Interested in being part of the battle against the real enemy? Here's what we need to do to be part of the army of the Lord:

Basic Training – Reading the scriptures, attending Sunday School and other scripture study meetings. All of these activities require some of our time and so they become oh so easy to push aside since we're all so busy in life. Sadly, the further away we get from knowing the Word of God, not only will we not know what we're fighting for but we won't even know there is a battle at all!

Preparation for Battle – The army of the Lord is called together at least once or twice a week to celebrate victories, be strengthened and receive further direction for the ongoing battle. These important sessions are otherwise referred to as church meetings. Oh, when you say it that way, it doesn't sound so important, does it? It's just church – I went last week so it's OK if I miss this week, Sunday is my only day to get things done, etc. How the enemy must celebrate when our army can't be bothered to get together to strengthen each other or when those who do attend spend the time fighting with each other and forgetting about the real enemy.

The Battle – Although there are souls to win in church, the bulk of the battle occurs outside of church. If you haven't gone through basic training, you may not be aware of that. Whether it's sharing your testimony, standing up for Godly principles, participating in outreach activities or going on missionary work, there are plenty of opportunities to be part of the battle against the real enemy. However, if you're not prepared for the battle (see previous paragraph), you won't be a very effective soldier for the Lord.

Even though King Noah deserved to be put to death – and, in fact, was put to death later in the chapter – Gideon made the right choice by focusing his attention on the Lamanite army as they were the real enemy, not his fellow Nephites. Likewise, we need to focus our attention on our real enemy, not the people sitting in the pews with us.



Unintended Consequences (Mosiah 20)

During the “Great Plague of London” in the 1600’s, it was decided that dogs and cats throughout the city should be killed so people wouldn’t catch the deadly disease from their pets. However, eliminating these animals allowed the rat population to thrive and the city was then overrun with rats. Oh, and by the way, the rats carried fleas which were able to spread the disease even faster.

As illustrated above, some actions can have unintended consequences.

In Mosiah 20, the displaced priests of King Noah – who are now in hiding in the wilderness – spy on 24 young Lamanite women dancing in the clearing and then kidnap them to be their “wives”. Based on their carnal background, these men likely viewed this act as just a simple acquisition of something for themselves that would have no effect on anybody else.

However, the king of the Lamanites, assuming that the women were taken by the Nephites under new king Limhi (and you know what happens When You Assume without knowing the facts), declares war on the Nephites. Many people on both sides are killed before Gideon finally figures out what must have happened to the women.

We’ve likely all done things in our lives that have had unintended consequences for ourselves. It’s part of life -- we live with it.

However, we can sometimes take an action that may seem personal in nature but winds up having spiritual ramifications -- even to other people -- due to unintended consequences.

For example, if I want to make certain choices in my life that would be considered sinful, that’s my business, right? However, isn’t it possible that people who become aware of what I’m doing could decide that this church is not for them as a result of my actions? Or, if I wind up out of the ministry, isn’t it likely that some number of people will miss out on being ministered to because I’m no longer in a position to minister to them? I may not have intended for these things to happen but they are nonetheless consequences of my personal actions.

Unintended consequences can also work in a good way. On a recent missionary trip to Dominica, there was a woman who attended church who we kept missing for a follow-up visit. On the last day, we were on our way to a scripture study when we realized we forgot our books at the house. We considered just using the church app on our phones but instead decided to go back to get our books. When we left the house the second time, we saw a woman standing in the road,

needing a ride into town -- it was the exact woman we had been trying to visit! We picked her up and were able to visit with her as we drove. Even though the consequence of our action was unintended, it is still accurate to say that we met the woman because we went back for our books.

Is there any way to control unintended consequences? Not really -- if we can control or even anticipate the consequences of our actions, they are by definition not unintended. However, if we try to do what is right in the sight of God, we don't have to be concerned with unintended consequences. Just follow the spirit of God and leave the consequences in God's hands. From God's perspective, He never has unintended consequences.



God Eases Your Burden – But You Still Have It (Mosiah 21)

After losing several battles to the Lamanites, the Nephites of King Limhi find themselves in bondage to the Lamanites in Mosiah 21, “submitting themselves to be smitten, and to be driven to and fro, and burdened, according to the desires of their enemies” (Mosiah 21:13).

Now, these particular Nephites were not exactly godly people – they were followers of the late King Noah. However, as often happens when people are in trouble, they now turn to God to deliver them from their condition. God hears their cries and responds, though not exactly as they may have hoped:

“The Lord did hear their cries, and began to soften the hearts of the Lamanites that they began to ease their burdens; yet the Lord did not see fit to deliver them out of bondage” (Mosiah 21:15)

To summarize the above:

- God heard their cries
- He responded by easing their burdens
- But the actual situation was unchanged

How many of the people do you think counted this as an answered prayer?

In order to view this type of scenario as an answered prayer, a person needs to have faith in God – enough to look for what He is doing to help the situation and enough to trust Him even though the basic situation remains the same.

It’s natural to question God as to why He doesn’t fix a situation, remove the problem, etc. After all, He’s God, right? He can do anything, can’t He? The idea that He would intentionally leave us in an unfavorable situation and just make it a little better might make some consider Him to be lame or even downright cruel.

So, why does God work this way? The answer depends on the specific situation but here are some possible reasons:

- Perhaps we need to learn a lesson or grow in some way. The Nephites in this chapter definitely needed to learn a lesson. If God had freed them from bondage immediately, they would have just returned to their former life with no thoughts of God. However, as God helped them by easing their burdens, they had time to develop some understanding of God and to learn to rely on Him for their daily strength.
- Perhaps easing our burden is enough of an answered prayer. Sometimes, the situation cannot be changed (such as a death of a loved one). Or, God may just decide that the situation will not be changed. Perhaps He wants to use us to be good examples to others of someone who has faith in God despite going through a difficult situation. In all these cases, we need strength from God to go on and we can praise His name for providing it.
- Perhaps the situation will be resolved but it's not time yet. In the meantime, God gives us strength to last from now until then.
- Or, perhaps there is no clear reason as to why God doesn't resolve a situation. If we have faith in God, we trust that He knows best and praise His name for easing the burden in any way.

In all of the above cases, we have a choice as to how we react to our situation. We can choose to bemoan our situation, questioning why God doesn't do His "job" as the great fix-it man. Or, we can recognize that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). As long as God gives us the strength to carry on, we can count it as an answered prayer that He eases our burden, even if we still have it.



Drunk or Filled with the Spirit? (Mosiah 22)

In Mosiah 22, Gideon shares a plan with King Limhi to free the Nephites from being in bondage to the Lamanites. Knowing that the Lamanite guards get drunk every night until they pass out, Gideon suggests that the Nephite people be instructed to gather their belongings and be prepared to depart during the night when the guards have passed out. Limhi agrees with the plan and even sends a gift of extra wine to the Lamanite guards. Sure enough, the guards fall into a sound sleep, allowing enough time for all of the Nephites in the city to make their way into the wilderness, eventually arriving in the city of Zarahemla where the rest of the Nephites under King Mosiah reside.

How foolish were these guards to be so easily manipulated by their desire to get drunk at night? With the loss of tribute that was being paid by the Nephites who escaped, the Lamanite king surely wasn't laughing. Most likely, the guards were terminated (if you know I mean). Drunkenness ruined lives then – and continues to do so today.

The perils of drinking are well documented so I won't even try to add to that discussion here. Terms like DUI and AA conjure up some images of where drunkenness takes a person, assuming they survive. In spite of the risks, drinking is widely encouraged in our society, even among the young. Tell someone you don't drink and the reaction will be something like, "Oh, you're one of those".

Are we willing to be "one of those"? As servants of God, we do our best to avoid sin. The scriptures put drunkenness in the same category as fornication, idolatry, thievery and extortion – these are all listed as activities that put us at risk of not inheriting the kingdom of God. So, is it just innocent fun? Does the spirit of God within us lead us to do any of these things or are we pushing it aside when we indulge? One verse that comes to mind is:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18)

This verse tells us that we must make a choice – continue in our drunken ways or be filled with the Spirit. You can't do both at the same time.

Several years ago, we encountered two men in Dominica who were recovering alcoholics. They were not what we might call "social drinkers" but rather were public drunkards, each losing their livelihoods because of trying to work while intoxicated and/or spending all of their money on

alcohol. When they came to The Church of Jesus Christ and were baptized, they chose to be filled with the Spirit and leave the drunken lifestyle behind.

A year or two later, we were speaking with one of the community leaders in Dominica and we shared that we were being prayerful that miracles would occur there so everyone would know that the power of God was in our church. The woman mentioned the two men referenced above and said, “Everyone in this community knew those two men as fall-down drunks and now their lives are completely turned around. They are clear evidence to everyone that the Spirit of God is in your church”.

Do we want to be filled with the Spirit of God? Do we want to move in a direction of spiritual growth and be an example to others of what God can do in a person’s life? Or do we prefer to fit in with the world, indulging in drunkenness and other worldly indulgences? Hopefully, the choice is obvious.



As Good as Your Word (Mosiah 23)

At the end of the previous chapter, the people of King Limhi had escaped from the city where they were in bondage to the Lamanites. The Lamanite army tried to pursue them but they just wound up getting hopelessly lost in the wilderness. In Mosiah 23, this lost army stumbles upon the city where Alma and his followers are living. The people of Alma were the ones who had chosen to serve God so they had been in hiding from King Noah and were thus not among the people of King Limhi (Noah's son) who had returned to the land of Zarahemla.

The Lamanites are prepared to put Alma's group into bondage as they had previously done with Limhi's group. However, they make an offer to Alma and his people – Show us the way back to the city of Nephi (where the rest of the Lamanites live) and we'll let you go free. No killing, no bondage, no problem. Alma agrees and leads the Lamanites where they want to go. However, "after Alma had shown them the way that led to the land of Nephi the Lamanites would not keep their promise; but they set guards round about the land of Helam, over Alma and his brethren". (Mosiah 23:37)

Perhaps it shouldn't have been surprising that the Lamanites didn't keep their word. After all, they're the bad guys – not the people of God.

But what about us? As servants of God, do we strive to keep our word – to God and to our fellow man?

In business, agreements are typically put in writing in the form of contracts. This is because the typical person is not as good as his word. Once upon a time, people may have been able to make a "gentleman's agreement" with just a handshake to secure the promises but those days are long past. Today, the saying is that a verbal agreement is not worth the paper it's printed on.

The fact that most people do not live up to their word creates a wonderful opportunity for us as servants of God to show that we are different.

In our day-to-day life, this can include any of the following:

- Completing assignments at our workplace that we have agreed to complete
- Following through on commitments made to our spouse, children, friends, etc.
- Showing up for appointments we have made (even if we're not reminded)
- Paying back money we have borrowed

Although the above may not seem to be directly related to serving God, the failure to do these will cause others to think less of servants of God, that we're just like anybody else.

Some people develop a reputation when it comes to being as good as their word:

- There are the people who say they will do something and others say, "I know this will get done because he/she said it would get done"
- Then there are the people who say they will do something and others roll their eyes and say, "Yeah, right"

Which do you want to be?

When you gave your life to Christ at the water's edge, you answered affirmatively to a question that went something like, "Do you promise to serve God to the best of your ability all the days of your life?". While I suppose it could be open to interpretation exactly what it is you are promising to do when you answer that question, I would submit that you are, at a minimum, stating that you will do your best to keep the commandments of God and that you will be an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ.

Now, I'm not saying that a person is condemned if he doesn't live up to that – it's up to God to determine whether you're keeping your word to Him. However, someone who doesn't keep this promise certainly gives the appearance to his fellow servants that he is not as good as his word.

Whether it's in our day-to-day life or our spiritual life, instead of trying to come up with excuses why we can't follow through on our commitments, let's do something earth-shattering – Let's do what we say we will do. You gain a lot of credibility as a servant of God if you are as good as your word.



Teaching the Untaught (Mosiah 24)

In Mosiah 24, the education of the Lamanite people under the rule of Amulon is described. From a worldly perspective, they are well-educated as they learn the Nephite language and are trained in writing and doing business with others. As a result, they begin to accumulate riches and are described as a “cunning and wise people, as to the wisdom of the world”.

However, the one thing missing from their education is also identified: “They knew not God; neither did the brethren of Amulon teach them anything concerning the Lord their God, neither the Law of Moses; nor did they teach them the words of Abinadi” (Mosiah 24:5). As a result, even as the people are described as wise and cunning, they are also described as “delighting in all manner of wickedness and plunder”.

Sadly, our own public education system in the United States has evolved into something like the Lamanite education system described above. Note the progression over the past half century:

- It wasn’t that long ago that a school day was opened in prayer and biblical concepts were taught in classrooms. Children from this era grew up knowing what the Bible taught and could then choose whether to live their lives based on those teachings.
- In 1962, it became illegal to have prayer in public schools. Initially, it was just prayer that was eliminated, and it was mostly seen as an accommodation to the rare person who might be offended by public prayer. Children still learned biblical concepts in school and at home and/or at church with parents who grew up in the era referenced above.
- Little by little, references to God and His teachings were phased out of schools. Busy parents put church on the back burner. An entire generation of children grew up with little or no instruction about God, reaching adulthood with at best a very basic knowledge of who God is and what His teachings are.
- In today’s school system, teachers can be fired for even mentioning God or Jesus. Public displays of the Ten Commandments or the Nativity scene have been removed. The generation of children referenced in the previous paragraph are now raising children of their own – since these parents have little or no knowledge of God, they are obviously not teaching their children about God. The sad truth is that the average young person today is growing up with absolutely no education about God.

What does this mean to us as servants of God? It's actually a great opportunity to teach the untaught. Unlike the past few generations of young people who may have made a conscious choice to no longer attend the church they were raised in, today's young people (teenagers and even young adults) may have never even seen the inside of a church building! When I say they know nothing about God, I mean NOTHING. They don't know who Jesus is. They've never heard of the people in the common Bible stories that we all learned in Sunday School – Adam & Eve, Noah, Moses, etc. They're a clean slate when it comes to the teachings of God.

So, how do we take advantage of this opportunity? We befriend people of the younger generation. We show love to them. We earn their trust. Then, we can share the things of God with them. Share personal testimonies with them to show that God is alive today. Invite them to church where they can meet other people like you and where they can begin to learn more about the scriptures. People like this will typically be more open to learning about the Book of Mormon too – since they're being exposed to the scriptures for the first time, it won't make much difference to them that it's two books instead of one.

Brothers in the ministry – If you have someone like this in your congregation, you might be interested in what one such young man shared with me. He said, “Why, before relating a story from the Bible, does the minister say, ‘You all know this story’? I don't know the story and it makes me feel dumb, thinking I must be the only person in the room who doesn't know the story”. Although we may feel like we don't want to insult the intelligence of our congregation by making a familiar scripture sound like it's new information, let's remember that for some people, it may be new information.

In general, let's not assume that a young person who is unchurched has made a conscious decision to be so. He/she may well have grown up with no education about God and the Lord may be using us as the instrument to teach the untaught.



Tell Them It Was God (Mosiah 25)

In the previous chapter, Alma and his group were miraculously delivered from being in bondage to the Lamanites and arrived in Zarahemla, joining up with Limhi and his group who had also been delivered from Lamanite bondage. In Mosiah 25, Alma speaks to all the people and he has a specific message for those who have been delivered from bondage:

“And he did exhort the people of Limhi and his brethren, all those that had been delivered out of bondage, that they should remember that it was the Lord that did deliver them.” (Mosiah 25:16)

Perhaps some of the people thought it was due to their own strength or cunning that they were delivered. Perhaps others remarked that they were lucky to have gotten away. Alma made sure to tell them that it was God who had done this for them.

We’ve likely all had opportunities to do what Alma did, explaining how God answered a prayer or provided protection or intervened in someone’s life in some way. Here’s a recent example of this happening in my own family:

My daughter is dating a young man who has been attending church with her. A few months ago, he was in a serious car accident, crashing into a telephone pole at 70 MPH. The car was totaled but the air bags deployed, preventing him from going through the windshield. He walked away virtually unscathed.

As he was relating the story to my daughter, he remarked on how lucky he was that he didn’t get hurt in the accident. My daughter (making me proud) replied, “No, you weren’t lucky – God preserved you”. When they came to visit a few days later, he told us about what happened, and I smiled when he made sure to include the words, “and God preserved me”.

I told the young man that it was good that he was wearing his seatbelt since the airbags would not have deployed otherwise. He said, “It’s a funny thing about that. I never wear my seatbelt and I wasn’t wearing it when I started out that day. I stopped at McDonald’s for a coffee and, just as I was getting ready to leave, a woman came hurrying across the parking lot toward my car, waving her arms. When I rolled down the window, all she said was, ‘Fasten your seatbelt’ and she turned and walked away. I put on my seatbelt and pulled out and two minutes later, crashed into the telephone pole”.

Now it was my turn to point out how God preserved him, even sending a messenger to him just in time to save his life. He now understands that it was God (not luck) that saved him, and he has his own testimony of God's goodness.

You as a servant of God will recognize when God has intervened. Share that expertise with others when they want to attribute something good happening to something other than God:

- If someone says they were lucky, tell them it was God
- If someone describes something as a coincidence, tell them it was God
- If someone says they're healed because of a good doctor, tell them that God grants wisdom to the doctors
- If someone tries to explain away a miracle by saying the doctor made a mistake in the original diagnosis, tell them it was God

In general, don't let people attribute God's blessings to other sources that will typically be anything else but God. Tell them it was God!



Dealing with Sin in the Church (Mosiah 26)

In Mosiah 26, Alma begins to face some of the issues that come into play with a growing church that is reaching out to many people:

- There are people who can't bring themselves to believe in what is being taught.
- There are people who hear the word but refuse to be baptized.
- There are people who try to convince members of the church to commit sin.
- And, unfortunately, there are some members of the church who do fall into sinful ways.

When Alma becomes aware of the sin in the church, he struggles with how to handle the situation. It's not hard to understand his struggle – he loves the people, he doesn't want to be reprimanding anyone and he certainly doesn't want to lose anyone from the church. On the other hand, it has reached the point where it can't be ignored – “there were many witnesses against them; yea, the people stood and testified of their iniquity in abundance” (Mosiah 26:9).

Setting a good example for any of us, Alma takes his concerns to God, asking for His guidance in handling the transgressors. The voice of the Lord responds to Alma. Here is an excerpt from God's response:

“Whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also...[however]...whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people” (Mosiah 26:29,32)

As can be seen from the above, it's not about judgment and it's not even about the type of sin that has been committed. The key decision point is whether the member is willing to recognize (confess) that a sin has been committed and sincerely repent of that sin. If so, all is forgiven and the member continues on in his service to God, cleansed of his sin as he was on the day of his baptism.

On the other hand, if the member is unwilling to repent of his sin – or to even acknowledge that a sin has been committed (when it clearly has) – then there is a problem. However, the problem is not between the member and the ministry; it's not between the member and the Church; the problem is between the member and God.

If the ministry winds up “taking action” (making a member inactive or suspending his membership), they are only updating the Church records to indicate what has already occurred between the member and God – the commission of some sin (typically a sin that is visible to other people) for which there is no repentance. It’s in essence the inverse of what occurs when a person is baptized – adding a person’s name to the church membership list is not what brings salvation but rather it’s a record of what has occurred between the person and God – repentance, baptism and giving his life to Christ.

If we’re ministers, how do we handle situations that involve sin among our church members? By loving our members enough to help them along in their service to God, including advising them of areas that may need to be corrected and/or issues that may require repentance. The key objective here is to make sure the members know that we love them and want to help them rather than projecting an image of being the “sin police”, looking for opportunities to put them down or cut them off.

If we’re members and our ministers attempt to advise or correct us in the way described above, let’s be willing to accept their counsel in the same spirit it is offered. Recognize what it takes (especially today when people are so easily offended) for a minister to offer this type of counsel and how much he loves you and wants you to stay on the path that leads to salvation.

Dealing with sin in the Church is important to keep the Church moving in the right direction but it is also important for each individual member. Someone who leads a sinful lifestyle with no repentance and is treated by the Church as if everything is OK is at a huge risk. God will not be consulting our Church membership list when determining who goes to Paradise and who doesn’t so let’s make sure we deal with the sin in our lives and repent as often as necessary.



Your Conversion Experience (Mosiah 27)

In Mosiah 27, Mosiah and Alma face a difficult situation. Their adult sons are rebelling against the church. Alma, the son of Alma, is a particular problem as he is good with words and he is convincing others to follow in his ways.

After much prayer by their parents, the five young men encounter the angel of the Lord who appears to them and speaks to them with a voice of thunder, causing them to be overcome and fall to the earth. Alma is unable to stand or move for the next two days. During this time, he has a powerful conversion experience. In his words:

“I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit...after wading through much tribulation, repenting night unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God...I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.” (Mosiah 27:24,28,29)

After his conversion, Alma became a great leader for the church as God used Alma’s gifts to benefit His people rather than to help the enemy.

What is your conversion experience? If you are part of the family of God, there was a point in time at which you were converted. You had to be old enough to be accountable for your sins before you could be baptized so there was some period of time that you were in the enemy’s camp. Thank God that He revealed to you that you were on the wrong team and that the Holy Ghost then drew you to the right team.

How did He do it? Did He speak to you in an audible voice? Did He show you a vision? Did He speak to your heart? Did a different feeling come over you? Did new thoughts come into your mind? The conversion experience varies from person to person but we all need to have one.

Why is it important to have a conversion experience? Why can’t we just join the Church? Here are a few reasons:

- **Repentance is Necessary** – In order to become part of the family of God, a person needs to recognize that he is a sinner and he must repent of his sins. Your conversion experience enlightens you to your sinful condition and creates a desire to repent of your sins.

- **To Know that God Wants You** – Your conversion experience is a connection with God when He is calling you into His family. Knowing that God wants you in His family gives you confidence that you are doing the right thing and is something you can lean on in the future when trials arise and perhaps some doubts start to creep in.
- **You'll Have a Testimony** – Even if God never did anything else for you (however unlikely that may be), you'll always have your conversion experience as a personal testimony that you can relate to others. Now, granted it may not be as impressive to say that a good feeling came over you as compared to an angel appeared and spoke with a voice of thunder but your sincere gratitude that God snatched you from the enemy and changed your life forever should shine through and make an impression on others whenever you discuss your conversion experience.

Don't dwell on the magnitude of your conversion experience. There have been people who had powerful experiences and later denied them and left the Church while others who had simple personal callings remained faithful for their entire lives. Be thankful that you had a conversion experience, think on it when times get tough and share it with others who are still awaiting their own conversion experience such that they will desire to have one as well.



Being Missionary-Minded (Mosiah 28)

Having been converted to Christ in the previous chapter, the four sons of Mosiah express a desire to do missionary work in Mosiah 28. Their choice of preaching the gospel to the Lamanite people is somewhat surprising though, considering that:

- Their lives will be in danger (the Lamanites hate the Nephites)
- They will have virtually no credibility (why will the Lamanites even listen to them?)
- Their likelihood of success will be extremely slim (the Lamanites are not the type of people who will look to God under any circumstances)

On the other hand:

- They won't be greeted with a response of "We already have a church"
- They recognize that they themselves were vile sinners and God was merciful to them
- They consider the Lamanites their brethren so they would love to see their lives changed by knowing the Lord

And, finally, there is the overriding reason that should drive any of us who are believers in Christ to desire to share the gospel with others:

"They could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble" (Mosiah 28:3)

I remember a missionary in our church who used to say, "I became a missionary the minute I walked out of the waters of baptism".

In Lehi's dream (as recorded in 1 Nephi 8), as soon as Lehi tasted of the tree of life, he immediately had a desire to share it with his family.

It's what should happen to each of us – when we experience God's forgiveness for our sins, receive the Holy Ghost and begin our walk on the straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life, we should then have a desire to share this amazing experience with others so they can also experience it. We should be "missionary-minded".

Are we missionary-minded? If so, what are we doing about it? It's good to have a missionary mind but it needs to translate into some type of action in order to bring about actual results.

The Church has a great need for missionaries today. As Jesus said, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few". Opportunities exist in the United States and in other countries to share the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although it's true that you can share the gospel in your own neighborhood, there's nothing quite like going on a missionary trip. For the time that you are on the trip, you are completely focused on the work of the Lord, free from the distractions that surround us in our day to day lives. The power of God is evident – if you read the reports of our missionaries, you will get a flavor of what God does to direct, aid and protect the missionaries as they labor in the field. If you are missionary-minded, consider being involved in missionary travel – the Church will benefit and you will be greatly blessed.

Are there other ways to be involved if you are missionary-minded and for whatever reason cannot go on missionary trips? Of course! Donating much-needed funds that will pay for missionaries to travel is always welcome as is prayer and fasting on behalf of the missionary work of the Church. Within your own branch of the Church, you can be active in outreach efforts and in sharing your testimony with people you know, inviting them to experience The Church of Jesus Christ.

Regardless of what type of missionary action is most suitable for you, it begins with being missionary-minded. If you have an appreciation for what the Lord has saved you from, having a desire to share that with others is a natural next step – the stronger that desire is, the more you will be compelled to do something about it. We have something valuable in our possession that can change the world – let's be missionary-minded and find a way to be part of the changing of the world.



Majority Rules (Mosiah 29)

It's a simple concept – Majority Rules. It's when you make a decision by having everyone vote on some question and then implement whichever option gets the most votes. It's how the U.S. government is designed to operate – the majority of voters select elected officials and the majority of those elected officials enact laws and policies. The majority makes the rules.

In Mosiah 29, King Mosiah realizes that none of his sons have a desire to follow him as king (since they're now much more interested in doing missionary work for the Lord) so he puts into place a new form of government in which judges will govern the people. These judges will be elected by “the voice of the people” (majority rules).

Since the new government is to be based upon the laws of God and since his people have been taught the things of God, Mosiah trusts that the majority of the people will typically make the right choices when they vote:

“Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right...therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law – to do your business by the voice of the people” (Mosiah 29:26)

When the government of the United States was established, it was founded on similar assumptions – the laws were to be based on the precepts of God and the majority would typically know what was right based on God's teachings and vote accordingly. How far from that have we come today?

What's gone wrong? The problem is too much focus on the “majority rules” part and not enough focus on the “right with God” part. Since the rules can be established by a majority of people being in favor of something, all you have to do is convince a certain number of people to agree with you and anything can become “truth” – what God says doesn't matter at all.

Of course, the fallacy with this way of thinking is that God's truth is entirely unalterable – no majority of people can change that, no matter how famous they are or how educated they may appear to be.

For years, I've kept a cartoon (which I decided not to include with this article) which has a big sign reading “Welcome to Hell” with two men riding down an escalator into rising flames. The caption

reads, “Don’t worry – we voted by a 3 to 1 margin that this doesn’t exist”. Can that place be voted out of existence by a majority vote?

If we had a national election asking whether people believe in God and 51% voted “No”, would God cease to exist? What if the majority was 75%? Or 95%? What if the majority included your favorite Hollywood actors assuring you that God doesn’t exist? Would any of that be enough to make God disappear?

If a majority of people cannot vote God out of existence, why would we think that a majority of people can make His teachings disappear, claiming that they are outdated, politically incorrect or just plain wrong?

King Mosiah anticipated that a time such as this would come. He told his people:

“If the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction” (Mosiah 29:27)

Are we approaching this period of time? Before we reach that point, let’s do our best to stand up for the things of God, even if the majority of people oppose us. The truth is that God and whoever stands with Him constitute the real majority and, in the end, that majority rules.