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THE POWER OF A PROMISE

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In one of the most dramatic events in the Book of Mormon, Nephi slays Laban and then, masquerading as Laban, orders the slain man's servant to accompany him into the wilderness. The deception is short-lived, however, lasting only until Zoram and Nephi overtake Nephi's brothers. At that point Zoram realizes he has fallen in with

men he takes to be his enemies.

Zoram begins to tremble and turns to flee, but Nephi physically restrains him while attempting to reason with him. "I spake with him," Nephi wrote later, "that if he would hearken unto my words, as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life" (1 Nephi 4:32).

Nephi assures Zoram, "*even with an oath*, that he need not fear; that he should be a free



May each of us emulate the Lord's example in always keeping our commitments, that others may trust us and that we may merit the Lord's approbation.

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man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us” (v. 33; emphasis added).

Nephi’s oath and words of explanation have their desired effect on Zoram. He responds with an oath of his own that he will not attempt to flee (see vv. 35–36).

Commenting on this passage, Hugh Nibley explains, “The reaction of both parties makes sense when one realizes that the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people and their descendants.”¹

The oaths having been exchanged, Nephi says, “Our fears did cease concerning him” (v. 37).

What a simple and wonderful custom—for the parties to an agreement to simply give their word and then trust that each is duty bound to do what he has promised. In

today’s world, such a thing is rare. Gone are the days when business deals consisted of a verbal agreement and a handshake. The rule now is to get everything in writing. Heads of corporations, celebrities, entertainers, sports figures, and politicians haggle publicly over breached contracts and agreements. And court dockets are clogged with litigation aimed at sorting out broken promises.

Fortunately, there is One on whom we may depend absolutely to keep His word—the Lord Jesus Christ. “For I will fulfil my promises which I have made unto the children of men,” He assures us (2 Nephi 10:17). He invites us to enter into covenants with Him, secure in the knowledge of His word: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say” (D&C 82:10).

The Lord’s constancy is one of the things that enables us to love and trust Him, and it is one of the attributes that compels us to worship Him. For instance, though I find it difficult to entirely comprehend what Jesus Christ revealed about Himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the concept humbles me:

“Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for the Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior.

“Great is his wisdom, marvelous are his ways, and the extent of his doings none can find out.

“His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand.

“From eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail” (D&C 76:1–4; emphasis added).

As mortals, we are so unlike that.

When He returns at the time of His Second Coming, one of the things that will bring us to our knees, I believe, will be not only a recognition of His grandeur but also



an acknowledgment of His absolute honesty. “Here am I, send me,” He said in the premortal world (Abraham 3:27), promising in that moment that He could be trusted to perform the Atonement and thereby become the Redeemer and the Savior of mankind.

It is unthinkable that He would have failed us. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was confronted at last by the immensity of that awful task, “to suffer, bleed, and die!”² Matthew records that the Savior “fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). The resurrected Lord tells us that He kept His word: “Glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:19).

One of the greatest blessings of my life is the covenant into which my wife and I entered when we were sealed in the temple. Blessings were pronounced upon us having to do with the years we would spend in mortality, and we are grateful that many of those have already been realized. But if we are faithful, the things we will most treasure lie in the future, beyond this life—sanctification, resurrection, a reunion with parents who are now gone but to whom we have been sealed, the joy of a growing progeny, including not only our children and beloved grandchildren but also descendants who are yet unborn, and the hope of a glorious eternal inheritance in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

How do we know these things will come to pass? Because the Lord has given His word, and on that we may depend.

May each of us emulate His example in always keeping our commitments, that others may trust us and that we may merit the



Lord’s approbation. For “they that deal truly are his delight” (Proverbs 12:22). ■

NOTES

1. *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. (1964), 104.
2. “How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Most *Ensign* articles can be used for family home evening discussions, personal reflections, or teaching the gospel in a variety of settings.

1. Show the family a legal document. Point out some of the careful wording that is necessary to make it binding. Read the scripture references in the article, and compare the promises of the Lord to the promises of men. Testify of how we can depend on the promises of the Lord.

2. Ask family members if they made any promises during the past week. If they cannot think of any, tell them you know of at least one promise made every Sunday. Ask them to think to themselves how well they have kept their sacramental covenant. Using the last part of the article, testify that the Lord perfectly upholds His part of the covenant.

The resurrected Lord tells us that He kept His word: “Glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.”