

# Finding Her Faith Again

*The way back isn't always easy,  
but it's always there.*

By David Dickson

Church Magazines

**T**he words “[Falling] away into forbidden paths and [becoming] lost” (1 Nephi 8:28) probably don’t sound very hopeful to most of us as we read them in the Book of Mormon. Quite the opposite, really. It’s all too easy to imagine a sort of gloomy finality for this group of people described in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life—the group who tasted the fruit and then left it behind.

But Te Oranoa M., age 17, from New Zealand has a different take on things. “What inspires me about this scripture,” she says, “is that it doesn’t say they are lost forever.”

What an incredible insight! And it’s one that comes from personal experience. “I, myself, fell away from the Church,” she says, “but I have been able to come back.”

## Fading Away

Te Oranoa grew up in the Church and talks about gaining her own testimony and even setting spiritual goals. “But that testimony grew cold,” she says.

In some ways, she found common ground with Amulek, particularly in the way he described himself to the people of Ammonihah: “I did harden my heart, for I was called many times

and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know” (Alma 10:6).

For Te Oranoa, that scripture hits close to home. “Just like Amulek, I knew all these spiritual things, and the Spirit was telling me to do certain things, but because I was being a bit stubborn and a bit prideful, I wouldn’t do them. Afterward, my testimony kind of faded away.”

In the end, Amulek’s story would become more than merely familiar to Te Oranoa. It would also become a turning point on the road back.

## Finding a Warm Memory

Even during the time when her faith had grown cold, she could still remember sweet experiences from before. Te Oranoa never forgot how she’d felt when attending the temple

with her youth group or going to a youth conference.

“There was a pattern,” she says. “I’d feel really good when I came to church, but I didn’t feel good when I missed church.”

There finally came a day when Te Oranoa decided to see if she could connect with those good feelings again. The first thing she did was to read through recent general conference addresses.

An October 2016 general conference address, “[Learn from Alma and Amulek](#),” by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, woke something in Te Oranoa’s soul. She recognized a lot of her own life and feelings as President Uchtdorf described how Amulek’s faith had faded. She also remembered more strongly than



*“You can turn  
back to the  
Lord whenever  
you want.”*

ever the happiness she had enjoyed when her faith was stronger. Instantly, she wanted to make some changes.

“I was hoping to find something to reignite that fire of my testimony,” she explains, “so I read President Uchtdorf’s talk, and yes, I felt on fire!”

### Hoping for Eternity

Te Oranoa’s path back to faith hasn’t always been easy, but there is a particular light at the end of the tunnel that keeps her going: the hope of an eternal family.

“Families can be together forever,” she says. “That’s my biggest dream, my biggest hope in life. Whenever I want to learn about something, or I find a doctrine hard to understand, I try and relate it back to eternal families. For example, why is Jesus Christ’s Atonement important to me? For one thing, I need His Atonement in my life so I can be worthy to enter the temple and be sealed to my family for all eternity.”

### Turning to God

It’s perhaps worth remembering that the people in Lehi’s vision who fell away after tasting the fruit did, in fact, still *taste* it. They must have known of its goodness, even if only briefly. And they can discover it again. That’s the hope Te Oranoa clings to, for herself and for others.

“You don’t have to keep going down those forbidden paths for the rest of your life,” she says. “You can turn back to the Lord whenever you want.” **NE**

