

THE WITNESS

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***Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow—they toil not,
neither do they spin.***

ISSUE 193/ 2026

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WITNESS

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(3 Nephi 6:6)

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FOUNDATION

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Pleased to Announce

Join us in welcoming
Jason Anderson
and
Andrew Smith

to the Board of Directors.

We are excited to have them bring their experience, insight and leadership to the organization. In addition to serving on the Board, Jason will also take on the role of Treasurer, where his financial oversight and guidance will be a valuable asset. We look forward to their contributions and the positive impact they will make in their new roles.





Ponder the Prophecy of This Gospel Going Back to the House of Israel

by Jason Anderson

The title of this article was Wednesday's theme at the 2025 Central Missouri Restoration Branch Reunion. The theme was in reference to the promise found in D&C 12:5a-b:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, Who created the heavens and the earth; a light which cannot be hid in darkness; **wherefore, I must bring forth the fullness of My gospel from the Gentiles unto the House of Israel.**

There is not enough space in this article to go through this topic in every detail or from every angle. My prayer is that we will have a desire rekindled in us to ponder and to study and to pray for discernment and for understanding of this promise God made to Lehi and Nephi and Jacob and Enos, among others, and to understand the role of the Gentiles—and the Church specifically—in this reclamation work; to understand the beautiful reason God chose the Gentiles for this work; and finally, to understand that pondering—true pondering—is not just a thought exercise, but must and will lead to obedience and to action.

The Book of Mormon was written, according to the Title Page, **to shew unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off for ever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God,**

manifesting Himself unto all nations. (Title Page, Book of Mormon)

There are many promises of the gospel going to the House of Israel generally, and to the remnant of the Lamanites specifically, which are found in the Book of Mormon. Two examples are found in Enos and 1 Nephi. Enos receives a promise from God regarding the Lamanites. **And I had faith, and I did cry unto God, that He would preserve the records; and He covenanted with me that He would bring them forth unto the Lamanites, in His own due time.** (Enos 1:25-26) Enos records that the Lord had made the same promise to others. **And the Lord said unto me, Thy fathers have also required of Me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith, for their faith was like unto thine.** (Enos 1:28) Nephi records a promise and prophecy to the House of Israel. **Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to make bare His arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about His covenants and His gospel, unto those who are of the House of Israel.** (1 Nephi 7:22)

The Doctrine and Covenants lists the fulfilling of these promises as one of the reasons the Church was established in the last days.

Yea, the word of the Lord concerning His church, established in the last days for the restoration of His people, as He has spoken by the mouth of His prophets, and for the gathering of His Saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city New Jerusalem. (D&C 83:1b)



The Church has struggled for lack of identity and purpose. Proverbs 29:18 says, **Where there is no vision, the people perish.** I have once heard this verse changed a bit to say, “Where there is no vision, the people leave for another parish.” I believe we have experienced the truth of both of these statements over the last 40+ years. We have tried to find purpose in building churches. We have tried to find purpose in reorganizing the Church. We have tried to find purpose in protecting the flock. And we have not found meaningful purpose, life-changing purpose, convert-winning purpose nor maintaining-membership purpose in these things.

But I find such hope in this promise—that God says He will bring the gospel back to the House of Israel **from the Gentiles.** (D&C 12:5) In it, I find a way out from the “dark and cloudy day” of wandering and uncertainty where we find ourselves today. Because in this promise there is purpose. There is vision. There is an identity for us to cling to and to pass on to our children.

I hope, and believe, despite all the lack of agreement over points of doctrine or church hierarchy, that we can still agree that the Lord has a plan for the redemption and gathering of the House of Israel, and that He has called **us** to assist in this work. And that He, in fact, brought the Church out of the wilderness 196 years ago for the accomplishment of this task. If we can agree on this, I hope that as we ponder and pray and study that we will be able to more fully work together in

this task; and to be content to let the Lord work out the details of the many points of doctrine on which we cannot agree.

We often feel we can do nothing together unless we can agree on all points of doctrine, but Doctrine and Covenants 122:16a gives us a way forward.

And now I say unto you Mine elders, apostles and high priests of My church, Continue ye in the ministry unto which you have been called; and if ye **cannot fully agree on all the points of the law, be patient and be not contentious; so far as you can agree work together without heat, confusion, or malice.**

Here we are given instruction to be patient with each other, to not be contentious, and so far as we can agree, to work together. This means we don’t have to get upset about the things we can’t do together because of lack of agreement, but to be happy and engaged in those areas where we can still agree.

The Nephite writers found purpose in this promise. I find it interesting how hard they worked to write and to preserve the records. Hadn’t the Lord told them He would bring the gospel to the House of Israel? Couldn’t they just rely on His word and let Him do it? No, the people of the Book of Mormon understood that God works through men, and they knew they had a crucial role to play in fulfilling the covenant of God with the children of Jacob. Their role was to create and preserve a record so when it would come forth, it would be the sign that God had set His hand again to fulfill that covenant.

We should take note. For, having received the fruit of their labors, we also have been given a role by God in His plan of salvation and in the fulfillment of His covenant with the House of Israel. Our role, according to Nephi, is to take the gospel of the Book of Mormon to the House of Israel.

And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fullness of the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years

and many generations, after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fullness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed. And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the House of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord. And then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by Him. Wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, and the very points of His doctrine, that they may know how to come unto Him and be saved.

(1 Nephi 4:16-19)

And why, do you suppose, did God give that role to the Gentiles? Could not He just as easily, perhaps even more easily, have given this task to a descendent of Lehi or another of the covenant people? Jesus tells us why in 3 Nephi.

For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that He may shew forth His power unto the Gentiles, for this cause, that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto Me, and be baptized in My name, and know of the true points of My doctrine, that they may be numbered among My people, O House of Israel. (3 Nephi 9:92)

Isn't that beautiful? Oh, the love of God for all of His creation! God gave the Gentiles the task of bringing the gospel back to the House of Israel so He could show His power unto the Gentiles—so that we would repent and be numbered among His people. Everything God does is for the benefit of His whole creation. All His works perfectly work together so that all might have the opportunity to know Him.

As we ponder His great love for us and His desire for us to be a part of His work, I think it is important that we understand a critical truth—a

truth we have at times, perhaps, not recognized. Specifically, that God wants us to assist, not because of any gift inherent in us, or skill, or righteousness. We have no special value or use to Him that He could not have found had He gone directly to the House of Israel. But He wanted us to have the blessing, the joy, the glory that can only be found by serving Him.

God tells us that His work and glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (DC 22:23b) Our work and our glory, according to Alma, is to assist Him in His work. **Yea, 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)

We go to camps and reunions and retreats for the mountain top experience we have as we study together and ponder together and work together and worship together. It can be difficult, however, to maintain that spiritual high once we leave the camp or retreat or reunion. Alma tells his son Helaman the secret to maintaining that spiritual high is serving God.

Yea, and from that time, even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Yea, and now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me exceeding great joy in the fruit of my labors. (Alma 17:22-23)

We have been given this tremendous gift—because of the love God has for us—to be an instrument in His hands in the reclaiming and gathering of His people, the House of Israel. We would do well to ponder in our hearts what we have done in relation to this gift. Are we any better off than if the gift had not been given? Have we fulfilled the purpose for which the Lord worked this marvelous work among us?

Christ, when He came to this continent as recorded in 3 Nephi 8:3, shared with the people many things. At the end of this first visit He told them, **Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father,**



like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)

If we delight in something, we think of it constantly. If our delight is in the law of the Lord, we ponder it day and night. If our delight is in being an instrument in the hands of God as He brings the gospel back to the House of Israel, we'll ponder the how and where and why and when, day and night. A bride-to-be, delighting in her wedding day, spends much time thinking about and planning for that day and acting to implement those plans so that all will be just as she has envisioned. Thoughts lead to actions.

What do you delight in? If you can't immediately answer, keep track of what it is you think about, worry about, care about and act on during the course of

a day or week or month; and you'll receive your answer. Pondering, meditating, thinking about something, delighting in doing so, will bear fruit. The more we delight in obeying God, the more fruitful we will be. On the other hand, if we are not bearing fruit in a particular area, perhaps it is because we have not pondered nor delighted in that area. Or perhaps, our pondering has been in vain because we have not been connected to the true vine, as Jesus identifies Himself in John 15:1. He goes on to say that we cannot bear fruit unless we are connected to Him. But if we abide in Him, and His words abide in us, then we will bear much fruit.

What is the fruit of pondering and delighting in and assisting the Lord in His work of reclaiming the House of Israel? Speaking of the Gentiles, in 3 Nephi, Christ says:

But if they will repent, and hearken unto My words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish My church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance, and they shall

in My name, that ye may understand; and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. He asked them to ponder His words so they could understand what He had said; and to prepare their minds to receive more understanding, more instruction, the next day. Knowing and thinking about and pondering God's words and His ways and His commandments are the first steps towards applying those words to our everyday lives.

But pondering is just a first step. It will and must lead to action. There is a time for prayer and study and meditation and pondering, and there is a time to act. The measure of our response is directly related to our intensity in pondering. A fleeting thought results in no action. A scripture read or a sermon that resonates—if not pondered—leads nowhere and accomplishes very little. Pondering will always bear fruit in our lives.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be

assist My people, the remnant of Jacob; and also, as many of the House of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem; and then shall they assist My people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst, and then shall the work of the Father commence, at that day even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people.

(3 Nephi 10:1-4)

Remember the two reasons the Church was established in the last days from D&C 83:1b: **For the restoration of the House of Israel, and for the gathering of the Saints to stand upon Mount Zion, the New Jerusalem.** They go hand in hand. One is the fruit of the other.

Brothers and Sisters, what are we waiting for? One big obstacle is that we do not really know who the remnant of Lehi is today or where they are. Some believe they can be found among the Native

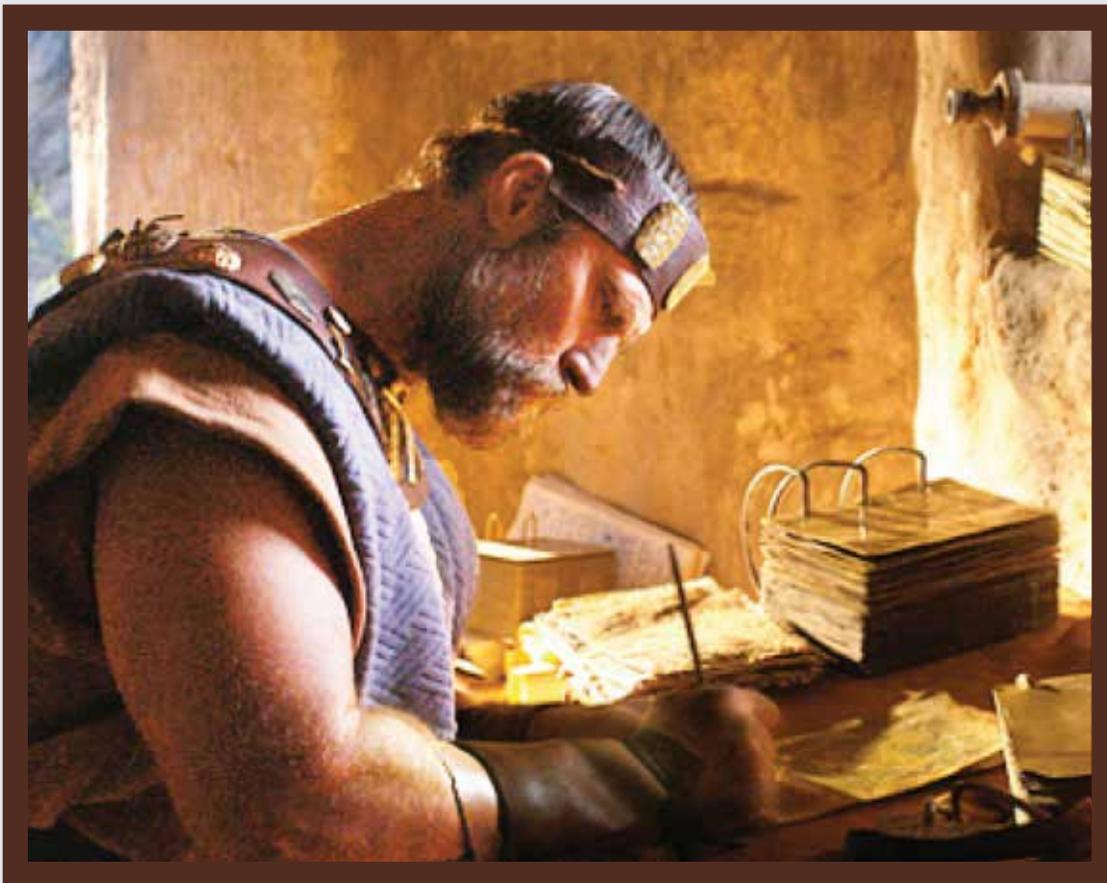
American tribes in North America. Others believe they are found down in Central America. But exactly who among those groups? We do not have clarity. We desperately need insight and revelation to fulfill the purpose the Lord has given the Church. Several of us at Colbern Road Restoration Branch have begun praying for insight. Specifically, we are praying that the Lord would reveal the answers to these four questions:

1. Who are the Lamanites today?
2. Where are they?
3. Who will the Lord send to them?
4. What should be shared with them?

We invite prayer warriors all over the world to join us in seeking answers to these questions. We are praying and pondering individually in our quiet times, in our homes, as well as when we come together for Wednesday evening prayer service. If you are willing to be counted among those pledged to make an ongoing effort in prayer for the Lord to reveal the answers to these questions; and you would like to receive future updates on the effort, please sign up at bomf.org/pray-to-know/ (see QR code below). I would love to see what the Lord

would do if, collectively, we made this a priority in our pondering and prayer time.

The prophets of the Book of Mormon labored diligently to preserve the records with the promise that one day their record would be the cause of their posterity to come to the knowledge of their Redeemer. The torch has been passed to us. May we labor just as diligently. May God bless you as you ponder this promise and may He bless you as that pondering turns to doing what He places on your heart.



Remembrance, Gratitude, Repentance and Discipleship: How We Perceive God

by David Gilmore

When we open the word of God, the way we see Him shapes everything. The same scripture can feel like a warning or a promise, an ultimatum or an invitation—all depending on the posture of our hearts and the way God has been presented to us throughout our lives. Because of this, those who minister, teach and testify carry a profound responsibility: to represent God truthfully and graciously, so that His words become a pathway rather than a stumbling block for those who hear them.

It is interesting to ponder how there are times in our lives where the unchanging God looks different to us, or the message that we should be receiving is received differently in our hearts. Consider Isaiah:

Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the Houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. (Isaiah 8:13-15)

A more recent translation of verse 14 says He will be a holy place for both Israel and Judah. Then for both Israel and Judah, He will be a stone that causes the people of Jerusalem to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. For them, He will be a trap and a snare.

Peter references this same verse and the cornerstone that Isaiah mentions; then he continues:

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore who believe, He is precious; but unto them who are disobedient, who stumble at the word, through disobedience, whereunto they were appointed, [He becomes] a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense. For the stone which the builders disallowed, is become the head of the corner. (1 Peter 2:6-8)

It should be our goal to always put Jesus at the cornerstone of our lives. He should be the cornerstone of this message; He should be central to all things. If we find ourselves and our hearts desiring to be closer to Him, then He becomes a precious sanctuary for us and a place of calm retreat. If our hearts do not desire those things, then He becomes a rock of offense and a stumbling block. We can see this played out through the Gospels where Jesus was received openly—even desperately—by some, yet He became a point of offense to others. One of many examples is when they sought to stone Jesus just because of what He was saying and what He was teaching.

In Alma 3, we read about Alma the Younger and the ministry he provides specifically in the city of Zarahemla. Alma gives a series of questions that he asks people to reflect upon—to consider.

Please keep this in mind when we look at Alma's message: **What perspective did the people who were listening to Jesus take, and what is the perspective that we should take today?**

We learn a little bit about Alma at the end of Alma Chapter 2 when he gave up the judgment seat. He gave up the responsibility he had in the world, in society.

In the ninth year of the reign of Judges over the people of Nephi, Alma delivered up the judgment seat unto Nephihah. Alma confined himself completely to the high priesthood with the sole purpose to testify of the word according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.

In Chapter 3 we find out where he's going and what he's doing. Alma began by delivering the word of God to the people of the church—first in the land of Zarahemla, and then throughout the land.

As we consider Alma's message to the people, let us imagine we are in a similar scene and align our goals to Alma's goals in his day. Each week when you go to worship, you step out of your lives—you step away from work and from your hobbies—and you come into the sanctuary of God. Alma's goal was to bring people into an experience with Christ—outside of culture, outside of the noise of life—to study and to reflect. Hopefully, we do that in our worship as we get back to our foundation and use God's day as a day to reflect and apply what God has called us to be. In Alma 3, there are 22 questions Alma asks the people. He begins with these questions:

And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? Yea, and have you sufficiently retained in remembrance His mercy and long suffering towards them? And moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that He has delivered their souls from hell? (Alma 3:8-10)

Alma continues through verse 26 to explain this process. Reflecting on these questions, we must walk with purpose in our lives. We must first remember the path that brought us to where we are today. In this case, he's asking the people to remember the process of God's hand in their forefathers' lives, and certainly we should do the same. Finding the path that we've been on should help us make sure that, as we point our direction toward the future,

we are rightly oriented. To fully understand why Alma spends 26 verses talking about this experience of drawing closer to God in previous generations, it's important to remember Alma's life-changing experience.

When Alma was a young man, he persecuted the church. Then he had a dramatic conversion experience where God intervened in his life. Alma certainly experienced what it was like to live outside the will of God. Following his experience, he is able to frame and reference his previous choices to the current decision he has made to be a follower of God.



There's a theme in the first couple of questions that is a valuable reminder for us: We should maintain a position of **remembrance** and **gratitude**. This **remembrance** refers to the **intentional act of recalling God's past actions, both His covenants**

and our personal experiences with His mercy. Not just remembering those things, but using them to enable and grow our faith. This idea of gratitude is a sincere and active response of thanksgiving to God, where we mentally and in an outward way acknowledge His goodness, His mercy and His blessings. Gratitude does a good job of preserving remembrance. When we are regularly thankful in our prayer life and in our testimonies, we keep God's prior works alive in our hearts and in the front of our minds. So, Alma begins by calling the people to remembrance and gratitude.



After beginning his line of questioning in Chapter 3, regarding his audience's forefathers, Alma changes the line of questioning. Alma says that he's speaking to the people of the church:

And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received His image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of Him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God, to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? (Alma 3:27-31)

How do we receive this guidance? When we hear these things, is our natural response to think of this as a promise and guidance of the One who is where we want to be, guiding us along the path that brings us to Him? Or does this strike us as an ultimatum and a threat to the natural man against the things that our hearts want to be doing? I think there is a specific emphasis given here as we look at these questions; an emphasis to focus on our relationship with God first and foremost. Continuing in verse 32, Alma recounts his own experience:

I say unto you, Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day, Come unto Me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say, Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth, and that He will save you? Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God, with your souls filled with guilt and remorse; having a remembrance of all your guilt; Yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness; yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? (Alma 3:32-35)

In reference to Alma's conversion experience, let's go to a future point in the life of Alma where he wants to give a father's blessing to each of his three grown sons. In Alma 17, Alma is speaking to his son Helaman. He recounts the experience he had as a young man, but does so from the perspective of a man who's gone through life sharing the details he remembers from his youth.

And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people, concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. (Alma 17:15)

Take a moment to appreciate the position we are in today. We have the witness of the scriptures describing what Jesus has already accomplished, while these people lived before His coming. They spoke of Christ in the future and placed their trust in the promises yet to be fulfilled—making their faith all the more remarkable.

Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, O Jesus, Thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who art in the gall of bitterness, and art encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed by the memory of my sins no more. And O, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain; yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. (Alma 17:16-18)

And here is that life-changing moment:

Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy. (Alma 17:19)

When he caught hold upon that name of Jesus, his sins were put behind him. They would not be in the forefront of his mind. They would not be overwhelming him anymore. Bear in mind that testimony and reread verses 34 and 35:

Can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God, with your souls filled with guilt and remorse; having a remembrance of all your guilt; Yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness; yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? (Alma 3:34-35)

We hear the same theme when Alma, years later, recounts his conversion to his son Helaman

in Chapter 17. He explains that the only relief from his overwhelming guilt came when he called on Jesus to free him from his former life. With that testimony in view, Alma continues:

I say unto you, Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? (Alma 3:36)

How would you look up to God with a pure heart and clean hands? Not through the works which we do, but through the ministry which Jesus provides. I'll address this later, but I want to mention it here because some people have accused the Book of Mormon of teaching a works-based salvation, and I reject that. I think the Book of Mormon is extremely clear that the salvation we receive is through the merits and ministry of Jesus Christ and Him alone, while the works we do can serve multiple purposes.

One of those is for our own reflection, so we know for our own benefit that the thoughts we have are reflected in the life we live. And when we stand before the tribunal of God, as Alma is articulating here, it's not just that we wonder whether our thoughts are right, but that we will be able to reflect upon our actions and our works and know where we stand before God.

I say unto you, Can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? (Alma 3:37)

It is the inclusion of Jesus that makes this message a message of hope and not a message of condemnation. It is in Jesus that we find promise. It is outside of Him that we find ultimatums and threats. So, our themes continue that we should **remember** and be **grateful**, and that we should have a desire for our own personal conversion and a desire to make a change. Alma explains if we have a desire within us to make a change, even if it's as small as a seed, God can work with that. (Alma 16:151-173) Ponder these questions which Alma has asked within your own heart whether you have that desire to want to change. Alma continues to ask questions of the people, which are also relevant to us today.

I say unto you, Can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the devil?...And now I ask of you, my brethren, How will any of you feel, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood, and all manner of filthiness? (Alma 3:38, 41)

Before continuing in Alma's message, it's helpful to pause for a brief aside to ponder this cross-reference that shares similar imagery and answers the deeper question behind Alma's reflections: How are our stains and filthiness removed? The final passage in the Book of Mormon provides a powerful parallel that draws our attention back to Jesus Christ as the source of cleansing and sanctification:

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him...then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ...and deny not His power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God...unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot. (Moroni 10:29–31)

This passage reinforces the same imagery Alma uses—the washing away of our stains, the burden of guilt being removed, and the hope of standing clean before God. Moroni makes it unmistakably clear that this cleansing does not come through our works, but through the grace of Jesus Christ, Who removes our stains and makes us perfected in Him. This mirrors Alma's own line of questioning about whether our garments have been washed white through the blood of the Lamb. Moroni speaks directly to our present condition: When we stand before the tribunal of God, will we be able to testify that Christ has cleansed us—and do our lives reflect the gratitude of a heart transformed by His grace?

This brief aside helps anchor Alma's questions in their true foundation: It is Christ who removes our stains, Christ who sanctifies, and Christ who perfects. All of Alma's imagery finds its fulfillment in the redeeming work of Jesus.

Moroni speaks to the same spiritual condition Alma addresses—the question of whether our sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb. When we stand before God, will our lives reflect gratitude for what Christ has done? Moroni's words sharpen Alma's line of questioning, reminding us that if we have not sought that cleansing, our mindset in that day will be very different. With that shared imagery in view, we return to Alma's message.

Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed, and are spotless, pure, and white? (Alma 3:44)

Are these spiritual patriarchs and the holy prophets a part of God's kingdom because they were perfect? No. It is because of what Jesus did for them.

And now behold, I say unto you my brethren, If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, Can ye feel so now? (Alma 3:46)

Some Christian theologians observe that many who do not follow Jesus imagine God primarily as a distant judge—enthroned behind walls, deciding





Timothy Keller, a recent Christian teacher, had a great lesson regarding discipleship as it pertains to waiting on the Lord. This does not mean we are waiting **around** on the Lord, but waiting **on** the Lord as if to be in service of others like a restaurant waiter; to wait on others. If so, then these good deeds we do in our lives—both to God and for God—and in the service

of others, are what we give to Him as an offering. Controlling what we can control (i.e. our choices) and leaving the rest in God's capable hands.

Behold, He sendeth an invitation unto all men; for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and He saith, Repent, and I will receive you; Yea, He saith, Come unto Me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely... Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in His own name He doth call you, which is the name of Christ. (Alma 3:57-58, 62)

I heard somebody say recently that, "Satan knows your name, but he calls you by your sins; Jesus knows your sins, but He calls you by your name."

The remainder of Chapter 3 covers Alma's direction to works of righteousness in preparation for the coming kingdom of heaven. I like the following passage. (Please note that I've written them here out of order because they point to each other sequentially when read this way.)

Behold, I testify unto you, that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken, are true. [How does Alma know they're true? Because of the experience he had in his own life, which he expounds upon in Chapter 17.] And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days, that I might

who is allowed in and who is kept out. But that image is not supported by these passages. In fact, it stands in direct contrast to Alma's message: All are invited, and it is we who ultimately determine our standing before God by the condition of our own hearts—whether we come before Him cleansed and sincere, or burdened by the sins we refuse to release.

I believe the purpose of Alma asking these things is not so we can find 21 of 22 questions that we do well and think we're good to go—which was the perspective the rich young ruler was attempting to take with Jesus. He had kept the ten commandments well; but then Jesus asked something very difficult of him. (Luke 18:18-25) Consider the things on Alma's list which are difficult for you. We have a decision to make. Will we go away sorrowful? Or will we accept the challenge and the promise and the hope to make a change in our lives?

Consider the teaching of James:

For whosoever shall, save in one point, keep the whole law, he is guilty of all. (James 2:10)

Whoever keeps the whole law, and yet stumbles at just one point, is guilty of breaking all of it.

This brings us to a third theme that we find in Alma 3: **repentance and discipleship**—meaning something that doesn't just happen once and we mark it off and we're done with it. **Discipleship** is a lifetime of calling; and it's not easy.

G.K. Chesterton said, "When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or whether you take them with gratitude." And does that gratitude encourage us to make change?

know these things of myself. Behold, I say unto you, They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. (Alma 3:76, 77, 79, 78)

This is the promise from Alma I would like to leave with you. It is not our works of righteousness that sanctify us; that sanctifying power is the gift and invitation of God Himself, purchased at the high cost of His own blood. He asks much of us because He has given so much for us.

Our works either stand as a testimony—for our own benefit—of the choices that we make, or they can become a barrier to our relationship with Jesus. I don't believe Alma asked these questions to be rhetorical so we could rest on our laurels. There is a difference between pursuing God out of fear and pursuing God out of our love for Him. When we misunderstand who God is, fear can cause a number of reactions. It could be like the fight or flight reaction: some may fight against Him, others may flee from Him; and still others may follow Jesus only enough to “get by,” believing that avoiding certain behaviors is sufficient.

But if I am pursuing God out of my love for Him—the God of promises, the God of hope, the God of my salvation—then there is no end to my pursuit of Him. It's not just that I don't do the things I'm not supposed to do, it's that I focus on embracing what I should do.

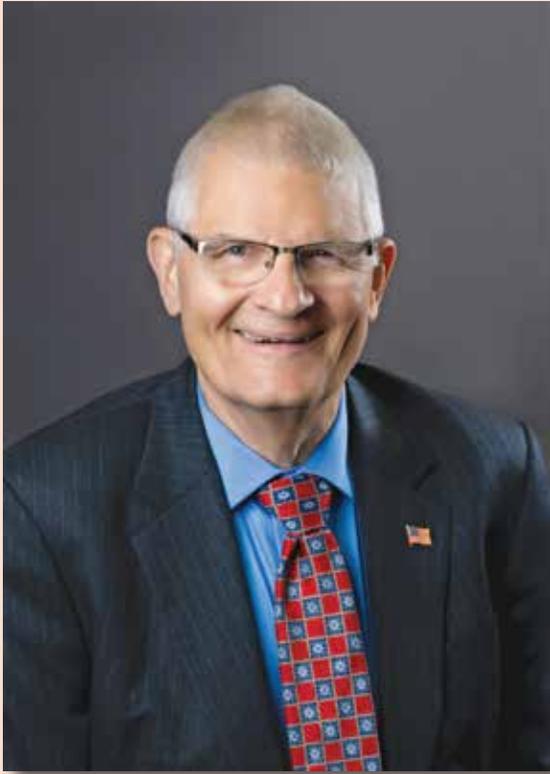
It's in this context that Alma emphasizes why it's important to remember that we are broken; that we are in need of a Savior the same as previous generations. That's why a call to **remembrance** is applicable to us, and why it is so valuable, rooting us in the **experiences of those who have gone before us—experiences that cultivate both remembrance and gratitude.**

Alma, in this process, also wants to find something that challenges us to reevaluate where we stand and awaken within us a desire to change. So that through this desire, we will strive to be closer to our Savior and be better to others—today and in the future—which will be our **repentance** and our **discipleship.**

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him... then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ... and deny not His power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God... unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.
(Moroni 10:29–31)



With Appreciation



Eldon Anderson was elected to the board of directors of the Book of Mormon Foundation (BMF) in the spring of 2005. While his wife, Bonnie, served as the director of the BMF Internship program, Eldon also became deeply involved. He taught classes, helped develop the program and had a major role in the tours, both in-country and out-of-country. Eldon served for many years as the liaison between the board and the Internship Advisory Committee, providing ongoing guidance and support for the Internship and keeping the board abreast of plans and developments in that program.

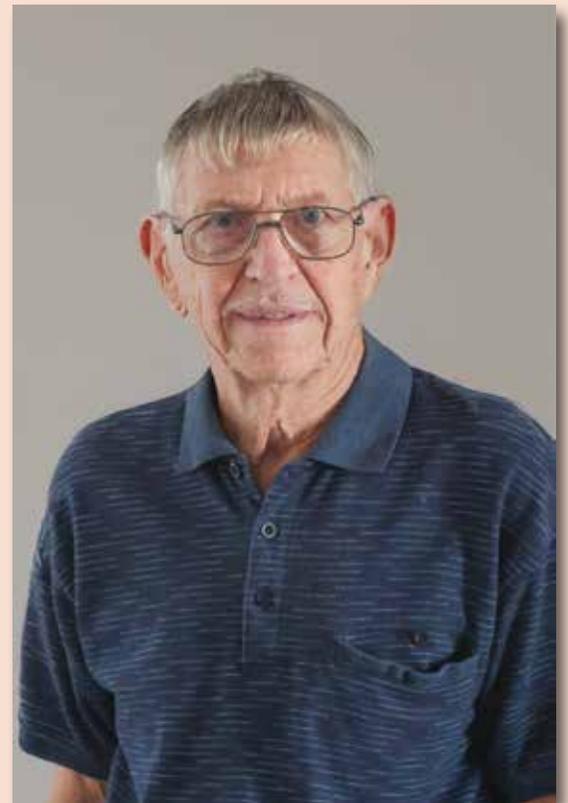
Eldon has also served as Treasurer for BMF during the majority of his time on the board. In addition, he has taught classes at Book of Mormon Days locally and in other congregations throughout the United States.

Throughout his twenty-year tenure on the board, Eldon demonstrated his abiding belief in and love for the Book of Mormon and his desire to serve his Lord and his fellow man. His unassuming presence, wry sense of humor and powerful insights will be greatly missed by the board. Our prayers, thanks and best wishes go with Eldon as he continues to pursue avenues of service to his Heavenly Father.

The Book of Mormon Foundation extends its deepest gratitude to Dennis Heater for his years of faithful and dedicated service as a board member. Dennis's journey with the Book of Mormon Foundation is a direct result of his own personal testimony and journey with the Book of Mormon. His first encounter with the Book of Mormon came through his late wife, Shirley, in the 1970s when she challenged him to read it. His acceptance of that challenge became a pivotal moment that would dramatically reshape the course of his life. His testimony of this book ultimately led him into decades of service and learning.

Dennis supported Shirley's work with the Zarahemla Research Foundation, Quetzal Archaeology Center and the Book of Mormon Foundation. Following Shirley's passing in 2017, Dennis stepped forward to complete her term on the board where he has since been serving with humility, steadiness and devotion.

Dennis especially cherished the Foundation's Internship program and the spiritual growth he witnessed in young people encountering sacred places and this sacred text. His prayer—and ours—is that the Book of Mormon Foundation will continue to grow and find more ways to place this precious record into many more hands. We appreciate Dennis's life of quiet faithfulness and enduring service.



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Book of Mormon Retreat by Rachel Morrison

Taylor and I were incredibly excited to direct the Book of Mormon Retreat this year. When choosing a theme, we were reading through Alma 17 and the phrase **The Way Is Prepared** really jumped out to us. We quickly realized this would be the basis of our retreat:

O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look, they might live; even so it is with us. **The way is prepared**, and if we will look, we may live for ever. And now my son, see that ye take care of these sacred things; yea, see that ye look to God and live. (Alma 17:81-83)



The Lord held us in the palm of His hands throughout the retreat. We began with **The Stripling Warrior Contest**—mixers with Amy Jo Gillam. Favorite activities included Victory Stack and Wounded Warrior Carry. Brian Holmes, our camp pastor, taught a class that focused on **Enduring to the End**. He presented scriptural examples of people who endured and likened enduring spiritually to running a race. Mark Bendorf shared how **The Way Is Prepared** by using visual aids to act as metaphors on the subject. One example compared a stick from the woods to a wooden flagpole to illustrate the potential we all have if we are formed in Christ. Eric English did a scriptural deep dive on the **Impact of Abinadi** and how pivotal his endurance had been for the Book of Mormon legacy. It showed how those who have gone before us—enduring and showing their faith—made lasting impacts. He encouraged the campers to live strongly in their faith, even if they could not see the outcome of their efforts. We are very appreciative of our staff, including our cooks Shelly Morrison, Tracy Wren and Katie Wren; auxiliary staff Jon and Tammy Tandy; and the 2025 interns. The weekend truly came together by the power of the Lord. He took our efforts and magnified them. Praise God!

