

The Book of Moroni

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Thank You, Mormon & Moroni (Moroni 1)

As we begin the final part of The Book of Mormon, I want to express thanks to two of the men who made it all possible. Mormon, for whom the book is named, spent a good part of his life going through thousands of pages of Nephite history to produce a readable history for us (from 1 Nephi through Mormon chapter 7). After his death, his son Moroni picked up the project and completed the Nephite history (Mormon chapters 8 and 9) and then abridged the Jaredite history (Book of Ether). Moroni may have thought this was the end of the project but the Lord had other plans:

“Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished...[so] I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord” (Moroni 1:1,4)

The Book of Moroni is the compilation of the “few more things” that Moroni writes with the additional time that is granted to him. While it would be easy to be consumed by his own problems (the Lamanites are trying to find him to kill him), Moroni chooses to use the time that remains in his earthly life to work for the Lord. It’s a great example for any of us to follow.

The resulting book produced by Mormon and Moroni is a very valuable resource. In addition to the spiritual components which qualify it to be part of the Word of God, the history provides many lessons for us to learn as servants of God.

Even though all of the writers that contributed to The Book of Mormon are Nephite, the writing is not slanted or spun to make the Nephites always look good and the Lamanites always look bad – if the Lamanites were righteous and the Nephites were unrighteous, the history reports it that way.

If the history had ever fallen into the hands of people who were not servants of God, it never would have survived. Either it would have been destroyed completely or it would have been revised to suit the views of the day. Nephi would have been depicted as a villain who usurped the leadership role from Laman and Lemuel, etc. This is why God made it clear that the history

was to be in the possession of only the servants of God and it was buried in the earth whenever that was not possible.

So – Thank you, Mormon and Moroni for your faithfulness to this work. Thank you for your service to God.

And, while I'm at it:

To all who labor diligently today for the cause of Christ,
To all who don't allow their own life challenges to overshadow the Lord's work,
To all who live, teach and defend the unchanging Word of God –

Thank you for your service to God! May God bless you and reward you in His own special way!



Bestowal of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 2)

When you give your life to the Lord at the waters of baptism, you answer two questions. First, you affirm that you repent of all the sins you've committed up to that point. Second, you promise to serve God for the remainder of your life.

The repentance process consists of experiencing a deep sorrow for the sins you've committed in the past as well as a true desire to do better in the future. Assuming you are truly repentant (and you shouldn't be getting baptized if you're not), the first of the two questions is the easier one as it's simply an affirmation of what's already occurred – Yes, I repent. Done, check it off.

The second question? Well, since that deals with the future, I can't really check that one off until I take my last breath on earth. And, as much as I may be sincere today with that promise, the reality is that things in my life will change over time and I will face significant challenges to live up to my promise. Sounds like I'm going to need some help with this one.

The good news is that God recognizes that we need help to live up to this promise so He provides it in the form of the Holy Ghost – our own personal portion of God that resides within us. The Holy Ghost teaches us what we need to know to be successful in serving God and prompts us to do the right thing (or not do the wrong thing) in various situations that we face in life. It is an indispensable tool in serving God.

Here's how Jesus described the Holy Ghost to His disciples:

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

OK, I get it. I need the Holy Ghost within me in order to be able to serve God. How do I get it?

In The Church of Jesus Christ, after a person answers the two questions referenced above and is then baptized, the next step is the bestowal of the Holy Ghost. Moroni 2 describes the actual process to be followed for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost. Jesus instructed His twelve disciples on this land to follow this process and we continue to follow it today in The Church of Jesus Christ:

“Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it” (Moroni 2:2)

In case you’ve ever wondered why the ministry kneels in prayer prior to the actual bestowal of the Holy Ghost, it’s because we’re following the instructions given above. That first prayer is needed to ask God to grant the power to one of the brothers to lay their hands on the individual and bestow the Holy Ghost. This added step indicates that none of us owns this power – we need to request it from God each time.

In case anyone ever questions whether they have actually received the Holy Ghost, this same chapter indicates that when the above process was followed, “on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost” (verse 3). Every convert received it then and we can be assured that every convert receives the Holy Ghost today since the ministry of The Church of Jesus Christ has the same priesthood authority as the original disciples and we follow the same process for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost.

We can each be thankful that God doesn’t leave us alone after we’re baptized, expecting us to figure things out for ourselves when it comes to serving Him. He provides the Holy Ghost to each of us to lead, guide and direct us for the remainder of our lives and help us to keep the promise we made on the day of our baptism.



Stir Up the Gift of God Within You (Moroni 3)

How would you respond if you were asked what it means for someone to be ordained?

Perhaps you would say it means that someone is becoming a minister. That's partly right although people can also be ordained into other positions such as Teacher, Deacon or Deaconess so it's not just about being a minister.

You might try to describe it as some type of promotion. But that can't be it – it makes it sound like some members are higher up than other members and that's not consistent with the teachings of Christ. In fact, Jesus said, "whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27).

You might think of it as someone being honored but that's not exactly it either. That would mean that we're being recognized for our accomplishments whereas the scriptures say that God ordains us "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Although it's not about being personally honored, it is in fact an honor to be given the opportunity to serve God in an ordained office. The scriptures do describe it this way, adding that "no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God" (Hebrews 5:4). Hmm, being "called of God" – there's a definition we can work with.

Yes, someone who is being ordained is called of God. Not called to assume a title (that would be in the promotion or honor category) but rather called to perform specific labors (in the servant category). One dictionary definition I found for the word "ordain" is "to confer holy orders on someone". Using this definition, the labors associated with an ordained office can be thought of as orders or commandments from God that the individual assuming that office is expected to follow.

OK, these orders or commandments I'm expected to follow – will I be able to do them? Happily, God does not leave us high and dry. As Nephi said, "The Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). When we are ordained, God gives us – as a gift – the authority (where needed) as well as whatever ability, inspiration and spiritual gifts are required to successfully carry out the specific works associated with the ordained office.

Moroni 3 describes the part of the ordination process in which the ministry lays hands on the individual and bestows the ordained office – and all associated gifts – upon them. In The Church of Jesus Christ, this occurs after the individual is set aside by the washing of feet. The sample prayer in this chapter includes the specific office the person is being ordained into and even some of the duties the person will be expected to perform in that office.

Based on Paul’s letters to Timothy in the New Testament, it appears that Paul was the one who ordained Timothy into the ministry. Some years later, when Timothy was facing challenges in his ministry, Paul encouraged him to “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6).

If you are an ordained officer of the Church, you have the gift of God within you to help you perform the duties of that office. (And if you’re not an ordained officer, don’t feel left out – you have the gift of the Holy Ghost within you to help you do what’s expected of a member of the Church). Don’t let that gift lie stagnant within you – stir it up so it’s an active part of your life.

- If you feel like you’re not actively doing what’s expected of you – Stir up the gift of God within you!
- If you’re not sure of the right thing to do – Stir up the gift of God within you!
- If you’re facing opposition from the enemy – Stir up the gift of God within you!

Even if you’re not able to do it yourself, you can ask God to stir up His gift within you. He wants you to succeed in carrying out His holy orders. He’s given you what you need to accomplish these orders. It’s a great gift that you’ve been given so don’t let it lie dormant. Stir up the gift of God within you and do your part in building the kingdom of God.



What Is It? It's the Bread of Life (Moroni 4)

After being led out of Egypt by Moses, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and then found themselves in a wilderness with no source of food for such a large group. However, God provided for them by sending down a kind of bread from heaven – it began appearing one morning in the form of small round things on the ground.

“And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.” (Exodus 16:15)

The word “manna” is said to derive from the Aramaic phrase “man hu” which means, “What is it?”. When you fit that back into the verse above, it becomes clear that the Israelites referred to this mysterious substance as “What is it?” since they didn’t know what it was. However, Moses does let them know that this was the bread that God had provided for them.

Years later, Jesus Christ spoke about this manna but pointed out that it was only good for the day, stating “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead” (John 6:49). Jesus then went on to describe a different type of “bread from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die” (John 6:50) and surprised his entire audience by declaring, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51).

Some of the people at the time became confused and thought that Jesus literally wanted them to eat His flesh. Of course, he was really saying that we need to partake of the sacrifice that He would make on the cross (which we do via repentance and baptism) in order to be eligible for eternal life.

However, Jesus later instructed His disciples that they should actually eat bread that would represent partaking of His flesh. At His last supper with them, “he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

When Jesus appeared to the Nephites in the land of America, He instructed them in a similar way. After the multitude had eaten the bread, He told them, “And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do

always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.”
(3 Nephi 18:7)

The Nephites followed the instruction of Christ as “they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus” (Moroni 6:6). We do the same in The Church of Jesus Christ today.

In Moroni 4, instruction is given as to how to bless the bread that is to be used for the sacrament. All in the church kneel down and the minister prays for the bread to be blessed and sanctified for its intended purpose as a representation of the body of Christ. The sample prayer is worth reading as it makes it clear what the purpose is of partaking of this bread. The prayer you hear in church probably sounds similar.

“O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.” (Moroni 4:3)

Due to the pandemic, we were unable to partake for a long time and we sorely missed it. If you are still waiting, pray that your branch will open soon – it’s vital for all members of the Church to regularly partake of the bread of life.



Are We Able to Drink of the Cup? (Moroni 5)

“Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?” (Matthew 20:22)

This was the question that Jesus asked His disciples when two of them were trying to arrange to have seats of honor right next to Him in the kingdom of heaven. The question had nothing to do with drinking an actual beverage from a cup. In this case, Jesus drinking from this “cup” meant that He would be giving His life for the cause. Jesus wanted to know if His disciples were willing to do the same.

The disciples answered, “We are able!” It didn’t get them the seats of honor in heaven but Jesus was glad to hear that His disciples were that committed to the cause – many of them did in fact eventually give their lives for the cause of Christ.

Sometime later, during the last supper that Jesus shared with His disciples, the disciples literally were able to drink out of a cup that represented the blood that Jesus would spill as He gave His life for the cause. On that occasion, Jesus took His cup of wine and “gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28).

The disciples were able to drink of this cup because they had been forgiven of their sins and they were willing to dedicate their lives to the cause of Christ. They would go forward fearlessly (once they received the Holy Ghost), representing Christ and remembering that He shed His blood for this cause. Even as they drank out of this common cup, they were united in this common cause, even being willing to give their own lives for it, if and when it became necessary.

Are we able to drink of this cup today? Not only to drink from a cup of wine but also to be united in the common cause of Christ, even giving our lives for it if necessary? Hopefully, we can all answer, “Yes, we are able!”.

In The Church of Jesus Christ, we do offer the opportunity to share a cup of wine as Jesus did with His disciples. Members of the Church who have been forgiven of their sins through baptism, have expressed their willingness to dedicate their lives to the cause of Christ and have received the Holy Ghost are eligible to participate in the Lord’s Supper which includes drinking from the cup of wine that represents the blood spilled by Jesus for the remission of sins.

While some people may occasionally get a little nervous about drinking from the same cup as other people (especially during times when the risk of catching an illness from others is higher), we take courage in knowing that we are doing it the way Jesus taught so we can have faith that He is with us as we follow His commandment. For myself, I can state that I have never gotten sick from sharing a communion cup with any congregation nor do I know anyone else who has.

During the recent pandemic, one member of the Church had a dream in which he saw Jesus walking beside the minister who was giving the communion cup to each member of the congregation. After each person drank, Jesus touched the cup and all of the germs disappeared. We can take great comfort in envisioning this occurring during the distribution of the Lord's Supper.

Moroni 5 describes the blessing of the sacramental wine in which the minister takes the cup and asks God to bless it and sanctify it such that all who drink of the cup will do so in remembrance of the blood of Christ which was shed for them. The Church of Jesus Christ does it the same way today.

The procedure described by Moroni is based on what Jesus taught when He visited the Nephites in America. After the Nephites had finished drinking the wine from the cup that day, Jesus said to them:

“Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you” (3 Nephi 18:10)

Are we able to drink of the cup of Jesus Christ? Let our lives illustrate that we are able!



Let God Out of the Box (Moroni 6)

Moroni 6 provides some instruction on church operation, including baptism, fasting and prayer, communion and requiring repentance when sin is committed. The chapter concludes with a description of how the Nephites conducted their church meetings. We encourage our church meetings to be conducted in a similar manner today:

“And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done” (Moroni 6:9)

In other words, when we get together for a church meeting, it’s not a requirement that we follow an exact script. Perhaps the Spirit may inspire a certain message to be preached on a given day. On a different day, perhaps more of a focus on prayer would be appropriate. On yet another day, singing praises to the Lord could be emphasized.

The point of the above is not necessarily to mix things up just for the sake of doing something different. It’s more a matter of realizing that our meetings are the most blessed when we allow the Spirit of God to lead them rather than our human minds.

Our human tendency is to try to control how things work – including how God works – not only in our church meetings but in our lives as well.

Perhaps you’re familiar with a toy from a different era known as a Jack-in-the-Box. The toy consists of a little figure (presumably named Jack) who lives in a small box. On the side of the box is a crank. When you turn the crank, the lid of the box opens and Jack pops out of the box. Poor Jack is totally under your control – he has to stay in the box until you decide to turn the crank and let him out of the box. And, even when you let him out, he’s limited in how far he can go since he’s attached to the bottom of the box.

Let’s be careful to not think of God as a God-in-the-Box. God wants to be involved in all aspects of our lives, each and every day. He’s not someone to be kept in a box, waiting for us to let Him out only when we think we need Him. Also, our lives will be most blessed if we give God free reign in our lives. If we try to tell God how to bless us or how to answer our prayers, we are trying to limit what He can do. Allowing Him to operate “out of the box” may well result in blessings we cannot even imagine.

A scriptural example can be found in Acts 3. This chapter describes a man who has never been able to walk. Every day, he can be found outside of the temple, begging for money. Imagine this man praying one day that God would send someone to give him a piece of silver. Now, here comes Peter who looks upon him and the man is thinking his prayer is about to be answered. Then Peter says, “Silver and gold have I none”. OK, no answered prayer today. And then Peter says, “rise up and walk” and the man is able to walk for the first time! God had a much greater blessing for this man than what he ever could have imagined – The Lord’s “out of the box” action left the man walking and leaping and praising God.

As we pray today, are we keeping God in the box? Are we saying, “OK God, I’ve decided to do this and I want you to bless me in that” (as opposed to saying, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”). Do we tell God the exact steps He needs to take to solve our problems or can we leave it up to Him to determine the best actions? Would we be comfortable telling God, “I have no preconceived notions of what to do today (or what to do during this church meeting, going back to the earlier example) – Feel free to direct me in WHATEVER WAY you want me to go”? Or is that giving God too much leeway?

While it’s not necessarily wrong to pray for specific things, let’s offer God the opportunity to work “out of the box” in our lives. Instead of settling for a piece of silver, let’s set our sights on walking and leaping and praising God!



To Judge or Not to Judge (Moroni 7)

“My brethren, it is given unto you to judge” (Moroni 7:15)

“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matthew 7:1)

How do we reconcile the two scriptural statements above? One appears to directly contradict the other.

It’s possible that you’ve heard the first statement above quoted in various situations. It usually goes something like this:

Follower of Christ: “This type of behavior goes against the Word of God”

Person engaging in said behavior: “The Bible also says, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged’!”

Is this what Jesus intended when He made this statement? That it would be used to refute application of the Word of God? Of course not. If you read the next four verses, it’s clear that Jesus is addressing the propensity that we as humans have to judge others for doing things wrong even when we ourselves are doing things wrong – perhaps even the same exact things!

When it comes to ourselves, we’re typically willing to consider mitigating circumstances, to allow for possible misunderstandings, to recognize that we’re not perfect but that we still love the Lord. Can we do the same for others? Or do we judgmentally hold them to a higher standard? If so, we should be prepared to be held to that same higher standard. That’s what Jesus is saying.

What is judging anyway? If you consider what judges do in court, they use their knowledge of the law to form opinions about events that are presented to them. Since they are professional judges – and presumably expert in the law – their opinions count the most and can influence the outcomes of trials. If you’re involved in a trial, sometimes the judgment may be in your favor and sometimes it may go against you. It depends on how your actions compare to the applicable laws.

If a judgment goes against you, does it mean you are a bad person? Of course not. It just means that the judge has compared your actions to the law and has determined that your actions are not consistent with what the law says. It’s nothing personal – the judge doesn’t even know you. It’s a simple comparison of this (your actions) to that (the law) and an opinion as to how they match up.

Based on this, are we capable of judging whether certain behaviors go against the Word of God? As long as we are expert in what the scriptures say, we are very capable of making such judgments. Of course, we need to be careful – especially today when people are so easily offended. Any statements about behaviors being contrary to the Word of God should not carry indications that we think people who do these things are bad people or that they are condemned or even that we don't like them. It should be as impersonal as possible – a simple comparison of this (the behavior) to that (the Word of God) and an opinion (judgment) as to how they match up.

In case we feel like we are not expert enough in the scriptures to make such judgments, Moroni seeks to simplify it for us:

“I show unto you the way to judge; for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil.” (Moroni 7:16-17)

Simple, isn't it? Behaviors that draw people closer to Christ are of God. Behaviors that push people away from Christ are of the devil.

Being able to judge properly allows us to first make sure our own behaviors are consistent with the teachings of Christ (as Jesus said in Matthew 7) and then to teach others such that they can be properly equipped to judge their own behaviors. It also allows us to stand up for the precepts of Christ in a world that is quickly moving away from Him (and you know from the previous paragraph who influences people to move away from Christ).

Happily, the final judgment belongs to God. And, for those of us who follow Christ, we are blessed to have our sinful behaviors covered by His spilled blood – on the day of our baptism and as we continue to serve Him for the remainder of our lives. So, when we stand before God at the end of our lives, He will compare this (our name) to that (the Lamb's Book of Life) and, finding our name there, His judgment will be – “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord”.



He's Got the Little Tiny Baby in His Hands (Moroni 8)

A gross error, solemn mockery before God, awful wickedness. What terrible sin is being described by all of these strongly worded terms? Believe it or not, these terms are used in Moroni 8 to describe the practice of baptizing little children.

Wow, is it really that bad to do this? After all, isn't baptism the way that people become members of the church? What's wrong with getting the children started early? Is there really any harm in this?

Well, let's first make sure that we understand the purpose for baptism. It's not just to become a member of the church. Rather, it's what people do when they are ready to repent of all of their sins and turn their lives over to Christ. Little children cannot do this. As the Lord states in this chapter, "Little children...are not capable of committing sin" and "I came into the world not to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick" (verse 8).

When I'm sick, I go to the doctor and maybe he'll prescribe antibiotics for me. If I went to the doctor when I wasn't sick and he prescribed antibiotics, that would be a pretty severe error. Likewise, it's a gross error (much worse than taking incorrect medication) to baptize children who have not sinned and are incapable of repentance. Since baptism is the witness of what has occurred within a person, what is being witnessed when a little child is baptized? Also, the child may even be confused in later years to not even come to a point of true repentance, since their "baptism" has already occurred.

Now, suppose someone comes to the church and is baptized. A few weeks later, the same person comes into church and says he wants to get baptized again. Would we do it? No, the ministry would inform the person that baptism is a one-time event to repent of your sins. To do it over and over, baptizing someone who is already right with God, would make a mockery of the ordinance.

Thus, the use of the term "solemn mockery" when describing the baptism of little children. It's baptizing someone who is already right with God. Instead of doing that, we're instructed to "teach parents that they (the parents) must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children" (verse 10).

Even after reading the above, one might question as to why this would be considered “awful wickedness”. It’s clearly unnecessary to baptize little children but is it actually wicked? What’s wicked is the belief system that would accompany this practice:

“For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism” (Moroni 8:15)

Such a belief system would send even a baby to hell if it died without baptism. How wicked is that! Such a belief system also limits the power of the blood of Christ:

“And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption” (Moroni 8:20)

Needless to say, The Church of Jesus Christ does not embrace this wicked belief system. Rather, we follow the example of Jesus Christ who loved the little children so much and picked them up and blessed them. We likewise offer a blessing upon babies and little children, entrusting them to God to watch over them and protect them until they are old enough to make their own decision regarding baptism. If such a child should tragically pass from this life at a young age, we know their soul would be taken directly to the paradise of God.

In Matthew 18, Jesus instructs His disciples to become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Clearly, the children are already where they need to be with God – their place in heaven is assured for now.

Don’t worry – When the children get older, they’ll discover sin and then they’ll need repentance and baptism. For now, let’s enjoy their innocence, knowing that their precious souls are in the hands of God.



The Power of Positive Thinking (Moroni 9)

Found on a popular medical website:

Positive thinking is the practice of focusing on the good in any given situation. It can have a big impact on your physical and mental health. It doesn't mean that you ignore reality or make light of problems. It simply means that you approach the good and the bad in life with the expectation that things will go well.

Some physical benefits of positive thinking may include longer life span, lower blood pressure, lower chance of having a heart attack, greater resistance to illness, better stress management and better pain tolerance. Mental benefits may include more creativity, clearer thinking, greater problem-solving skill, better mood, better coping skills and less depression.

One man in the scriptures who was a master at positive thinking was Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Israel.

In Genesis 39, Joseph finds himself sold into slavery by his own brothers. It would have been easy for him to bemoan his fate and stoke his anger over how unfairly life was treating him and how his own family members had betrayed him. Instead, he focuses on being the best slave he can be and winds up being put in charge of the entire household.

At the end of the same chapter, Joseph is unjustly accused of a crime and finds himself in prison. Again, it would have been easy to dwell on his totally unfair circumstances. Instead, he focuses on being the best prisoner he can be and winds up being put in charge of the other prisoners.

Joseph's positive approach – driven by his faith in God – allows him to survive the discouragements of his life until such time as God delivers him from prison and uses him in a mighty way – it's a great example of the power of positive thinking.

Moroni 9 provides a flashback to earlier events in the Book of Mormon as Moroni shares a letter from his late father Mormon. In this letter, Mormon shares how wicked the people had become in the later years of his life. As the letter progresses, it's clear that Mormon's anger is growing as he records the wicked acts of the people, even asking (as some of us do today), "How [much longer] can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment?" (verse 14).

However, rather than end the letter on a totally negative note that would leave Moroni angry at all the wicked people and bemoaning his fate to be left alone now, Mormon ends by encouraging his son to focus his mind on Jesus Christ and all the good to come in the future:

“My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may...the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.” (Moroni 9:25)

Moroni is being encouraged to engage in positive thinking!

What is happening today that might cause us to be angry or dwell on negative thoughts?

Perhaps a pandemic that has affected so many lives? Perhaps rioting and destruction in many parts of our nation? Perhaps a contentious political landscape in which people on opposite sides find it difficult to be civil to each other? Perhaps the increasing levels of sin and disregard for God all about us (perhaps making us wonder how much longer God will tolerate it)?

Or, maybe (like Joseph), it's conditions in our own individual lives that threaten to bring on the negative thoughts – family problems, financial challenges, job-related issues, health concerns, etc. For any of these, it would be easy to bemoan our fate in life and be angry at individuals, angry at life, even angry at God.

OR – We can choose to focus on Jesus Christ who died so we could be forgiven of our sins. We can focus on the joy of salvation. We can focus on how much God loves us. We can trust that God has a purpose for wherever we are in life and commit to ourselves that we will be the best servant of God that we can be – today, right now, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

So, we have a choice. We can look at all of the bad things happening around us or to us and allow them to fill our minds with anger, fear, resentment and sadness, convincing ourselves that life would be so much better if all of these bad things went away. Or, we can realize that life is already so much better because we have given our lives to Jesus Christ and are part of the family of God. And, the best is yet to come because we have eternity in the kingdom of God to look forward to.

Choose the positive thoughts – that's where you'll find the blessings and power of God.



Trusting in God (Moroni 10)

The Book of Mormon ends with a challenge to the reader to trust in God. We will end this blog series with the same challenge to our readers.

What does it mean to trust in God? Does it mean that we give God assignments and trust (expect) that He will make things work out the way we want them to? If you've ever tried doing this, you know that it doesn't really work that way. Those who think it does work that way often wind up losing their faith when they conclude that God is not trustworthy when He doesn't give them what they ask for.

Trusting in God is really about trusting Him for the outcome in a given situation. It means that we put something in His hands and trust that He will work things out in the proper way, whatever that is. When we pray, we usually request specific outcomes to our situations and, when the outcome is what we requested, we rejoice and praise God. However, when the outcome is not what we wanted, if we truly trust in God, we will seek to understand why it worked out the way it did and ultimately trust that God allowed things to happen the way they did for some good reason, perhaps known only to Him.

We've learned quite a bit about trusting in God during the recent pandemic. We've learned that trying to force a specific outcome – not getting sick – has resulted in fear, frustration, separation from others, anger, loss of jobs, inability to attend church and even severe disappointment or heartache for those who have gotten sick in spite of their best efforts. We've learned that we can trust in God by praying for the outcome we want – none of us wants to catch this terrible disease – but then we trust Him for the outcome, knowing that He is in the matter regardless of the outcome.

Trusting in God has allowed us to resume our lives, going wherever God leads us – whether to church or to meet with people who need the Lord or wherever – without the fear, frustration and anger that accompanies trying to manage the outcome ourselves. We may not be exactly following all of the prescribed steps of the health experts but remember that our goals don't exactly match – their goal is to try to force a specific outcome but our goal is to follow the Lord and leave the outcome in His hands.

Moroni 10 begins with Moroni reviewing all of the material that has been written by his ancestors and abridged by his father. As he prepares to seal up the records to be buried, Moroni considers the likelihood that people reading these writings at some future date (such as today) might have

a hard time believing that it's all true. Rather than adding his own persuasive language to try to convince the reader that the records are true, he instead invites the reader to take it to God:

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4)

What does it take to make this type of invitation? Trust in God! Moroni is willing to put this matter completely in the hands of God and trust Him for the outcome. Of course, Moroni wants people to believe in the Book of Mormon but he is willing to leave it up to God to convince those who He will – those with a sincere heart, real intent and faith in Christ, according to the verse above. By the way, this is a great verse for any of us to point people to when presenting the Book of Mormon – it shows confidence in the truth of the book and it shows that we trust God for the outcome.

During our time on earth, there comes a time when we have to make a choice – between our own wisdom or God's wisdom, between our own strength or God's strength, between our own plan or God's plan. Since our own wisdom, strength and foresight pales in comparison to God's, I heartily recommend trusting in God.

**Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding
(Proverbs 3:5)**