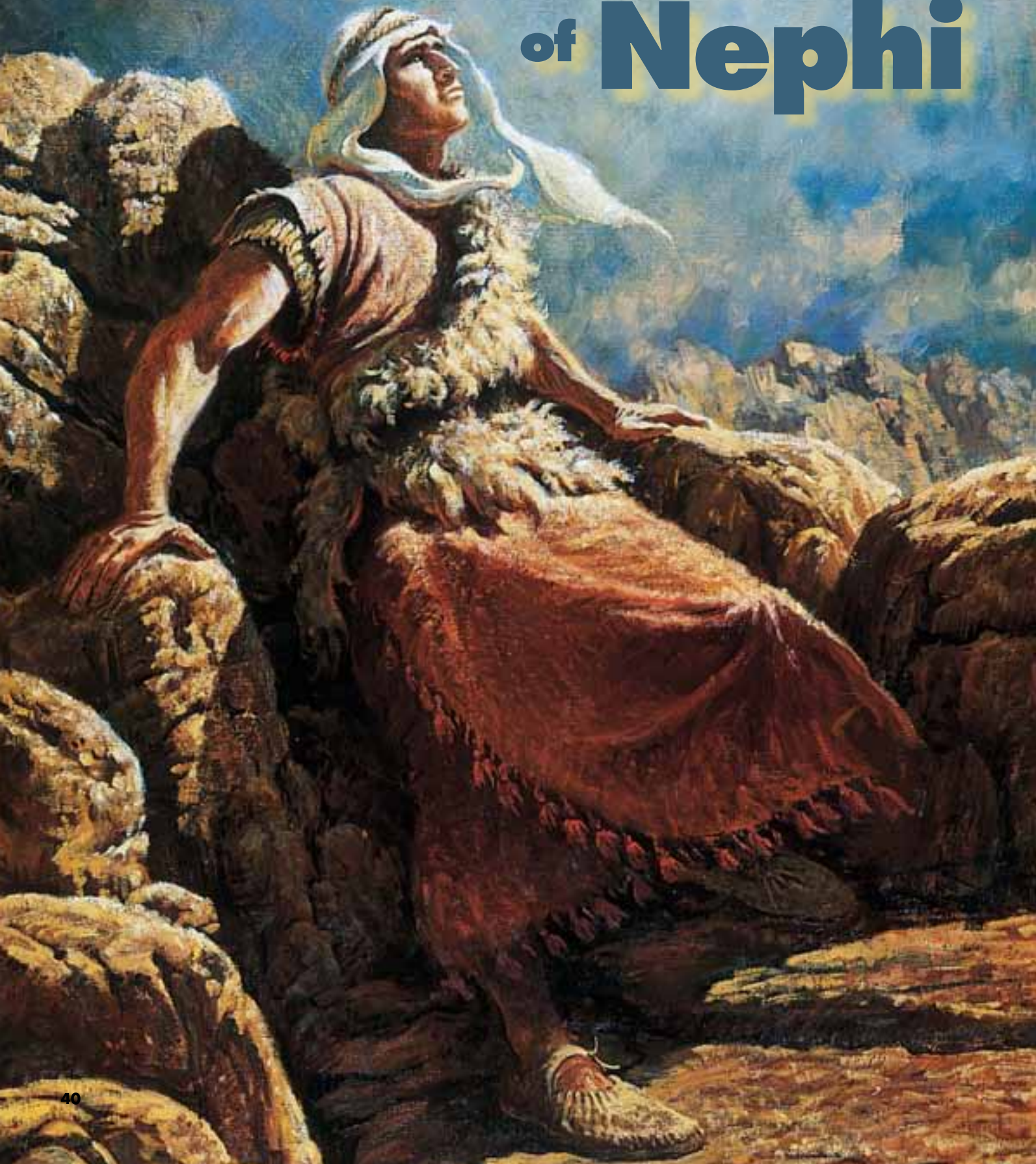


The Education of Nephi



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Church Magazines

We can learn a lot by studying how Nephi learned, as well as how he taught.

When we think of Nephi, we often picture him as Lehi's "good" son—the faithful, courageous, and obedient one—and as a great prophet and leader. But have you ever thought about Nephi as a student?

Read the Book of Mormon with this question in mind, and you'll find that Nephi was, first of all, an excellent learner and that he also became a master teacher.

Take a close look at his example, and you'll discover ways to improve your own gospel learning and teaching.

As a Student

1. Be ready to learn new things. When Lehi told his family that they would leave Jerusalem, Laman and Lemuel complained. While Nephi could have had some of the same doubts his brothers had, he had "great desires to know of the mysteries of God," so he prayed, and the Lord "visited [him], and did soften [his] heart that [he] did believe all the words which had been spoken by [his] father" (1 Nephi 2:16). The Lord then told him, "Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, for thou hast sought me diligently, with lowliness of heart" (v. 19).

In this episode we see the four qualities that set Nephi apart as a learner and prepared him to be led by the Holy Spirit: desire, faith, diligence, and humility.

• His *desire* to know the things of God caused him to ponder what he learned (see 1 Nephi 10:17; 11:1–3, 6, 10–11).



• His *faith* strengthened him and led him to pray to the Lord, believing he would receive an answer (see 1 Nephi 7:17; 11:4–5; 15:11; 16:28–29; 2 Nephi 33:3).

• His *diligence* in seeking the Lord and obeying His commandments qualified him for the Lord's trust (see 1 Nephi 3:7; 10:17, 19; 16:28–29).

• His *humility* made him receptive to the Lord's answers (see 1 Nephi 11:17; 2 Nephi 4:17–19).

Nephi had a great desire to know the gospel. He believed in the words of his father, and he sought the Lord diligently and in humility. You can follow this pattern as you kneel in prayer, interact with your family, and ask for answers from the Lord.



ON THE PRACTICAL SIDE

Of course, Nephi's education didn't begin and end with gospel-related subjects. He learned other things, including, possibly, a trade—metalworking. The Book of Mormon tells us that:

- Nephi commented on the craftsmanship of Laban's sword (see 1 Nephi 4:9) and the workmanship of the Liahona (1 Nephi 16:10).
- When the Lord commanded Nephi to build a ship, He showed Nephi how it should be built. But apparently Nephi didn't need to be taught how to make tools; he simply asked the Lord where he should go to get ore to make them (see 1 Nephi 17:9–12).
- In the promised land, Nephi remarked on the metals available and used them to make several plates to keep records on (see 1 Nephi 18:25; 19:1).
- Nephi also made many swords patterned after Laban's sword and taught his people how to work with metals (see 2 Nephi 5:14–15).

See “Recent Studies on the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, June 1989, 50–51. For more on this topic, look up the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship (www.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu), and read “Metals of the Book of Mormon” by Revell Phillips (*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 [2000], 36–41).



N*ephi explained to others what he had learned for himself. He found that Sam listened, even though Laman and Lemuel murmured and complained. When you share your gospel knowledge with others, you are following Nephi's example, whether they believe you or not. And as you share your testimony, you will find that it grows.*

When Nephi told his brother Sam about what he learned from the Lord, Sam “believed in [his] words” (1 Nephi 2:17). By contrast, his brothers Laman and Lemuel murmured and complained. After Lehi told them about his dream, they couldn't understand what it meant, and they were “disputing one with another” about it (1 Nephi 15:2). Nephi then asked them a question that seemed obvious to him: “Have ye inquired of the Lord?” (v. 8). They replied that they had not, “for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us” (v. 9). Because they lacked Nephi's desire, faith, diligence, and humility, they were not ready to learn.

2. Take the new things you learn and connect them to what you already know. Nephi “was taught somewhat in all the learning of [his] father” (1 Nephi 1:1), so he already had a solid base of knowledge to build on. With this foundation, he could “liken all scripture” to himself and his family (1 Nephi 19:20). He said, “My soul delighteth in the scriptures,” and on top of that, he said, “My heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard” (2 Nephi 4:15–16).

3. Explain and testify about what you learn. Nephi explained to his brothers what he learned from the Lord and bore testimony to them of its truthfulness (see, for example, 1 Nephi 15). Explaining something to another person helps you understand it even better. And if you testify of gospel

truths, you'll discover that "a testimony is to be found in the bearing of it" (Boyd K. Packer, "The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge," *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 6).

As a Teacher

1. State the truth clearly and plainly.

Nephi believed in the power of stating the truth plainly. He said, "My soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn" (2 Nephi 25:4), and "I glory in plainness; I glory in truth" (2 Nephi 33:6).

"The Lord showed [Nephi] great things" (1 Nephi 18:3), including sweeping visions of the future. Nephi, in turn, taught his people plainly so that they could not misunderstand (see 2 Nephi 25:28).

2. Give examples of the truths you teach. Nephi often used stories from the scriptures to illustrate what he taught. For example, when he was trying to persuade Laman and Lemuel to help him build a ship, he told them that they needed to have faith and be obedient. He taught them this lesson by reminding them of specific instances when the children of Israel were blessed for obeying and trusting the Lord (being led out of bondage in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, being fed with manna, getting water from the rock) and when they were cursed for murmuring against Him and hardening their hearts (plagues of serpents, other destructions; see 1 Nephi 17).

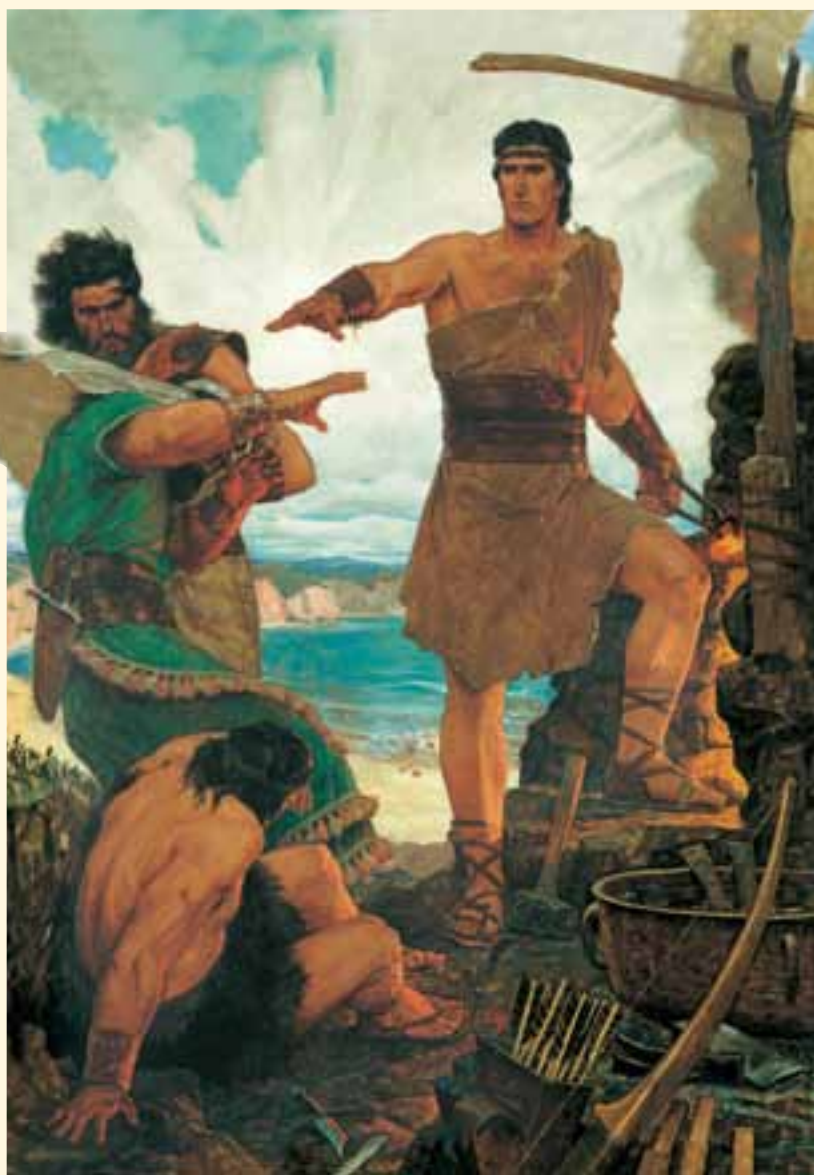
By giving examples of the principle he was teaching his brothers, Nephi made his teaching more powerful and easy to apply.

3. Teach by the Spirit. Nephi knew that the Spirit was essential to teaching the gospel, because "when a man speaketh

Nephi kept his teaching simple. "I glory in plainness," he said. Do the same when you teach so that the power of the Spirit can accompany your words.

by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1). Like Nephi, you can live close to the Spirit and speak when the Spirit prompts you to speak (see 2 Nephi 1:27). **NE**

For more on being a good teacher and learner, read "You're a Teacher Too," *New Era*, Sept. 2006, p. 44.



LEFT: NEPHI WRITING ON THE GOLD PLATES; BY PAUL MANN; CENTER: ILLUSTRATION BY JERRY THOMPSON; RIGHT: NEPHI REBUKING HIS REBELLIOUS BROTHERS; BY ARNOLD FRIBERG