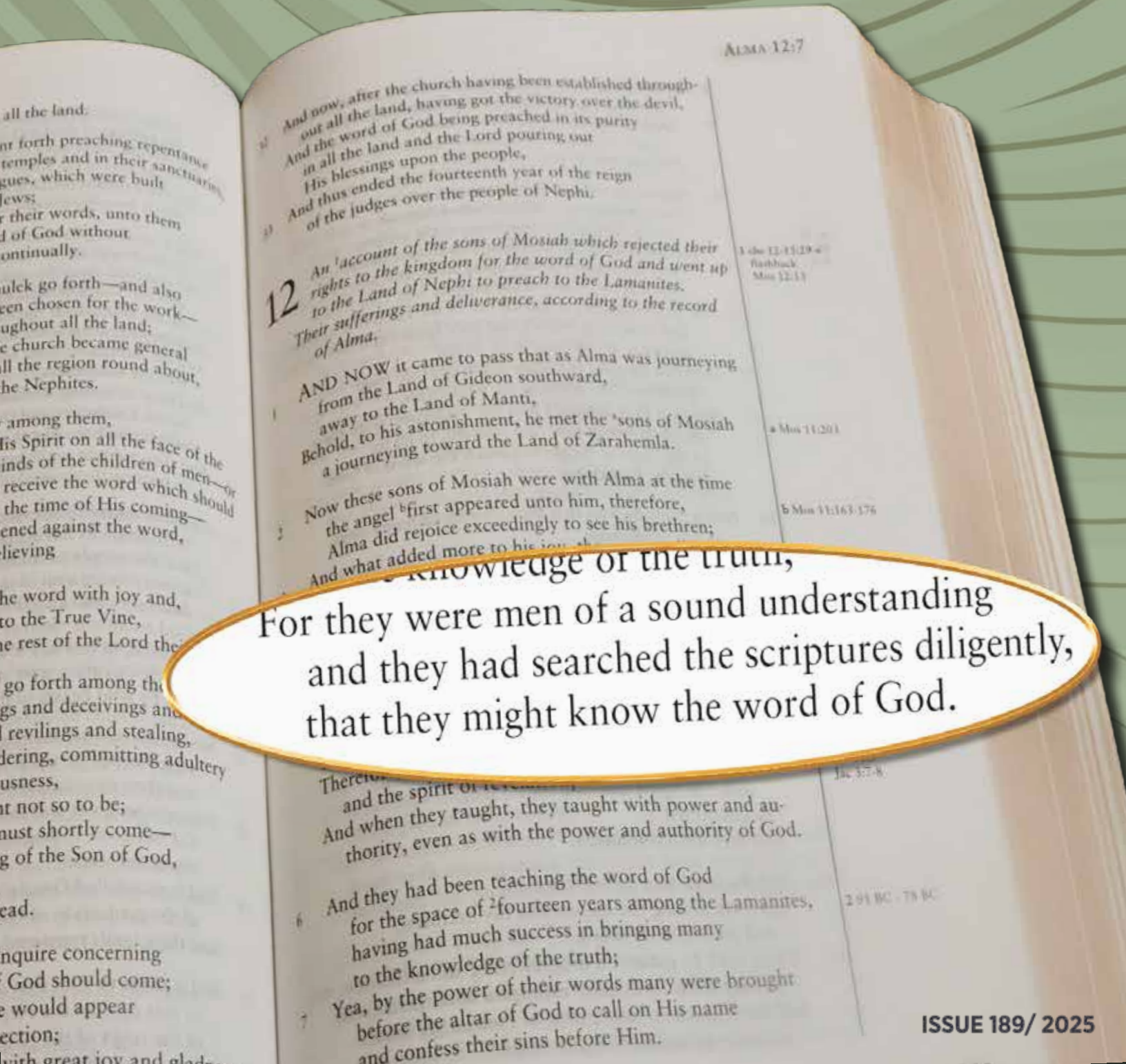


THE WITNESS

A Quarterly Publication of  The Book of Mormon Foundation



ALMA 12:7

12 And now, after the church having been established throughout all the land, having got the victory over the devil, And the word of God being preached in its purity in all the land and the Lord pouring out His blessings upon the people, And thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi.

12 An *account of the sons of Mosiah which rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God and went up to the Land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites. Their sufferings and deliverance, according to the record of Alma.*

AND NOW it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the Land of Gideon southward, away to the Land of Manti, Behold, to his astonishment, he met the ^asons of Mosiah a journeying toward the Land of Zarahemla.

Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel ^bfirst appeared unto him, therefore, Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; And what added more to his joy, *was*

... knowledge of the truth,
For they were men of a sound understanding
and they had searched the scriptures diligently,
that they might know the word of God.

Therein *was* the spirit of revelation; And when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God.

6 And they had been teaching the word of God for the space of ²fourteen years among the Lamanites, having had much success in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth;

7 Yea, by the power of their words many were brought before the altar of God to call on His name and confess their sins before Him.

THE
WITNESS

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Cover: Alma 12:4

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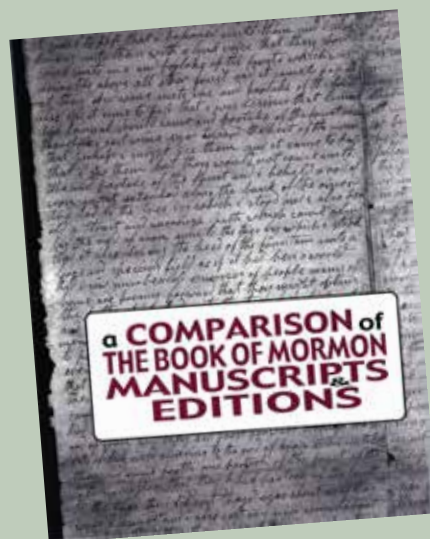
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After the original Book of Mormon was published in 1830, it was 169 years before any edition of the Book of Mormon was compared word-for-word with the Original and Printer's Manuscripts. It seems impossible, and yet it's true. Finally in 1999, the Restored Covenant Edition of The Book of Mormon (RCE) was printed by Zarahemla Research Foundation (now part of the Book of Mormon Foundation). The RCE text was the most accurate edition published and is based on a meticulous word-for-word comparison of the two Book of Mormon manuscripts and eleven editions.



A Comparison of the Book of Mormon Manuscripts & Editions is a companion volume to the Restored Covenant Edition of The Book of Mormon. Copies of this resource are available from the Book of Mormon Foundation. The books are FREE. Customer only needs to pay shipping cost. Call BMF at 816-461-3722 to order your books and pay for shipping. One book ships for \$8; five copies ship for \$16.

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INTERNSHIP

Why Were the Sons of Mosiah So Successful?



They took their journey into the wilderness, to go up to preach the word among the Lamanites, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish. Mosiah 12:13, 5

by Jason Anderson

Perhaps the most successful missionary team in the Book of Mormon was the four sons of Mosiah—Ammon, Aaron, Omner and Himni. Due to their efforts over 14 years of working among the Lamanites, thousands were converted to a knowledge of their Redeemer, Jesus Christ. What makes the feat more spectacular is that the Lamanites were not just enemies to the Nephites, they were a wild, and a hardened, and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing, and plundering them. (Alma 12:22)

We often look at men and women from scripture as extraordinary people with supernatural powers and abilities. While the people that make it into the scriptural record may be extraordinary in their willingness to serve God, they are otherwise ordinary people—like you and me—with ordinary

human frailties. So, what made the sons of Mosiah so successful? And what can we learn from them to apply in our lives to be more effective instruments in the hands of God?

They had the love of God in their hearts and were willing to sacrifice everything to share that love.

Mosiah 12:5-6 tells us they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for 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. This Christ-like love softened the hearts of some, like King Lamoni's father who, when seeing the pure love Ammon had for his son Lamoni, went from wanting to kill Ammon to being ready to be taught. For the king was greatly

astonished at the words which he had spoken, and also at the words which had been spoken by his son Lamoni; therefore he was desirous to learn them. (Alma 12:214)

They had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth and were men of a sound understanding. (Alma 12:3-4)

How did they acquire this knowledge and sound understanding? There were three things they did that permitted God to magnify their efforts—three basic, fundamental things available to each of us:

- **They had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.** (Alma 12:4) We must be in God's word daily. Our scriptures are of no value to us sitting on the shelf. Mark Twain is quoted as saying, **The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read.** The word *search* implies something more to me than simply to read. To search is to try to understand, to **feast upon the words of Christ** as 2 Nephi 14:4 tells us; to look for personal meaning and practical application; to try to understand the historical context and underlying principles. We search the scriptures, not by racing through a predetermined number of verses or chapters each day, but by reading with curiosity; asking questions and looking for answers; and praying, pondering, and meditating over what we read. Set aside a specific amount of time and be content that one day you may get through a whole chapter while the next day may be spent on just one verse.

- **But this is not all: they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting.** (Alma 12:5) Verse 5 continues by sharing with us the result of this dedicated study, prayer and fasting: **therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God.**

- **Lastly, they had spent about 8-9 years ministering to the Nephites.** Ultimately, we gain knowledge by doing. I can read a book telling me how to ride a bike. The more I read about it, the more confident I may become to try it. However, I do not gain a sound understanding or a knowledge of how to ride a bike without getting on the bike and riding it. We can learn about God in scripture

and speak with Him in prayer and gain control over the flesh by fasting, but we can only come to know His power when we step out in faith in service to Him.

They knew the course they were embarking on was the will of God and that He had promised to go with them and before them. (Alma 12:17-21)

The sons of Mosiah trusted in these promises—that this was God's will and He would go with them. This knowledge emboldened them in their witness and provided the strength necessary to withstand all that they would encounter with courage and faith. The comfort offered to the sons of Mosiah at this time was greatly needed. It is not clear why, or even mentioned here, but we later learn from Ammon that this was a time of depression among the brothers. Alma 14:111 says, **Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said, Go**



They were a wild, and a hardened, and a ferocious people.

amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success. Again, it is important for us to remember that these were ordinary men with ordinary struggles like you and me. They were able to do extraordinary

things because of their total surrender to the Holy Spirit, not because of any inherent goodness found in them. Satan will certainly try to discourage and defeat us, especially right before we are about to become instruments in God's hands. But when we know we are doing God's will and carrying out His plan, we can have the faith to endure the trials and hardships that will inevitably come.

They served the people to whom they brought ministry.

In the case of Ammon with King Lamoni, Lamoni was open to hearing about the word of God because of Ammon's faithfulness in carrying out all the duties Lamoni had given him. I've wondered what might have happened if Ammon had immediately called the king to repentance. It might not have gone as well for him as it did. But serving—which is an act of love—softens hearts. And after hearing from the other servants how Ammon had saved the flock and was in the barn carrying out all of the king's commands, Lamoni said, **Surely, there has not been any servant among all my servants, that has been so faithful as this man; for even he doth remember all my commandments to execute them.** (Alma 12:80) And when Ammon came in from his chores, he was able to share the gospel with a king who was ready to hear. There is a practical application here for us. We should make an effort to get to know our neighbors and coworkers. Learn about their families, their work and their views about life. Cultivate meaningful relationships of mutual trust. Not as a means to an end but as an end unto itself. Don't argue or defend the faith. Simply love them and serve them, and be ready to share with them when they are ready.

They found common ground with those to whom they brought ministry and built on that common ground.

Ammon didn't try to impress Lamoni with how learned he was or with big words and complex theology. He met him where he was. For instance, when Ammon asked Lamoni whether he believed in God; Lamoni answered that he didn't know what that meant. Ammon found something Lamoni would understand and asked him if he believed in a Great Spirit. Instead of attacking Lamoni's belief system or explaining how wrong Lamoni was, Ammon focused on their common belief in a

Supreme Being. From there he was able to share the gospel from the beginning of creation, including the plan of redemption (Alma 12:119) and the coming of Christ (Alma 12:120). This finding of common



ground—a starting point that all can agree on—is so important, especially today when we live in a culture of division, both inside the church and out. It takes charity, mutual respect, humility and even forgiveness. These provide a sure foundation from which to build.

The Holy Spirit was in them.

And a portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power, according to my faith and desires which are in God. (Alma 12:113) We must decrease so the Holy Spirit can increase. Our goals, our desires, our wisdom and our understandings must be turned in and subjugated to God's will. When we remember our covenant to take upon us the name

of Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments, God will keep His part of the covenant—to send His Spirit to be with us.

They made themselves available.

The greatest **ability** we have is **availability**. Sometimes we might think we are too busy to serve God or to even prepare to serve Him by spending time in prayer, fasting and study. **The greatest danger facing each of us is not that we would become openly rebellious and wicked before the Lord. But that we through the busyness of everyday life might not make the time to serve others and God. The danger is that we may fail to perceive life's greatest meaning, fall short of its highest good, be unable to give the most needed service—and be content to have it so—that is the danger. That some day we may wake up and find that we have been so busy with everyday life that we have really missed life itself—a life God intended for us to give to Him in service.** (Phillips Brooks, Episcopal preacher and author of the hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”)

We can see from this that being an effective witness for God is simple. It's not always easy or convenient for us to carry out, but it is simple to understand. What other characteristics do you think made them so successful? Read Alma chapters 12-14 and see if you can spot any not mentioned here.

Alma, son of Alma, takes a moment to ponder all that has happened over the past 15 years: his work among the Nephites, the sons of Mosiah's

work among the Lamanites, the recent terrible war that shed the blood of thousands, and his desire to declare repentance and the plan of redemption to all. Alma comes to the conclusion that our glory and joy comes from serving God. **And this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God, to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.** (Alma 15:61) God says in DC 22:23b that His work and glory is **to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.** And Alma says our joy and glory comes from assisting Him in His work. (Alma 14:96)

We have a wonderful opportunity to be actively engaged in God's work. We have been blessed with the fullness of the gospel, the everlasting covenant, the promise of the Kingdom of God on Earth and the Lord's plan for the restoration of the house of Israel. We each have been given certain and unique gifts and talents by God that we may better assist Him in His work. We have not been given all this for our benefit only. We have not been given all this so we could sit in nice pews on Sunday morning and share with each other the good news. The Lord has said in Luke and elsewhere that to whom much is given, much is required. We each have friends, neighbors and co-workers who may not even know it, but deep down they are longing for and have a great need to know God. So let's tell them. In word and in deed. May God grant us the desire to prepare, the courage to serve, and the power of His Spirit to magnify our feeble efforts. This is my prayer.



Book of Mormon Retreat 2025

Seek the Lord in Your Youth

by Jamie Bendorf

O remember my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God; yea, and cry unto God for all thy support. Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest, let it be in the Lord; yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord for ever; counsel the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good: Yea, when thou liest down at night, lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning, let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day. (Alma 17:68-70)

In counsel to his son Helaman, Alma admonishes him with these words. One can only imagine the passion portrayed in these words, as any father would have when expanding a truth of utmost importance to his son. This is the manner in which we hoped to teach the youth at the Book of Mormon Retreat, to **Seek the Lord in Thy Youth** as was the theme, based on the above scripture. After prayer and study, Mark and I noticed that it clearly breaks down our relationship with the Lord into three categories: seeking God in our **hearts**, our **minds** and our **deeds**.



Seeking the Lord in Our Hearts

Let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord for ever; counsel the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good...and when thou risest in the morning, let thy heart be full of thanks unto God. (Alma 17:69-70)

The scriptures tell us to **keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.** (Proverbs 4:23) This means we must guard our hearts diligently, for it is the heart that eventually results in our actions. At the retreat, we had a class by Jeremy Stephenson, who taught **To Seek the Lord is to Diligently Pursue Him**. He compared this to a treasure hunt. To find a treasure hidden by a man, the best way is not by studying the treasure, but by studying the man who buried it. Such is our relationship with the Lord. We must know Him and learn of His attributes. For example, when we read and come to understand that God





that lead us to Him. If we are filling our minds with the things of this world, then we will not have the hope of Jesus in our vessels when it is needed.

Seeking the Lord in Our Deeds

Learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God; yea, and cry unto God for all thy support. Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest, let it be in the Lord.
(Alma 17:68-69)

is trustworthy, when difficult times arise we have faith that we can firmly trust in Him. If we want to serve and dwell with God, we must establish a relationship with Him first, recognizing that when we do, all else will follow suit. (Matthew 6:38) If our heart is not dedicated to following Him, no matter how much our mind knows what is right, the vain imaginations of our heart will eventually win out. When we truly love Him, then we will keep His commandments—not out of obligation, but out of the discovery of joy in surrendering to Him. Following the commandments then is not a burden, but rather a joyous outpouring of love for the Father! At the retreat, we told the youth if they were to have one take-away from the weekend, we desired that they would see the beauty of seeking the Lord with their whole hearts.

When our minds and hearts are set upon the Lord, we will naturally want to serve Him! However, we must be careful that our deeds are truly done out of a heart of love, rather than with **eye-service, as men pleasers**. (Ephesians 6:6) Adam Brendle taught on **Seeking First the Kingdom**. He mentioned that our outward manifestations do not clearly evidence an inward love. He asked the youth: **What is your motivation for serving God? Is it fear? Is it a desire for blessings or recognition? Or is it out of a love for Him?** May we be motivated as the sons of Mosiah, who were filled with such a love for God and their fellow man that **they could not bear that any human soul should perish**. (Mosiah 12:5) The scriptures tell us that they did not come to this love of their own accord, but rather because **the Spirit of the Lord [did] work upon them**. (Mosiah 12:7)

Seeking the Lord in Our Minds

Let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord.
(Alma 17:69)

How can we seek the Lord? One way is by filling our minds with His word and His teachings. When Alma the Younger had his awakening and was **harrowed up by the memory of [his] many sins**, how is it that he was saved? His mind caught hold upon the thought of Jesus Christ and how He had come to atone for the sins of the world. (Alma 17:15-16) If no one had taught him these truths, this thought may never have entered Alma's mind. How could it, if it had not first been placed there? (Romans 10:14, 16) It is important that our minds be filled with Christ through reading, studying His word and reading other good books



Building Your Toolbox

The third class we offered was **Building Your Toolbox**. The retreat staff shared study ideas, ways we have strengthened our prayer lives, different methods of fasting, and testimonies that have come as a result of prayer, fasting and seeking. The purpose of this class was to give the youth a variety of “tools” to help them in their quest to seek the Lord and make Him the center of their lives rather than to give ambiguous ideas without a means to accomplish them.



was filled with enthusiasm and joy as we laughed and sang together at the beginning, and ended with God’s welcoming Spirit as we praised His name in song. Sunday morning after a prayer walk, the youth assembled for a service in the dining hall. At the close of the service, Mark invited us to kneel while Jon offered a closing prayer. The Spirit filled that room as we were united in one heart and one mind.

We live in a day and age where we cannot stand idly by, expecting others to provide ministry. We can’t try to serve in word and dead works without the Holy Spirit. Instead, we must actively seek the Lord, no matter our age or current status. We must learn what the scriptures say He is—trustworthy, loving, omnipotent, omnipresent—so that when the inevitable storms come, we will not be swayed from our conviction to follow Him. We must seek the Lord in our youth, our midlife and our latter years. If we do, there will be a lifetime of beauty, peace and joy no matter what troubles may befall, because we rest in the palm of the One who created heaven and earth.



An Overview

We directed the retreat to serve others, yet we found ourselves being served and encouraged by the youth. There are some concerns today about the spiritual condition of today’s youth—and rightly so—but the retreat was a welcome reminder that there are youth with a desire to serve the Lord. Even in our short time together, we experienced a beautiful outpouring of the Spirit. The youth were eager to help and willing to step in when a need was expressed; they met newcomers with a smile and friendly conversation; and they had joy in their countenances and peace in their interactions. After every meal the kitchen was full of music and laughter—as many of the youth gathered to clean and fellowship one with another—without assigned clean-up duty! Nightly prayer groups were met with solemnity, and the annual Book of Mormon skits were met with joy and laughter. Each campfire



Feasting on the Words of Christ

Three-Part Series: Part One



Wherefore, I said unto you, Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye can not understand them, it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

(2 Nephi 14:4-5)

by Dr. Thomas M. Mitchell

This article is intended to be the first of three on the spiritual disciplines for followers of Jesus: purposeful prayer, searching the scriptures diligently and fasting. They are without a doubt the elementary habits that endow Christians for spiritual growth on their journey as they come to know Jesus. They are the active ingredients for a life-long service of love wherein we endure the crosses of this life to the end. And yet often, we habitually reduce these activities to mere labels or phrases we randomly repeat in sermons, classes and camp songs with limited involved experience or investment.

In the 12th chapter of Alma, we find Alma the Younger journeying toward the land of Manti and to his astonishment, he encounters the compatriots of his youth—the four sons of King Mosiah—returning to Zarahemla. His joy in reuniting with his friends, who were all converted at the time of Alma’s miraculous encounter with God, was only enhanced by the knowledge that they were still his brethren in the faith. In the unfolding of this story, we find insightful proclamations concerning prayer, study of God’s word and fasting during their time of evangelism among the Lamanites for the space of 14 years.

And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon, southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment, he met the sons of Mosiah, journeying towards the land of Zarahemla. Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly, to see his brethren. And what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding, and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all: they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting, therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God. (Alma 12:1-5)

It is quite easy to quickly read through this marvelous reunion and the place it holds in the great revival story of the church in the Book of Mormon. Yet in these few verses are some great *goldenlines* of truth. Goldenlines are known in graduate education assigned readings as the critical essential points or conclusions that are the heart of professional journals and educational writing. The key goldenlines of the first part of the 12th chapter of Alma are clearly identified:

They had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all: they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting, therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God. (Alma 12:4-5)

This is recorded as a true cause and effect relationship defined by the conditional word **therefore** or, in other words, **because of** or **due to**. I have found this to be true over and over in my life and ministry among the saints. Later in the chapter, prayer and fasting are reiterated in a request to be endowed with the Spirit of God:

And it came to pass that they journeyed many days in the wilderness, and they fasted much, and prayed much, that the Lord would grant unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them, and abide with them. (Alma 12:14)

Saints, do we want to know the word of God? Do we want the spirit of prophecy and revelation alive in the restoration at large and personally within us? Do we want men called of God to preach and teach with power and authority in our churches and in their witness to those who know not God? The answer is obviously, **Yes**.

The first of the three disciplines recorded in the 12th chapter of Alma is to **[search] the scriptures diligently**. (Alma 12:4) This is not necessarily the first of the three disciplines in order of importance, but it was a primary preparation the sons of Mosiah utilized to ready themselves for the ministry among the Lamanites. It is very difficult to discern God's will when you have spent scant time searching His words for that truth. It is very difficult to achieve a positive witness of the workings of the church of Christ when we have not invested the time to know it ourselves.

When Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees or scribes over doctrine or the law, He often answered, **It is written**. Jesus could have simply said, "Because I said so." Although seemingly self-serving, this would be the same as saying, **It is written**, because it was Jesus who was inspiring the prophets all through time. Jesus was reinforcing the need to know the word, to learn how God has worked among the children of men in all times and all places. In this way we come to know and more fully comprehend the promises of God, the characteristics of God, the timelessness, faithfulness and enduring love



Bring Forth the Record - Used with permission by Robert T. Barrett

of God and how He works among the children of men—which includes us today. The word is in many ways the blueprint for the kingdom of God, which Jesus came preaching.

THE PLAN

I have heard some saints say they find it boring to read the word of God. Part of that all-too-often statement may give clues to the source of apathy. Alma records that they searched the word of God diligently, and



Nephi used the phrase, **feast upon the words of Christ**. Obviously, this is not a casual reading of historical accounts when we are finished with all of our hobbies and interests and find ourselves bored with nothing else to do in life. It is an intentional daily activity fueled by a desire to know God and His dealings with mankind. Humans at their core are not that different in attitude and action. Therefore, the lessons of the past in scripture can give great insight into the challenges we now face each day.

Many have attempted to study God's word with little thought or planning. Some have thought it prudent to start reading the Bible beginning with the Old Testament. This can be a hard slog over the endless genealogies, the sundry laws and centuries of failures of Israel from king to king and from war to war until Jesus finally arrives in person and power in the New Testament. There are, I believe, better alternatives. I propose some other techniques.

First, find something important to you. Find something that speaks to your soul. For

example, witnessing ministers often direct first-time Christians to read the gospels of Christ or the visit of Jesus in Third Nephi where they can observe firsthand the plain saving words of Jesus. If you love poetry and prose, start with the Psalms of David and the Proverbs of his son Solomon. There are also areas in the scriptures to pursue geography, archeology, philosophy or sociology. There are laws and commandments, intimate eternal covenants and promises. Each in its own way speaks to the grandeur and glory of God, who has condescended in ministry to the likes of you and me. For me personally, the Book of Mormon is the easiest book of scripture to read due to the plainness of writing found, particularly in the writings of Nephi and Mormon.

Second, identify the reason for your study and the most effective tools for that endeavor. If you simply desire to examine some passage of scripture for the first time or a review, then I would suggest a concerted reading of the section or chapter after asking the Holy Spirit to guide you. If, however, you are engaged in a detailed study of a topic or idea, I suggest using some kind of searching and sorting mechanism. Books of these topic searches, called concordances, have been compiled and used for many years as a great resource for this type of study. Another option I would suggest is one of the excellent computer search engines available in the restoration, such as zionbound.com. These marvels can quickly and efficiently retrieve all the related passages of a particular subject from all three books of scripture using a computer or mobile device. Then, it is easy to cut and paste them into your study notes, research, or sermon or class preparation. Additional options are: ScriptureToolbox.com, 3Scriptures.com, or restoredgospel.com.

THE PLACE

I always seek sanctuary when I search God's word. I intentionally divest myself from the incessant allure and siren songs of my iPhone, social media, and the noise of everything

around seeking to command my attention. That sanctuary can be a place such as a dedicated room or a time set aside during lunch break, or even listening to the word while commuting. Whatever the space or time, it needs to be consistent. For me that time is early in the mornings before I start my to-do list and those activities capture my mind. For others heading to work or for mothers getting kids off to school, other times of the day may be more productive. I have found if I have not studied for some time, there is a transition period back to focus on the word of God. It takes some time. Be patient but persistent in daily readings and in time this habit brings clarity and fellowship with the Spirit.

THE PURPOSE

One final note. The purpose of researching and pondering the scriptures must always be grounded in a desire to know Jesus. There is no other eternal purpose for this study. It is best to avoid a scriptural quest to search God's word for isolated phrases or authors which assert some theological position or ideological political

belief system. Scripture needs to be reviewed and understood as a wholistic framework, as a pattern for righteousness and social interaction, or for spiritual health and mental wholeness. Scripture should not be studied to fuel a particular theory or political purpose one already holds or as a weapon for future debates and arguments.

When we are truly invested in the Lord, He will—in His own time and way—reveal Himself. Often this comes as we search the scriptures. The ministry of Jesus, as Apostle Arthur Oakman and other inspired writers have said, is the spirit of prophecy. He will write the word in our own lives through our persistent searching and our yearning to know the goodness of truth. Scripture is as real and vivid as the actors of old in ancient script. He will write it, not in the tablets of stone, but as recorded daily in our own fleshly tables of the heart. (2 Corinthians 3:3) In this way we come to know Him in a real and personal way, and to recognize more fully and clearly the sound of His voice as He beckons us to follow and as we find meaningful ways to heed that call. May it ever be said of us as we strive to be His people.



PROPHECY WATCH

At the time of this writing, it seems the great death and destruction from the wildfires in California have dominated the news for a long time. As we watch and listen, one word keeps being used to describe the things we are seeing. That word is “apocalyptic.” The titles of these two recent articles are good examples:

Why California’s Deadly Wildfires Are Being Referred To As ‘Apocalyptic’¹
LA Apocalypse²

We also hear this word frequently used in the conversations of people describing many of the events of our time. We hear it both inside and outside the Restoration.

Usually, the words **apocalypse** and **apocalyptic** are attached to the writings of Apostle John in the book of Revelation and commonly used in describing the judgments of God. However, there is a spiritual principle found in the meaning of these words that’s often lost in the way they are used. That principle is: all things of God—both blessings and judgments—point to the revelation of Christ and His desire to save all who will hearken unto His voice. (2 Nephi 6:45) We should know that both blessings and judgments come from a loving God who wants to get our attention and reveal Himself to His children, just like any loving parent does for their children. He speaks through both blessings and judgments with the voices of His choosing. The 1828 Webster Dictionary defines **apocalypse** as:

APOC’ALYPSE, *noun*

Revelation; discovery; disclosure.

Even the book of Revelation proclaims the truth that all scriptures point to Jesus. This is the same revelation that Peter experienced when he said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.** Jesus said that this was revealed to Peter by His Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:17-18)

I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for

the word of God, and for the **testimony of Jesus Christ.** (Revelation 1:9)

I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the **testimony of Jesus**; worship God; for the **testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** (Revelation 19:10)

The Book of Mormon adds an important perspective to the apocalyptic conversations of today. It fills in prophetic events to the timeline of the last days and empowers our witness of Jesus when those prophecies are being fulfilled. Many of our Christian friends often jump quickly ahead to the apocalyptic writings in the book of Revelation because they are lacking other scriptures to complete the last-days picture. Therefore, we see many of them making references to the book of Revelation to understand the events of our time without knowing about many great and marvelous things that will yet come forth upon the earth. Hopefully, Book of Mormon believers understand the value of *this* record and the purposes for which it was brought forth by the gift and power of God. Apocalyptic conversations, in light of the revelation of Christ and the testimony of Jesus, should always include the great prophecies found in the Book of Mormon. Many of those prophecies will come to pass before or perhaps during some of the scriptures often quoted from the book of Revelation. In other words, using an old saying, “Don’t put the cart before the horse.”

Consider what the Book of Mormon says about the writings of Apostle John. We can’t list all the Book of Mormon prophecies here, but you are encouraged to study and make your own list. As an example, in 1 Nephi 3:214-256 we are told great things will take place before the writings of John will be fully seen and understood. The prophet Ether also writes of the prophecies of John. In this scripture, the word **then** is an important prophetic word:

And **then** shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John, be unfolded in the eyes of all the people. (Ether 1:113)

What a blessing it is for Book of Mormon believers to testify of apocalyptic events with this additional light and understanding. What a blessing it is to see all these apocalyptic events as the mighty movement of God in both miracles and judgments. The question is: **Do we believe what the Book of Mormon says?**

Every person who continues to knowingly rebel against the Lord will sooner or later experience the revelation of Christ through judgment. Some of the Book of Mormon peoples received this revelation during the great judgments that came after the crucifixion of Christ. They were heard saying:

And then shall ye lament, and say, **O that I had repented**, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. (Helaman 5:44)

O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things have become slippery, and we can not hold them. (Helaman 5:48)

And in one place they were heard to cry, saying, **O that we had repented** before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla. (3 Nephi 4:23)

And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying, **O that we had repented** before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out. (3 Nephi 4:24)

Will Book of Mormon believers prepare to be those that are spared when Christ manifests Himself and establishes His church, as recorded in 3 Nephi 10? **It will be truly apocalyptic!**

The question that bears down heavily upon the shoulders of the shepherds is this: **How do the shepherds prepare the people for these apocalyptic**

events? A recently shared quote by Charles Spurgeon gives a unique perspective of the church in what many of our friends call the end times. He says:

Feed My sheep. (John 21:17)

A time will come when instead of shepherds **feeding the sheep**, the church will have **clowns entertaining the goats!**

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth, and turn aside to myths!³ (2 Timothy 4:1-4)

His comparison between feeding the sheep and entertaining the goats was used as a metaphor. However, the serious question it raises is relevant for our time. How are the Restoration shepherds preparing the people for the last days? To be victorious, we are called to repent, humble ourselves, be valiant in our testimony of Jesus and preach/teach the word of God! The signs of the times are among us! Watch, therefore, and pray always!

Endnotes

1. “Why California’s Deadly Wildfires Are Being Referred To As ‘Apocalyptic,’” *Harbinger’s Daily*, January 13, 2025, <https://harbingersdaily.com/why-does-the-media-refer-to-californias-deadly-wildfires-as-apocalyptic/>.
2. Tom Gilbreath, “LA Apocalypse,” *The Hal Lindsey Report | Hal Lindsey*, January 12, 2025, <https://www.hallindsey.com/ww-1-12-2025/>.
3. Charles Spurgeon, **Clowns entertaining the goats!** *Grace Gems*, gracegems.org.

The purpose of Prophecy Watch is to assist in looking for and knowing the signs of the times and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. The perspectives it contains are not presented as the only, best or final answer to their meaning, but rather **to the intent that ye might believe on His name** (Helaman 5:66) and more fully participate in their fulfillment. We hope Prophecy Watch will provide a brief glimpse into specific prophetic subjects that will encourage each person to diligently pray, study, fast and seek the will of God concerning them.

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