

What Can the Book of Mormon Teach Us about Happiness?

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Lehi taught his son Jacob, “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

We all want to be happy. We often long for the cheerfulness, peace, and satisfaction we see in our family members and friends whose lives seem to be filled with happiness. Everyone has felt a void of happiness in their life at one time or another. Some might even have wondered, “Will I ever be happy?”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “The Lord has embedded in [the Book of Mormon] His message to you. Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni knew that, and those who put it together put in messages for you.”¹ Because

God desires all of His children to be happy in this life, He has embedded eternal principles of happiness in the Book of Mormon. Though you can find these principles throughout, two chapters in particular—2 Nephi 5 and 4 Nephi 1—contain clear guidelines that will lead us to increased happiness if we are willing to live by them.

2 Nephi 5

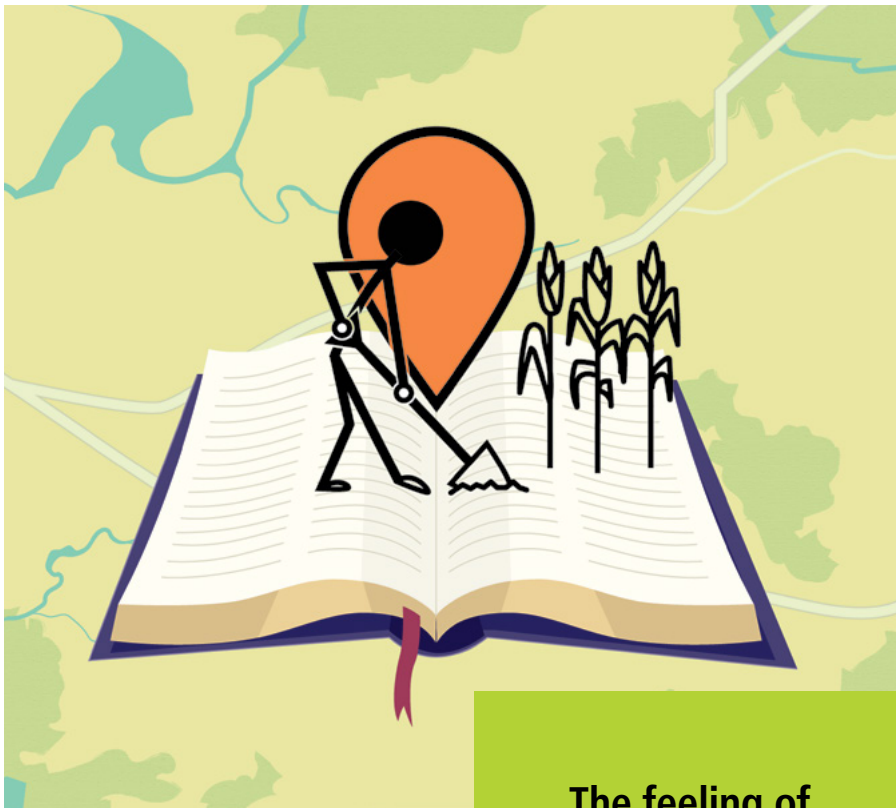
Soon after Lehi’s death, the Lord warned Nephi that Laman and Lemuel would attempt to take his life. The Lord told Nephi to take those who would go with him and flee into the wilderness. Although there must surely have been difficulties with this exodus and establishing a new community, in 2 Nephi 5:27, Nephi explained, “It came to pass that we

Seven principles we can extract from two chapters in the Book of Mormon teach us what it takes to be truly happy.

lived after the manner of happiness.” This chapter sets a pattern of happiness we can follow in our own lives. ***Maintaining Uplifting Associations***

Nephi tells us that those who fled into the wilderness with him were





those who “believed in the warnings and the revelations of God” (verse 6). A significant source of happiness is our social circle. It is important for us to spend time with others who believe as we do and whose presence is uplifting. In addition to spending time with family members, we can have uplifting associations with friends who strengthen our faith. Those interactions and associations have a significant impact on our happiness. Christine Carter, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote, “The quantity and quality of a person’s social connections—friendships, relationships

The feeling of accomplishment that often accompanies hard work brings happiness.

with family members, closeness to neighbors, etc.—is so closely related to well-being and personal happiness the two can practically be equated.”²

Aligning Actions with Beliefs

In verse 10, Nephi writes that his people kept “the commandments of the Lord.” Obedience to the

commandments is an important part of living a happy life. King Benjamin encouraged his people to “consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God” (Mosiah 2:41). It is difficult for us to be happy when we believe in God’s commandments but do not live them. Obedience brings peace of mind and peace of conscience. The Indian spiritual and political leader Mahatma Gandhi is said to have written, “Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” When our beliefs and actions are misaligned, repentance is the key to reestablishing harmony in our lives.

Accomplishing Hard Work

In verses 11 and 15 of 2 Nephi 5, Nephi writes that his people planted and harvested crops, raised animals, built buildings, and worked with various ores. He said, “I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands” (verse 17). From these verses we plainly see that work is a critical factor in obtaining happiness. Every day brings opportunities to work in our homes, around our homes, in our community, or in our employment. President Thomas S. Monson has said: “God left the world unfinished for man to work his skill upon. He left the electricity in the cloud, the oil in the earth. He left the rivers unbridged and the

forests unfelled and the cities unbuilt. God gives to man the challenge of raw materials, not the ease of finished things. He leaves the pictures unpainted and the music unsung and the problems unsolved, that man might know the joys and glories of creation.”³ Put simply, the exhilaration of being creative and the feeling of accomplishment that often accompany hard work bring happiness.

Focusing on the Temple

Nephi also tells us that he and his people took the time to build a temple (verse 16) as they established their new community. Temple blessings and happiness are inseparable. The temple teaches us of the plan of salvation and reminds us why we are here on earth. We learn that we are children of a loving Heavenly Father and our lives have great purpose in

His plan. In the temple we feel closer to Him; we feel His presence, His power, and His approval. Even if we cannot attend the temple on a regular basis, having a current temple recommend and having a picture of the temple in our homes can remind us of the temple experiences we have had and the truths we have learned there.

4 Nephi 1

In 4 Nephi, the prophet-historian Mormon tells us what happened to the people after the Savior visited the people of Nephi. As he described these people, he noted, “There could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God” (4 Nephi 1:16).

Sharing What We Have

In verse 3, Mormon writes that these people had “all things common

among them” and “there were not rich and poor.” As we seek happiness in our own lives today, it is important for us to learn to share what we have with others.

Multiple studies have shown that time spent serving and money spent on others have a direct impact on our happiness.⁴ It is no wonder, then, that King Benjamin told his people, “I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26). We have many opportunities to help those in need through service, fast offerings, and other various funds the Church manages.



Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “Down through history, poverty has been one of humankind’s greatest and most widespread challenges. Its obvious toll is usually physical, but the spiritual and emotional damage it can bring may be even more debilitating. In any case, the great Redeemer has issued no more persistent call than for us to join Him in lifting this burden from the people.”⁵ As we give more effort, time, and means to helping others, we will find an increase in our own happiness.

Belonging to a Family

Mormon tells us that these people “were married, and given in marriage” (4 Nephi 1:11). Being married and raising children (see verse 10) can be a great source of happiness for those who have these opportunities.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said, “Happiness in marriage and parenthood can exceed a thousand times any other happiness.”⁶

But we do not have to be married or have children of our own to have relationships with family members that bring happiness. Single adults, youth, and children can take part in these blessings as well. To have happiness in family life, we must try to offer each member of the family our friendship, understanding, and love. Families can provide emotional and physical safety and a sense of belonging, which are essential to experiencing happiness.

Being a Peacemaker

Four times throughout 4 Nephi, Mormon tells us these people had “no contention” among them (see verses 2, 13, 15, and 18) “because of the love

of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (verse 15). Contention and happiness are polar opposites—one leads away from the other. The Savior warned the Nephites of the dangers of contention when He said, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention” (3 Nephi 11:29). We must be sure we make a great effort to not do or say anything that brings a spirit of contention into our workplaces, schools, and homes. Instead we must do all we can to foster a love of God in our own hearts.

Often contention arises from impatience. With the help of the Spirit, we can change our nature and become more patient. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, said: “Impatience . . . is a symptom of selfishness. It is a trait



of the self-absorbed. It arises from the all-too-prevalent condition called ‘center of the universe’ syndrome, which leads people to believe that the world revolves around them and that all others are just supporting cast in the grand theater of mortality in which only they have the starring role.”⁷

There is a better way. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) invited us to “cultivate the art of the soft answer. It will bless your homes, it will bless your lives.”⁸

An Invitation to Seek Happiness

The Book of Mormon contains principles of happiness. We have covered only part of what is found in these two chapters. What could we find in the rest of the book? It would be wise to begin our own personal search of the Book of Mormon for even more guidelines to a happier life. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) promised the Saints: “The moment you begin a serious study of the Book of Mormon . . . you will find life in greater and greater abundance.”⁹ The Lord has given us this incredible tool. We can learn to use it to bless our own lives and the lives of those we love. ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2004, 11; *Liahona*, Feb. 2004, 15.



Begin your own search of the Book of Mormon for more guidelines to happiness.

- Christine Carter, “Happiness Is Being Socially Connected,” Oct. 31, 2008, greatergood.berkeley.edu.
- Thomas S. Monson, “In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 2.
- See, for example, Dunn et al., “Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness,” *Science*, vol. 319 (2008), 1687–88; Netta Weinstein and Richard M. Ryan, “When Helping Helps: Autonomous Motivation

for Prosocial Behavior and Its Influence on Well-Being for the Helper and Recipient,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 98 (2010), 222–24; and Aknin et al., “Prosocial Spending and Well-Being: Cross-Cultural Evidence for a Psychological Universal,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 104 (2013), 635–52.

- Jeffrey R. Holland, “Are We Not All Beggars?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 40.
- James E. Faust, “The Enriching of Marriage,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 11.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Continue in Patience,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 57.
- Gordon B. Hinckley, “Cornerstones of a Happy Home” (address given at a satellite broadcast for husbands and wives, Jan. 29, 1984), 8.
- Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7.