

Book of Mormon Lesson # 29

GIVE EAR TO MY WORDS

ALMA 36-39

by Ted L. Gibbons

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: Elder David B. Haight said: "The Book of Mormon is the most remarkable book in the world from a doctrinal, historical, or philosophical point of view. Its integrity has been assailed with senseless fury for over 170 years, yet its position and influence today are more impregnable than ever.

"The Book of Mormon did not come forth as a curiosity. It was written with a definite purpose—a purpose to be felt by every reader. From the title page we read that it was written ‘to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.’ The message it contains is a witness for Christ and teaches the love of God for all mankind. Its purpose is to bring people to accept Jesus as the Christ. The book tells of the actual visit of Christ to ancient America and records the teachings and instructions He gave in clarity and great power to the people. The Book of Mormon substantiates the Bible in its teachings of the Savior, speaks of Christ more than any other subject, and teaches that our Savior is the Redeemer and Atoner of mankind, constantly emphasizing that He is the central figure in God’s plan of salvation. This divine record makes converts to its message and to

His Church, which teaches it" ("Joseph Smith, the Prophet," *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 28).

NOTE #1: This lesson provides an excellent opportunity to study and ponder the 1995 *Proclamation to the World* about the family. Review the responsibilities parents have for their children as indicated by this proclamation.

NOTE #2: Alma 36 was included with lesson 20, and is therefore not a significant part of this lesson.

INTRODUCTION:

How many families can you identify from the scriptures that had both righteous children and children with significant problems? Responses might include the following:

Adam and Eve—Cain and Abel

Isaac and Rebekah—Esau and Jacob

Jacob and Rachel/Leah—Joseph and his older brothers

Lehi and Sariah—Laman and Nephi

Alma the Younger—Helaman, Shiblon and Corianton

What challenges can occur in families with such different attitudes and personalities. Alma gives us an excellent example of how to deal with different personalities and challenges. Invite class members to turn to Alma 35:16. How did Alma deal with the different situations of his three sons? (He gave every one his charge "*separately*") Why is it important for parents to deal with each child "separately?"

1. ALMA SHARES HIS TESTIMONY AND GIVES THE RECORDS TO HIS SON HELAMAN. (Alma 36, 37)

Parents should bear testimony to their children.

Alma begins and ends this part of his instruction with his testimony (See Alma 36:1, 30). Consider the following verses and find the phrases in Alma 36 that relate to Alma's testimony. Mark these phrases and consider them in the light of your own experiences with your families.

36:1—"I swear unto you . . ."

36:3—"Learn of me for I do know . . ."

36:4—"I know of myself . . ."

36:5—"God has made these things known unto me. . ."

36:26—"I have tasted . . . I have seen . . . I do know . . . The knowledge which I have is of God."

36:28—"I know he will raise me up . . ."

36:30—"Ye ought to know as I do know."

Why is it important for a child to hear the testimony of his parents? What impact might the story of Alma's conversion have on Helaman? When was the last time you took a child—one on one—and testified to him or her of your knowledge of the truth?

Can you think of an experience when a parent's testimony has changed your life?

Parents should teach by example.

Many times Alma charged Helaman to follow his example. Review the following verses; find and mark the words that show this:

36:2—"do as I have done . . ."

36:3—"learn of me . . ."

36:29—"you ought to retain in remembrance as I have done . . ."

36:30—"you ought to know as I do know . . ."

37:2—"keep a record . . . as I have done . . . as I have kept them . . ."

Why is it important for children to follow the righteous example of their parents? What should children do if their parents do not set a righteous example? Are you in a position to say to your children, "Follow me!" Would such a course take them where you and their Heavenly Father want them to be?

Like Alma, parents often say, "you ought" or "you should" or "I command." Why is it important for parents not only to give their children specific instructions, but to set an example as did Alma?

Parents should teach their children the importance of the scriptures.

Even though Alma indicates that the scriptures are a "small and simple" thing (Alma 37:6), what "great things" will the scriptures do for us if we study them diligently? (Alma 37:8-10—enlarge our memories; convince us of the error of our ways; bring us to a knowledge of God and salvation; bring us to repentance; cause us to rejoice in Christ)

How can parents teach the scriptures to their children so that they will rejoice in the opportunity to study?

How can children help parents fulfill this critical responsibility?

What charge does Alma give Helaman in Alma 37:35? What is scripture study one of the best ways to learn wisdom? (See 2 Tim. 3:15,16)

Alma teaches Helaman about the purpose of the Liahona. According to Alma 37:40, what was the purpose of this compass? (It pointed "the way they should go") What comparisons does Alma make between the word of God and the Liahona? Alma 37:38-47)

Alma's observes that the simplicity and reliability of the operations of the Liahona caused Lehi's party to become slothful and to forget to exercise their faith and diligence. Then the compass quit working and "they did not progress in their journey; therefore they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted . . ." (Alma 37:41,42). There is a lesson here for us. Do you remember the following from a letter from the First Presidency?

We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform ("Policies, Announcements, and Appointments," Ensign, June 1999, 80).

Like the operations of the Liahona, Family Home Evening, family prayer, gospel study, and wholesome family activities "are worked by small means" but they will, if attended to in faith and determination, "show unto [us] marvelous works" (Alma 37:41). It is not hard to visualize the family of Lehi gathered around the Liahona, noticing that it is pointing toward a low range of barren mountains and dry, desolate terrain toward the west, while in the northwest, off in the distance can clearly be seen an oasis with water and palm trees. Of course one would

be inclined to vote for the palms and the chance for a bath or a swim.

It becomes for us, as it was for Lehi and Ishmael and Sam, a matter of going where the arrows point. And we know where they point on Monday night. Even if the TV guide shows us an oasis of Monday Night Football with our favorite team and quarterback against the pre-season favorites in a game with implications for the conference championship, we know where the arrows point. In our family, we read the scriptures every morning at 7:00 AM. Sometimes, after a late night, the oasis of the mattress is may try to pull our compass off course. We may choose to ignore the little arrows if favor of what seems to be a more inviting direction of travel. If we choose not to follow them, the negative results may not be immediately obvious, but as we stray from the path defined by revelation to the prophets, we will pay a price. We will not progress in our journey; we will tarry in the wilderness, and we will not travel a direct course, and we will be afflicted . . ." (see Alma 37:41,42).

2. ALMA PRAISES AND ENCOURAGES Shiblon (Alma 38)

Parents should recognize the good that their children do and praise their children for their righteousness

Alma 38:2-4. What qualities in Shiblon brought great joy to his father? Why do these qualities bring a parent such joy?

Why is it important for a parent to recognize and praise a child for his or her good qualities and accomplishments?

What qualities would parents most like to see youth develop?

Alma 38:5-9. What does Alma do with Shiblon that he also did with Helaman? (He shares his testimony)

Parents should charge their children to continue in righteousness.

In spite of Shiblon's steadiness, faithfulness, and long-suffering, Alma concludes his words to his son with an admonition. In what areas does Alma choose to offer counsel to Shiblon? (Alma 38:10-15) Why is it important to charge and warn even the most righteous?

Why is it important for youth to receive counsel and admonition without becoming defensive?

3. ALMA ADMONISHES HIS SON CORIANTON TO REPENT (Alma 39.)

Parents should reprove their children if necessary.

Alma shows us four steps for dealing with children who have made mistakes.

1. Show them what led to their sin. Analyze the following verses.

Alma 39:2. "Thou didst not give so much heed unto my words."

Alma 39:2. "Thou didst go on unto boasting in thy strength and wisdom."

Alma 39:3,4. "Thou didst forsake the ministry . . . Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry."

Alma 39:4. "She did steal away the hearts of many; but this was no excuse for thee."

You may wish to reflect on Alma's teachings on the Law of Chastity. Using the points covered in this lesson for Alma 39, determine what leads to immoral behavior, the consequences of immoral behavior, how to prevent immoral behavior, and the hope for forgiveness through the atonement of the Savior. If you discuss the prevention of immoral behavior with youth in your class or home, I strongly suggest that you use parts of the pamphlet, "For the Strength of Youth." In addition, the following quote from President Gordon B. Hinckley may be useful.

You live in a world of terrible temptation. ography, with its filth, sweeps over the earth like a horrible, engulfing tide. It is poison. Do not watch it or read it. It will destroy you if you do. . . . Stay away from it. Shun it as you would a foul disease, for it is just a ly. Be virtuous in thought and in deed. God has

planted in you, for a purpose, a divine urge, which may be easily subverted to evil and destructive ends. When you are young, do not get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, this is the time to become so involved. But you boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the s. (*Ensign*, November 1997, p. 51)

There is another point here worth some emphasis. One of Alma's first observations about the thing that led to the sin of Corianton what that he boasted in his "own strength and wisdom." (Alma 39:2) It seems to me that this kind of boasting has taken a terrible toll from among our young people in the past two or three decades. How many times have you heard someone say (or imply by word or action) "I am strong enough and smart enough to handle this"? It is not difficult to imagine a companion saying to Corianton, "Don't you go talk to Isabel! You know what she does for a living!"

And it is not difficult to imagine the response: "I can handle this! My dad is the prophet, for goodness sake. I'm just going to talk to her. I might even convert her. She need the gospel as much as any poor Zoramite. Do you think I am so weak and dumb I'll jeopardize my membership for a thing like this?"

I sat in a court in the mission field and watched a dear friend and fellow missionary excommunicated from the church for immorality. He just went for a walk by himself a few times late at night. He left his when his companion was asleep and came home pretty soon. I know he was certain that he was strong enough in the Spirit to withstand any temptation he might encounter. But one morning he was not home. He had met a young on his walks, a harlot (to use the word of Alma), and they had gone away together to a hotel in a nearby city.

This is a warning we all need to hear. We are neither as strong nor as smart as we think we are, especially when compared to the diabolical genius of Lucifer.

2. Show them the consequences of their actions. Analyze the following verses.

Alma 39:7. "Harrow up your soul."

Alma 39:8. "Your crimes . . . will stand as a testimony against you at the last day."

Alma 39:9. "Except ye do this, ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God."

Alma 39:11,12. "When they saw your conduct they would not believe my words." You may "lead away the hearts of many people to destruction."

3. Show them how to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Analyze the following verses.

Alma 39:9. "Go no more after the s of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things."

Alma 39:10. "Take it upon you to counsel with your elder brothers."

Alma 39:11. Suffer not yourself to be led away by any vain or foolish thing."

Alma 39:13. "Turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength."

Alma 39:14. "Seek not after riches nor the vain things of this world."

Alma 39:13. "Return unto them and acknowledge your faults."

4. Express love and offer hope of forgiveness through the atonement. Analyze the following verses.

Alma 39:15. "I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ

Alma 39:15. "He surely shall come to take away the sins of the world."

Alma 39:17. "Is not a soul . . . precious unto God."

Conclusion

What final insight does Alma provide about the responsibility of a parent? (Alma 39:16) Alma fulfills this responsibility with each of his sons in these chapters, and provides a wonderful example for us to follow. What can we do to better prepare the minds of our children to hear the word of the Lord? How can youths better prepare themselves to hear the counsel of their parents?