

Korihor's Charisma: The Philosophies of an Anti-Christ



Follow Alma's example when confronting philosophies of faithlessness.

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During a time of unparalleled missionary success in the Book of Mormon, a man named Korihor appears among the Nephites and preaches against belief in the coming of Jesus Christ. Many today preach the same appealing philosophies, “their arguments . . . not so different from those in the Book of Mormon.”¹

Understanding how righteous Nephites dealt with these philosophies can give us strength and insight to stay anchored to Christ.

One religious educator dubbed Korihor's beliefs the 13 articles of faithlessness.² Korihor tries to tear down faith in Christ using distinct methods. Four times he claims that Church members “cannot know” or “do not know” spiritual realities (Alma 30:15, 24, 26, 48). Furthermore, he mocks believers by calling them “frenzied” and deranged, and their traditions and ordinances “foolish” and “silly” (verses 16, 23, 31). Sound familiar?

Korihor styles himself as enlightened—in contrast to believers who embrace the prophecies and traditions of those he considers outdated and unsophisticated. Many of Korihor’s arguments in Alma 30 parallel language we hear today:

- There is no God or Savior (see verses 12, 28, 38).
- There is no need for faith or repentance (see verses 15–16).
- There can be no atonement made for sin (see verse 17).
- There is no afterlife (see verse 18).
- Commandments restrict freedom and lead to blind obedience (see verses 23, 28).
- Church leaders exercise power over Church members and use funds for selfish purposes (see verse 27).
- Nothing is a crime when you only live once (see verse 17).

Dealing with Anti-Christ Philosophies

When Korihor preaches his brand of faithlessness to the consecrated and converted people of Ammon, they cause Korihor to “be carried out of the land” (Alma 30:21). Korihor’s message also falls on deaf ears in the city of Gideon. The people there perceived the hardness of his heart and “would not make any reply to his words” (verse 29).

We aren’t obligated to respond to every attack on our faith. The Savior was silent when questioned by Herod (see Luke 23:8–9). As a Church leader once said, “*You cannot prove the Church is true by disproving every claim made against it.* That will never work. It is a flawed strategy.”³

Korihor, brought before Alma, rises in great swelling words, reviling and accusing him. Alma brilliantly appeals to Korihor’s intellect, adding logic as a dual witness to his own testimony. We need not appeal only to *our* testimonies when addressing accusations that shake beliefs. Like Alma, we can offer “evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1) from four sources:

1. Testimonies of Church members
2. Testimonies of the prophets
3. The scriptures
4. The earth and the planets, which “do witness that there is a Supreme Creator” (Alma 30:44)

Lessons Learned from Korihor

Korihor led away the hearts of the people and caused “them to lift up their heads in their wickedness” (Alma 30:18). We must beware. Satan still uses false doctrine to tempt us to commit sin, especially sexual sin.

Korihor dares Alma to show him a sign, is struck dumb, confesses that he “always knew that there was a God,” goes begging from house to house, and is finally trodden down and dies (see verses 48–59).

So, why did he preach false philosophies? Because they pleased the natural man and made him successful, and he came to believe “they were true” (verse 53). In the end, he fooled himself.

Mormon observes, “The devil will not support his children at the last day” (verse 60). The philosophies of Satan are unsustainable because the adversary cannot make good on his promises. Contrast that with the Book of Mormon theme that God always fulfills His promises (see 2 Nephi 1:20; 10:17; Alma 37:17).

When you confront philosophies that may weaken your faith, trust in a God whose word yields fruit “which is sweet above all that is sweet” (Alma 32:42). Faithful gospel living bears fruit that is always abundantly sweeter than the empty promises and shallow satisfaction of ripening in iniquity. ■

NOTES

1. Boyd K. Packer, “Lehi’s Dream and You,” *New Era*, Jan. 2015, 4–5.
2. I thank Scott Woodward for his memorable way of remembering Korihor’s philosophies.
3. Lawrence E. Corbridge, “Stand Forever” (Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 22, 2019), 5, speeches.byu.edu.