

Book of Mormon 29
Give Ear to My Words
(Alma 36-39)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background)

I. The Power of the Word

A. The written words on a page have been likened to “animal tracks crossing snow” to the untrained eye. And yet from these very small tracks, or symbols, come enormous power.

B. They are indeed "tracks." But they are not tracks which lead to a feast on a bird, but tracks which lead to far greater feasts --- to the deepest and highest thoughts of men and women.

C. Above all, **they are vital tracks which lead to Salvation through Jesus the Christ.**

II. Great Power from God’s Word Came through the Bible.

A. After researching and writing "How the Bible Came to Be," (*Ensign*, Jan-Sept, 1982), I felt impressed to add a chapter, "The Power of the Word."

B. I told what happened after men received the Biblical Word in their own languages.

"To produce Bibles in the most influential languages of the sixteenth century and to make them easily accessible to everyone was to unleash a powerful new force upon the earth. The first impact was unquestionably to spawn the Reformation. But the Bible's reforming influence has spanned all the intervening centuries and has had a far broader effect than we usually think."

It has been a "light" and leavening influence upon the world in immeasurable ways. And particularly it has deeply touched the heart of every sincere Christian, as far as it is used.

C. Within this chapter I noted the effect this accessible Word had upon Joseph Smith; "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). Joseph tells, "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again.

D. "The Word" through James inspired Joseph to seek God for wisdom --- leading to the First Visitation and not just to a Reformation, but to the marvelous work and wonder of the Restoration.

E. In fact, I came to feel a major purpose of the Bible's coming forth in English was to serve as stimulus for Joseph Smith.

III. The Power of God's Word was doubled when the Bible and Book of Mormon were combined.

A. The witness of one voice is strong; the witness of two is stronger.

B. The Book of Mormon repeatedly verifies the Bible is true, thus making it a more sure trumpet.

C. The Book of Mormon clarifies the Bible, allowing men to understand its more difficult passages.

D. The Book of Mormon adds its testimony of Jesus Christ to that of the Bible, strengthening the witness that He truly lived and that His Word is true.

E. The Book of Mormon shows God did not ignore half the world --- that He loved all mankind sufficiently to ensure His teachings went to both great hemispheres. For the Book of Mormon is a record of His Word to the Western Hemisphere.

IV. Alma declared the value of God's Word as written and as orally delivered.

A. Alma used the Brass Plates [a portion of Bible] to remind that God is the ultimate source of deliverance (36:2-3,28).

B. Alma makes clear it was the record on the Brass Plates that helped convert many Lamanites (37:9).

"Yea... were it not for these things which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance; that is, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer."

C. Alma testifies the power of God's Word, through an angel, prevented his destruction (36:4-9)

1. The angel's voice was as "the voice of thunder" (36:7). Because of that angel's words, Alma came to be "born of God" (36:5). "God has, by the mouth of his holy angel, made these things [pertaining to salvation] known unto me."

D. Alma shared his awesome experience and how God's word brought him to Christ.

"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 remember 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.

"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 am in the gall of bitterness, and am 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 up by the memory of my sins no more."

"And oh what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

Yea... there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea... and there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy" (36:17-21).

E. After he was turned to Christ, Alma used God's word to save others: **"because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold many have been born of God,** and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God" (Alma 36:26).

V. Alma, now aging, called Helaman to continue the recording of God's words.

A. He prophesied that by these "small and simple means, great things [will be] accomplished."

1. The **"small means"** are the simple, yet powerful, words of God upon the plates.

2. But these "small means" or "tracks across the plates" have indeed brought many great things to pass.

B. The Catawba Indians of South Carolina had once been the strongest tribe next to the Cherokees. Their tribe, like others, had been decimated because of European diseases. While other Christians tried to convert them, the Catawbans remained aloof. Eventually **nearly the entire tribe embraced The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.** They were drawn to the church

because it taught them the true history of their forefathers through the Book of Mormon. Knowing they were actually “of Israel,” gave them hope, and a respected place among peoples of the world. Their conversion brought a great improvement into their physical as well as their spiritual lives. (See "The Influence of the Mormon Church on the Catawba Indians of South Carolina," a Master's Thesis, Jerry D. Lee, 1976).

C. The Catawbas are just one small example. God's word in the Book of Mormon has brought immeasurable blessings to millions throughout the world. As Alma prophesied it would, it truly has brought about God's great and Eternal purposes... and "doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls" (Alma 37:7).

VI. Alma taught that the Liahona was actually a witness of the Importance of God's word.

A. He said, "And now my son, I would that ye should understand that [the Liahona's guidance through the wilderness was a foreshadowing]; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass... even so it is with things which are spiritual.

"For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, **shall the words of Christ**, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow **into a far better land of promise**" (Alma 37:43-45).

B. Just as the Liahona guided Lehi's family to their Promised Land, God's Word has the power to guide us into the far greater Dwelling of Eternal Life.

VII. Alma comforts Shiblun with God's word.

A. Shiblun had been in bonds and stoned for the sake of God's word.

"And now, ... as much as ye shall put your trust in God even so much ye shall be delivered out of your trials and your troubles, and your afflictions, and ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

"There is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold he is the life and the light of the world. Behold, **he is the Word of Truth and Righteousness**" (38:5, 9).

VIII. Alma warns Coriantun and calls him to prepare for Christ through God's Word.

A. Pride led to Corianton's sexual sins (39:2-3).

B. But Alma calls him to repentance, humility, and further, "This was the ministry unto which ye were called, to declare these glad tidings unto this people, to prepare their minds; ... that they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of [Christ's] coming (Alma 39:16).

C. What an exciting challenge: to prepare the next generation to receive the Word of Christ which will be spoken directly by His own mouth!

D. Fathers were reminded by Elder D. Todd Christofferson in General Conference, April 2016, that this is their challenge today!

1. And most comfortingly, he prayed that they will be equal to the task.

IX. As commanded, God's word was kept and then preserved. And now it is being carried throughout the world, thus enabling salvation for all who will accept it. Our missionaries could not carry anything which would be more potent.