

# —THE— *Answer* —BOOK—

*We knew the Book of Mormon held answers. But did it hold an answer for a family that would lose financial support by joining the Church?*



By Michael Frazier

“I can’t wait to see Maria and her family today,” I mentioned to my companion on the way to their home. “Yeah, me too. Just a few days until they’re baptized!” he replied.

Maria and her children had been investigating the Church for several months. We had witnessed much of their conversion process and had seen the excitement on all of their faces as they talked about making their baptismal covenant with God.

We arrived at Maria’s door and knocked. She answered but she was not her usual cheerful self. Her smile had been replaced by a look of sadness.

“Come in,” she muttered and showed us to the living room. The children—Maria, Carlos, Ricardo, and Marisol—all seemed depressed. Their shoulders drooped, and they wouldn’t look us in the eye.

“I don’t know if we’re going to be baptized,” Maria said to the floor.

“Why not?” I asked in surprise.

Maria explained that she had received an ultimatum from her ex-husband, Ishmael: Either she said good-bye to us or she could say good-bye to his money.

We tried to explain to Maria that God would provide for her and the children even if Ishmael didn’t, that they would not be left destitute if they obeyed God’s commandments. However, when we left, the whole house still felt defeated by Ishmael and his threat.

What could we do to help Maria and the children stick with their decision to be baptized? How could we build their faith?

We prayed that night and the next morning. Then as we began our companionship study a thought came to our minds. Our mission president had taught us that the answer to any problem could be found in the scriptures, and especially in the Book of Mormon. We decided to focus our Book of Mormon studies that morning on Maria.

We were reading in Alma 20. Here, Ammon and Lamoni meet Lamoni’s father en route to free Ammon’s brethren

from prison. Lamoni knew his father would be upset with him for becoming a Christian. He was afraid of what his father might do.

The comparison seemed obvious. Maria had been converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now a man with substantial influence over her well-being was upset. How would she respond?

We returned to Maria's house to share this story. Maria let us in, and we began to teach. We had Maria read:

"Now the father of Lamoni commanded him that he should slay Ammon with the sword. And he also commanded him that he should not go to the land of Middoni, but that he should return with him to the land of Ishmael" (Alma 20:14).

As Maria read we helped her see how king Lamoni's father was like her ex-husband, Ishmael:

"Ishmael doesn't like us or what we teach, does he?"

"No."  Yes.

"He wants you to forget us and follow him to the land of Ishmael, right?"

No.  "Yes," she laughed.

"Well, let's see how Lamoni responds."

Maria read: "But Lamoni said unto him: I will not slay Ammon, neither will I return to the land of Ishmael, but I go the land of Middoni that I may release the brethren of Ammon, for I know that they are just men and holy prophets of the true God" (v. 15).

"Maria, do you believe that we represent Jesus Christ and that what we teach is true?" we asked.

No.  "I do," she replied.

"Do you believe that by being baptized you are doing what God wants you to do?"

No.  "Yes," she said.

"Do you believe that God will provide for you and your family even if Ishmael will not?"

No.  "I know He will."

"Then what will you say to Ishmael?"

"I'LL TELL HIM THAT HE CAN DO WHATEVER HE WOULD LIKE, BUT WE'RE GETTING BAPTIZED!"

Carlos, Ricardo, and Marisol all cheered. We were amazed to see the transformation. Before there was despair. Now there was joy.

Maria did boldly tell Ishmael that she was being baptized, and a few days later Maria, Carlos, Ricardo, and Marisol made that covenant with God and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Ishmael did not carry out his threat. Instead he continued to visit his children and help provide for their needs. Perhaps his heart was softened by Maria's faith just as the heart of Lamoni's father was softened by Lamoni's faith.

There *are* answers to our problems in the scriptures. Alma did not necessarily have Maria in mind when he wrote about Lamoni's encounter with his father, but I was amazed at how well it applied to her situation, even down to the name Ishmael. I know that the scriptures can help us respond with courage to difficult situations, buoy us up in times of despair, and guide us in times of darkness. **NE**

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