



# “Let’s Make That Our Motto”

By Christopher Lambe

“All right, Privates!” the drill sergeant boomed. “Today is Sunday. Who here wants to go to church?”

Ten of the 63 men in my platoon raised their hands.

“Privates, we have a lot of things to get done today,” brayed the sergeant in his best intimidating voice. “I’m not trying to discourage you from going to church, but if you go, you will fall behind everybody else. So who here wants to go to church?”

Now my hand was the only one in the air. I was 18 years old, and basic training was my first real experience away from home. I knew I would need the strength and comfort I could find in attending church, taking the sacrament, and worshipping my Heavenly Father.

“Private!” the drill sergeant screeched as he approached me. Standing directly in front of me, he

roared his former words with no variation.

I raised my hand for the third time. Screaming at the top of his lungs, he repeated his speech. I again put my hand high in the air and looked him in the eyes.

“Drill Sergeant, I have a right to go to church, and I want to go, Drill Sergeant.”

“*Fine*. What religion are you, Private?”

“Drill Sergeant, I’m LDS, Drill Sergeant,” I answered.

“You’re a Mormon boy! Yeah, you Mormons *love* to go to church. I’ll take you there myself.”

## A Long Ride, a Blessing Given

That ride to church was the longest 10 minutes of my life. The whole time the drill sergeant swore and belittled me, saying how stupid he thought Mormonism was. When he finally dropped me off at the meeting-house, I found happy and welcoming

**I shared the story of Helaman’s stripling warriors with my fellow soldiers, which inspired us to make obeying “with exactness” our motto.**





### **A CLEAR PATTERN**

"The patterns and truths found in the Book of Mormon are clear and instructive, plain

and precious. When we begin with righteousness and obedience, we will end with blessings and joy."

Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "The Safety and Peace of Keeping the Commandments," *Ensign*, Dec. 2012, 65.

members—a stark contrast to what I'd been through that morning. Overwhelmed with relief—and by the Spirit—I began to cry.

Two senior missionaries approached me and asked how I was doing. I told them about my experience with the drill sergeant and requested a priesthood blessing. In the blessing I was admonished to increase my confidence and faith in Christ and was promised that as the Lord had done with Captain Moroni, He would raise me up to be an example in the lives of those around me.

### **Increased Faith and Confidence in Christ**

Basic training didn't get any easier. For the next nine weeks, the drill sergeant seemed to constantly find ways to make fun of me for my beliefs. Still, I sought opportunities to be at peace, find happiness, and, as I had been counseled, increase my confidence and faith in Christ. I found these things as I attended church and read my scriptures—I never missed a day of personal study. Helaman 5:12 especially bolstered my faith:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall

beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall."

This scripture gave me the courage and strength I needed to face my trials.

### **Helaman's Stripling Warriors Became Our Heroes**

As time moved forward, our platoon became discordant. It seemed we were constantly being punished because we weren't working together as a team. One day our platoon leader talked to us about the importance of being united and following orders and then invited us to make suggestions for improvement. The story of Helaman and his band of stripling warriors came to my mind.

"I know you guys are not part of my faith," I said, "but if it's okay, I would like to share a story about a group of warriors in the Book of Mormon."

The men agreed, so I told them about the 2,000 stripling warriors (see Alma 53, 56–57). I shared with them that the reason those soldiers were able to survive and accomplish the tasks they were given was because they had faith in God and because they obeyed every commandment "with exactness" (Alma 57:21).

“Why can’t we be like them?” I asked. “If these individuals were able to fight and defend their country, their freedom, their lives, and their families, why can’t we? Let’s make that our motto. Let’s do what our leaders ask of us and see what type of men we can become.”

A fellow soldier stood up. “For my life, my liberty, and my family!” he said. “Isn’t that why we are here—to defend the U.S. Constitution and the

freedoms of others? I’ll put that upon myself. Let’s do it!”

From that point on, we called each other one of the 2,000 warriors. In real ways, that group from the Book of Mormon became our heroes. Later on, I was even able to read the story from the Book of Mormon to my platoon members.

We still had some challenges after that, but as we began to perform our tasks with exactness, things changed

for the better. My fellow soldiers also started to ask me questions about my faith, particularly wanting to know why it was so important to me to practice it. I invited them to attend church with me. Although I had been the only soldier attending that first Sunday, by the last week of basic training, 15 others were attending church.

### **Faith to Withstand Trials**

It has been several years since basic training. I have a wonderful family. I am retired from the active military and work with the Department of Veterans Affairs serving other veterans. My experiences during basic training continue to touch my heart and strengthen me—particularly the experience of learning to rely on my Father in Heaven, on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, and on the Holy Ghost, who led me to the marvelous example of the stripling warriors in the Book of Mormon.

I know that building on “the rock of our Redeemer” and having immovable faith in Him can help us withstand even the most difficult temptations and difficulties. And I know that following the commandments with exactness, as the stripling warriors did, will bring us closer to our Father in Heaven and allow us to more fully feel His love, peace, and happiness in our lives. ■

*The author lives in Utah, USA.*

