

Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon

Teacher Manual
Religion 275

A Cornerstone Course

Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon Teacher Manual

Religion 275

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Comments and corrections are appreciated. Please send them, including errors, to:

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Contents

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| Introduction to Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon Teacher Manual . . . | v |
| 1 The Book of Mormon Is Another Testament of Jesus Christ | 1 |
| 2 Heeding the Words of Prophets | 5 |
| 3 Obedience Brings Blessings | 9 |
| 4 The Fall of Adam and the Gift of Agency | 13 |
| 5 The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ | 17 |
| 6 The Book of Mormon Was Written for Our Day | 21 |
| 7 The Book of Mormon and the Bible | 25 |
| 8 Salvation Comes through Jesus Christ | 29 |
| 9 “Seek Ye for the Kingdom of God” | 33 |
| 10 Prayer and Revelation | 37 |
| 11 Protecting Ourselves against the False Doctrines of the Last Days | 42 |
| 12 Our Need for Spiritual Rebirth | 46 |
| 13 The Baptismal Covenant, the Sabbath, and the Sacrament | 50 |
| 14 God’s Power of Deliverance | 54 |
| 15 Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God | 58 |
| 16 Repentance and Forgiveness | 63 |
| 17 The Power of the Word | 67 |
| 18 Preparing for the Final Day of Judgment | 71 |
| 19 Defending Religious Freedom | 75 |
| 20 Strengthening Our Faith and Testimony | 80 |
| 21 The Coming of Jesus Christ | 84 |
| 22 “Even as I Am” | 87 |
| 23 The Scattering and Gathering of Israel | 91 |
| 24 All Are Alike unto God | 95 |
| 25 Living Righteously in a Day of Wickedness | 99 |
| 26 After the Trial of Faith | 103 |
| 27 Faith, Hope, and Charity | 107 |
| 28 Come unto Christ | 111 |

Introduction to *Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon Teacher Manual* (Religion 275)

What is expected of a religion teacher?

As you prepare to teach, it is important to understand the Objective of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion:

"Our purpose is to help youth and young adults understand and rely on the teachings and Atonement of Jesus Christ, qualify for the blessings of the temple, and prepare themselves, their families, and others for eternal life with their Father in Heaven" (*Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* [2012], x).

You can achieve this purpose by diligently living the gospel, effectively teaching the gospel to your students, and appropriately administering your class or program. As you prepare and teach the gospel in these ways, you will qualify for the influence of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 42:14).

It is your opportunity to help students learn by the Spirit so they can strengthen their faith and deepen their conversion. You can help students accomplish this as you lead them to identify, understand, feel the truth and importance of, and apply significant doctrines and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The *Gospel Teaching and Learning* handbook is an essential resource for understanding the teaching process and learning how to become successful in the classroom.

What are the objectives and purposes of this course?

It is anticipated that many institute-age students will have previously studied the Book of Mormon sequentially—from beginning to end—at seminary, at home, or on a mission. This course, *Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon* (Religion 275), is designed to help students use a different approach to studying the Book of Mormon. The lessons found in this course focus on prominent doctrinal themes emphasized by the inspired authors of the Book of Mormon.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) invited readers of the Book of Mormon to center their attention on the doctrine it contains:



"The Book of Mormon was written for our day. ... Not only should we know what history and faith-promoting stories it contains, but we should understand its teachings. If we really do our homework and approach the Book of Mormon doctrinally, we can expose the errors and find the truths to combat many of the current false theories and philosophies of men" ("Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 4).

Throughout this course, students will study the prophetic writings and teachings found in the Book of Mormon, with emphasis on Heavenly Father's plan and the central role of His Son, Jesus Christ. Students will better understand the Book of Mormon as another witness of Jesus Christ and will deepen their love for and testimony of Him. They will improve their ability to study the doctrines of the gospel in their scriptural context, leading to greater understanding and personal discipleship. They will be

prepared to explain and testify of the importance and divine origin of the Book of Mormon and the doctrine it contains.

What is expected of students?

In order to receive credit toward institute graduation, students are required to read the scripture passages, general conference talks, and other materials listed in the Student Readings section of each lesson. Students must also meet attendance requirements and demonstrate competency with course material by completing an assessment.

How are lessons structured in this manual?

This course is designed as a semester-long course with 28 lessons written for 50-minute class periods. If your class meets twice each week, teach one lesson each class period. If your class meets only once each week for 90 to 100 minutes, combine and teach two lessons each class period. Each lesson outline consists of four sections:

- Introduction
- Background Reading
- Suggestions for Teaching
- Student Readings

Introduction

This section provides a brief introduction to the topics and objectives of the lesson.

Background Reading

This section recommends resources, such as messages from latter-day prophets and other Church leaders, that can help you better understand the doctrines, principles, and gospel truths covered in the lesson outline.

Suggestions for Teaching

The Suggestions for Teaching section includes material to help you know both *what* to teach and *how* to teach it (see also sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 in the *Gospel Teaching and Learning* handbook). Suggested learning activities are designed to help students identify, understand, feel the truth and importance of, and apply sacred truths. You may choose to use some or all of the suggestions as you adapt them to fit your individual teaching style and to meet the needs and circumstances of your students. As you consider how to adapt lesson materials, follow this counsel from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"President Packer has often taught, in my hearing, that we first adopt, then we adapt. If we are thoroughly grounded in the prescribed lesson that we are to give, then we can follow the Spirit to adapt it. But there is a temptation, when we speak about this flexibility, to start off by adapting rather than adopting. It's a balance. It's a continual challenge. But the approach of adopting first and then adapting is a good way to stay on sound ground" ("A Panel Discussion with Elder Dallin H. Oaks" [Seminaries and Institutes of Religion satellite broadcast, Aug. 7, 2012], si.lds.org).

This course includes statements by Church leaders that are likely to be available in multiple languages. As you prepare to teach, you may adapt the lessons by using other available statements by Church leaders that are relevant to the subject matter.

The Suggestions for Teaching section contains at least one doctrine or principle statement, which appears in bold. As students discover these doctrines and principles and share what they have learned, their words may differ from those stated in the manual. When this happens, be careful not to imply that their answers are wrong. However, if a statement could be more accurate, carefully help clarify understanding.

This curriculum demonstrates how to incorporate the fundamentals of gospel teaching and learning into a thematic course (see *Gospel Teaching and Learning*, 10, 23–31, 38–41).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described some of the benefits that come from studying the gospel thematically:



“Whereas reading a book of scripture from beginning to end provides a basic breadth of knowledge, studying by topic increases the depth of our knowledge. Searching in the revelations for connections, patterns, and themes builds upon and adds to our spiritual knowledge ... ; it broadens our perspective and understanding of the plan of salvation.

“In my judgment, diligently searching to discover connections, patterns, and themes is part of what it means to ‘feast’ upon the words of Christ. This approach can open the floodgates of the spiritual reservoir, enlighten our understanding through His Spirit, and produce a depth of gratitude for the holy scriptures and a degree of spiritual commitment that can be received in no other way. Such searching enables us to build upon the rock of our Redeemer and to withstand the winds of wickedness in these latter days” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [Brigham Young University fireside, Feb. 4, 2007], 3, speeches.byu.edu).

Student Readings

This section lists scripture passages, talks by Church leaders, and other materials that will enrich student understanding of the topics emphasized in the lessons. Assign and encourage students to read these materials before they come to each class. As they study these inspired materials, they will not only be better prepared to participate in class discussions, but they will also gain broader and deeper understanding of course topics. Provide students with the list of all Student Readings at the beginning of the semester.

How can I prepare to teach?

The Lord will assist you as you prepare to teach. As you prepare, you may find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I striving to live the gospel worthily so I can be receptive to the Spirit in my teaching?
- Have I prayed to receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost? (See D&C 42:14.)
- Have I studied the assigned scripture blocks and background reading?
- Have I read the curriculum and determined if there is anything that I need to adapt or adjust to meet the needs of my students?
- How can I follow up with students to ensure that they are getting the most out of assigned readings?
- How can I help each of my students fully participate in the lesson?

The following recommendations may also be helpful:

| Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon (Religion 275) | |
|---|--|
| Student Readings | |
| 1. The Book of Mormon: Introduction | • Introduction to the Book of Mormon, pp. 1–10 (see also pp. 11–12, 13–14, 15–16, 17–18, 19–20, 21–22, 23–24, 25–26, 27–28, 29–30, 31–32, 33–34, 35–36, 37–38, 39–40, 41–42, 43–44, 45–46, 47–48, 49–50, 51–52, 53–54, 55–56, 57–58, 59–60, 61–62, 63–64, 65–66, 67–68, 69–70, 71–72, 73–74, 75–76, 77–78, 79–80, 81–82, 83–84, 85–86, 87–88, 89–90, 91–92, 93–94, 95–96, 97–98, 99–100, 101–102, 103–104, 105–106, 107–108, 109–110, 111–112, 113–114, 115–116, 117–118, 119–120, 121–122, 123–124, 125–126, 127–128, 129–130, 131–132, 133–134, 135–136, 137–138, 139–140, 141–142, 143–144, 145–146, 147–148, 149–150, 151–152, 153–154, 155–156, 157–158, 159–160, 161–162, 163–164, 165–166, 167–168, 169–170, 171–172, 173–174, 175–176, 177–178, 179–180, 181–182, 183–184, 185–186, 187–188, 189–190, 191–192, 193–194, 195–196, 197–198, 199–200, 201–202, 203–204, 205–206, 207–208, 209–210, 211–212, 213–214, 215–216, 217–218, 219–220, 221–222, 223–224, 225–226, 227–228, 229–230, 231–232, 233–234, 235–236, 237–238, 239–240, 241–242, 243–244, 245–246, 247–248, 249–250, 251–252, 253–254, 255–256, 257–258, 259–260, 261–262, 263–264, 265–266, 267–268, 269–270, 271–272, 273–274, 275–276, 277–278, 279–280, 281–282, 283–284, 285–286, 287–288, 289–290, 291–292, 293–294, 295–296, 297–298, 299–300, 301–302, 303–304, 305–306, 307–308, 309–310, 311–312, 313–314, 315–316, 317–318, 319–320, 321–322, 323–324, 325–326, 327–328, 329–330, 331–332, 333–334, 335–336, 337–338, 339–340, 341–342, 343–344, 345–346, 347–348, 349–350, 351–352, 353–354, 355–356, 357–358, 359–360, 361–362, 363–364, 365–366, 367–368, 369–370, 371–372, 373–374, 375–376, 377–378, 379–380, 381–382, 383–384, 385–386, 387–388, 389–390, 391–392, 393–394, 395–396, 397–398, 399–400, 401–402, 403–404, 405–406, 407–408, 409–410, 411–412, 413–414, 415–416, 417–418, 419–420, 421–422, 423–424, 425–426, 427–428, 429–430, 431–432, 433–434, 435–436, 437–438, 439–440, 441–442, 443–444, 445–446, 447–448, 449–450, 451–452, 453–454, 455–456, 457–458, 459–460, 461–462, 463–464, 465–466, 467–468, 469–470, 471–472, 473–474, 475–476, 477–478, 479–480, 481–482, 483–484, 485–486, 487–488, 489–490, 491–492, 493–494, 495–496, 497–498, 499–500, 501–502, 503–504, 505–506, 507–508, 509–510, 511–512, 513–514, 515–516, 517–518, 519–520, 521–522, 523–524, 525–526, 527–528, 529–530, 531–532, 533–534, 535–536, 537–538, 539–540, 541–542, 543–544, 545–546, 547–548, 549–550, 551–552, 553–554, 555–556, 557–558, 559–560, 561–562, 563–564, 565–566, 567–568, 569–570, 571–572, 573–574, 575–576, 577–578, 579–580, 581–582, 583–584, 585–586, 587–588, 589–590, 591–592, 593–594, 595–596, 597–598, 599–600, 601–602, 603–604, 605–606, 607–608, 609–610, 611–612, 613–614, 615–616, 617–618, 619–620, 621–622, 623–624, 625–626, 627–628, 629–630, 631–632, 633–634, 635–636, 637–638, 639–640, 641–642, 643–644, 645–646, 647–648, 649–650, 651–652, 653–654, 655–656, 657–658, 659–660, 661–662, 663–664, 665–666, 667–668, 669–670, 671–672, 673–674, 675–676, 677–678, 679–680, 681–682, 683–684, 685–686, 687–688, 689–690, 691–692, 693–694, 695–696, 697–698, 699–700, 701–702, 703–704, 705–706, 707–708, 709–710, 711–712, 713–714, 715–716, 717–718, 719–720, 721–722, 723–724, 725–726, 727–728, 729–730, 731–732, 733–734, 735–736, 737–738, 739–740, 741–742, 743–744, 745–746, 747–748, 749–750, 751–752, 753–754, 755–756, 757–758, 759–760, 761–762, 763–764, 765–766, 767–768, 769–770, 771–772, 773–774, 775–776, 777–778, 779–780, 781–782, 783–784, 785–786, 787–788, 789–790, 791–792, 793–794, 795–796, 797–798, 799–800, 801–802, 803–804, 805–806, 807–808, 809–810, 811–812, 813–814, 815–816, 817–818, 819–820, 821–822, 823–824, 825–826, 827–828, 829–830, 831–832, 833–834, 835–836, 837–838, 839–840, 841–842, 843–844, 845–846, 847–848, 849–850, 851–852, 853–854, 855–856, 857–858, 859–860, 861–862, 863–864, 865–866, 867–868, 869–870, 871–872, 873–874, 875–876, 877–878, 879–880, 881–882, 883–884, 885–886, 887–888, 889–890, 891–892, 893–894, 895–896, 897–898, 899–900, 901–902, 903–904, 905–906, 907–908, 909–910, 911–912, 913–914, 915–916, 917–918, 919–920, 921–922, 923–924, 925–926, 927–928, 929–930, 931–932, 933–934, 935–936, 937–938, 939–940, 941–942, 943–944, 945–946, 947–948, 949–950, 951–952, 953–954, 955–956, 957–958, 959–960, 961–962, 963–964, 965–966, 967–968, 969–970, 971–972, 973–974, 975–976, 977–978, 979–980, 981–982, 983–984, 985–986, 987–988, 989–990, 991–992, 993–994, 995–996, 997–998, 999–1000, 1001–1002, 1003–1004, 1005–1006, 1007–1008, 1009–1010, 1011–1012, 1013–1014, 1015–1016, 1017–1018, 1019–1020, 1021–1022, 1023–1024, 1025–1026, 1027–1028, 1029–1030, 1031–1032, 1033–1034, 1035–1036, 1037–1038, 1039–1040, 1041–1042, 1043–1044, 1045–1046, 1047–1048, 1049–1050, 1051–1052, 1053–1054, 1055–1056, 1057–1058, 1059–1060, 1061–1062, 1063–1064, 1065–1066, 1067–1068, 1069–1070, 1071–1072, 1073–1074, 1075–1076, 1077–1078, 1079–1080, 1081–1082, 1083–1084, 1085–1086, 1087–1088, 1089–1090, 1091–1092, 1093–1094, 1095–1096, 1097–1098, 1099–1100, 1101–1102, 1103–1104, 1105–1106, 1107–1108, 1109–1110, 1111–1112, 1113–1114, 1115–1116, 1117–1118, 1119–1120, 1121–1122, 1123–1124, 1125–1126, 1127–1128, 1129–1130, 1131–1132, 1133–1134, 1135–1136, 1137–1138, 1139–1140, 1141–1142, 1143–1144, 1145–1146, 1147–1148, 1149–1150, 1151–1152, 1153–1154, 1155–1156, 1157–1158, 1159–1160, 1161–1162, 1163–1164, 1165–1166, 1167–1168, 1169–1170, 1171–1172, 1173–1174, 1175–1176, 1177–1178, 1179–1180, 1181–1182, 1183–1184, 1185–1186, 1187–1188, 1189–1190, 1191–1192, 1193–1194, 1195–1196, 1197–1198, 1199–1200, 1201–1202, 1203–1204, 1205–1206, 1207–1208, 1209–1210, 1211–1212, 1213–1214, 1215–1216, 1217–1218, 1219–1220, 1221–1222, 1223–1224, 1225–1226, 1227–1228, 1229–1230, 1231–1232, 1233–1234, 1235–1236, 1237–1238, 1239–1240, 1241–1242, 1243–1244, 1245–1246, 1247–1248, 1249–1250, 1251–1252, 1253–1254, 1255–1256, 1257–1258, 1259–1260, 1261–1262, 1263–1264, 1265–1266, 1267–1268, 1269–1270, 1271–1272, 1273–1274, 1275–1276, 1277–1278, 1279–1280, 1281–1282, 1283–1284, 1285–1286, 1287–1288, 1289–1290, 1291–1292, 1293–1294, 1295–1296, 1297–1298, 1299–1300, 1301–1302, 1303–1304, 1305–1306, 1307–1308, 1309–1310, 1311–1312, 1313–1314, 1315–1316, 1317–1318, 1319–1320, 1321–1322, 1323–1324, 1325–1326, 1327–1328, 1329–1330, 1331–1332, 1333–1334, 1335–1336, 1337–1338, 1339–1340, 1341–1342, 1343–1344, 1345–1346, 1347–1348, 1349–1350, 1351–1352, 1353–1354, 1355–1356, 1357–1358, 1359–1360, 1361–1362, 1363–1364, 1365–1366, 1367–1368, 1369–1370, 1371–1372, 1373–1374, 1375–1376, 1377–1378, 1379–1380, 1381–1382, 1383–1384, 1385–1386, 1387–1388, 1389–1390, 1391–1392, 1393–1394, 1395–1396, 1397–1398, 1399–1400, 1401–1402, 1403–1404, 1405–1406, 1407–1408, 1409–1410, 1411–1412, 1413–1414, 1415–1416, 1417–1418, 1419–1420, 1421–1422, 1423–1424, 1425–1426, 1427–1428, 1429–1430, 1431–1432, 1433–1434, 1435–1436, 1437–1438, 1439–1440, 1441–1442, 1443–1444, 1445–1446, 1447–1448, 1449–1450, 1451–1452, 1453–1454, 1455–1456, 1457–1458, 1459–1460, 1461–1462, 1463–1464, 1465–1466, 1467–1468, 1469–1470, 1471–1472, 1473–1474, 1475–1476, 1477–1478, 1479–1480, 1481–1482, 1483–1484, 1485–1486, 1487–1488, 1489–1490, 1491–1492, 1493–1494, 1495–1496, 1497–1498, 1499–1500, 1501–1502, 1503–1504, 1505–1506, 1507–1508, 1509–1510, 1511–1512, 1513–1514, 1515–1516, 1517–1518, 1519–1520, 1521–1522, 1523–1524, 1525–1526, 1527–1528, 1529–1530, 1531–1532, 1533–1534, 1535–1536, 1537–1538, 1539–1540, 1541–1542, 1543–1544, 1545–1546, 1547–1548, 1549–1550, 1551–1552, 1553–1554, 1555–1556, 1557–1558, 1559–1560, 1561–1562, 1563–1564, 1565–1566, 1567–1568, 1569–1570, 1571–1572, 1573–1574, 1575–1576, 1577–1578, 1579–1580, 1581–1582, 1583–1584, 1585–1586, 1587–1588, 1589–1590, 1591–1592, 1593–1594, 1595–1596, 1597–1598, 1599–1600, 1601–1602, 1603–1604, 1605–1606, 1607–1608, 1609–1610, 1611–1612, 1613–1614, 1615–1616, 1617–1618, 1619–1620, 1621–1622, 1623–1624, 1625–1626, 1627–1628, 1629–1630, 1631–1632, 1633–1634, 1635–1636, 1637–1638, 1639–1640, 1641–1642, 1643–1644, 1645–1646, 1647–1648, 1649–1650, 1651–1652, 1653–1654, 1655–1656, 1657–1658, 1659–1660, 1661–1662, 1663–1664, 1665–1666, 1667–1668, 1669–1670, 1671–1672, 1673–1674, 1675–1676, 1677–1678, 1679–1680, 1681–1682, 1683–1684, 1685–1686, 1687–1688, 1689–1690, 1691–1692, 1693–1694, 1695–1696, 1697–1698, 1699–1700, 1701–1702, 1703–1704, 1705–1706, 1707–1708, 1709–1710, 1711–1712, 1713–1714, 1715–1716, 1717–1718, 1719–1720, 1721–1722, 1723–1724, 1725–1726, 1727–1728, 1729–1730, 1731–1732, 1733–1734, 1735–1736, 1737–1738, 1739–1740, 1741–1742, 1743–1744, 1745–1746, 1747–1748, 1749–1750, 1751–1752, 1753–1754, 1755–1756, 1757–1758, 1759–1760, 1761–1762, 1763–1764, 1765–1766, 1767–1768, 1769–1770, 1771–1772, 1773–1774, 1775–1776, 1777–1778, 1779–1780, 1781–1782, 1783–1784, 1785–1786, 1787–1788, 1789–1790, 1791–1792, 1793–1794, 1795–1796, 1797–1798, 1799–1800, 1801–1802, 1803–1804, 1805–1806, 1807–1808, 1809–1810, 1811–1812, 1813–1814, 1815–1816, 1817–1818, 1819–1820, 1821–1822, 1823–1824, 1825–1826, 1827–1828, 1829–1830, 1831–1832, 1833–1834, 1835–1836, 1837–1838, 1839–1840, 1841–1842, 1843–1844, 1845–1846, 1847–1848, 1849–1850, 1851–1852, 1853–1854, 1855–1856, 1857–1858, 1859–1860, 1861–1862, 1863–1864, 1865–1866, 1867–1868, 1869–1870, 1871–1872, 1873–1874, 1875–1876, 1877–1878, 1879–1880, 1881–1882, 1883–1884, 1885–1886, 1887–1888, 1889–1890, 1891–1892, 1893–1894, 1895–1896, 1897–1898, 1899–1900, 1901–1902, 1903–1904, 1905–1906, 1907–1908, 1909–1910, 1911–1912, 1913–1914, 1915–1916, 1917–1918, 1919–1920, 1921–1922, 1923–1924, 1925–1926, 1927–1928, 1929–1930, 1931–1932, 1933–1934, 1935–1936, 1937–1938, 1939–1940, 1941–1942, 1943–1944, 1945–1946, 1947–1948, 1949–1950, 1951–1952, 1953–1954, 1955–1956, 1957–1958, 1959–1960, 1961–1962, 1963–1964, 1965–1966, 1967–1968, 1969–1970, 1971–1972, 1973–1974, 1975–1976, 1977–1978, 1979–1980, 1981–1982, 1983–1984, 1985–1986, 1987–1988, 1989–1990, 1991–1992, 1993–1994, 1995–1996, 1997–1998, 1999–2000, 2001–2002, 2003–2004, 2005–2006, 2007–2008, 2009–2010, 2011–2012, 2013–2014, 2015–2016, 2017–2018, 2019–2020, 2021–2022, 2023–2024, 2025–2026, 2027–2028, 2029–2030, 2031–2032, 2033–2034, 2035–2036, 2037–2038, 2039–2040, 2041–2042, 2043–2044, 2045–2046, 2047–2048, 2049–2050, 2051–2052, 2053–2054, 2055–2056, 2057–2058, 2059–2060, 2061–2062, 2063–2064, 2065–2066, 2067–2068, 2069–2070, 2071–2072, 2073–2074, 2075–2076, 2077–2078, 2079–2080, 2081–2082, 2083–2084, 2085–2086, 2087–2088, 2089–2090, 2091–2092, 2093–2094, 2095–2096, 2097–2098, 2099–2100, 2101–2102, 2103–2104, 2105–2106, 2107–2108, 2109–2110, 2111–2112, 2113–2114, 2115–2116, 2117–2118, 2119–2120, 2121–2122, 2123–2124, 2125–2126, 2127–2128, 2129–2130, 2131–2132, 2133–2134, 2135–2136, 2137–2138, 2139–2140, 2141–2142, 2143–2144, 2145–2146, 2147–2148, 2149–2150, 2151–2152, 2153–2154, 2155–2156, 2157–2158, 2159–2160, 2161–2162, 2163–2164, 2165–2166, 2167–2168, 2169–2170, 2171–2172, 2173–2174, 2175–2176, 2177–2178, 2179–2180, 2181–2182, 2183–2184, 2185–2186, 2187–2188, 2189–2190, 2191–2192, 2193–2194, 2195–2196, 2197–2198, 2199–2200, 2201–2202, 2203–2204, 2205–2206, 2207–2208, 2209–2210, 2211–2212, 2213–2214, 2215–2216, 2217–2218, 2219–2220, 2221–2222, |

- Encourage students to read assigned scripture passages and articles before each class.
- Expect students to fulfill their role as learners.
- Provide frequent opportunities for students to explain doctrines and principles in their own words, share relevant experiences, and testify of what they know and feel.
- Vary the learning activities and approaches you use in each class and also from day to day.
- Create a learning environment that invites the Spirit and gives students the privilege and responsibility to teach and to learn from one another (see D&C 88:78, 122).
- Throughout the course there are references to scripture study skills. Take advantage of these opportunities to help students become more self-reliant in their scripture study and more dedicated to lifelong learning from the scriptures.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



"Assure that there is abundant participation because that use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct. ... As students verbalize truths, they are confirmed in their souls and strengthen their personal testimonies" ("To Understand and Live Truth" [evening with Elder Richard G. Scott, Feb. 4, 2005], 3, si.lds.org).

How can I adapt lessons for those with disabilities?

As you prepare to teach, be mindful of students who have particular needs. Adjust activities and expectations to help them succeed. Seek ways to help them feel loved, accepted, and included. Foster a relationship of trust.

For more ideas and resources, consult the Disability Resources page at disabilities.lds.org and the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion policy manual section titled "Adapted Classes and Programs for Students with Disabilities."

Teachings and Doctrine of the Book of Mormon (Religion 275)

Student Readings

Note: You are not required to read any suggested materials that are not available in your language.

| Lesson Title | Suggested Readings |
|--|---|
| 1. The Book of Mormon Is Another Testament of Jesus Christ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 6:4; 13:40; 2 Nephi 11:2–3; 25:17–18; 33:1–2, 4–5, 10–11; Jacob 1:7–8; Alma 33:22–23; Mormon 1:15; 3:20–22; Ether 12:38–39, 41. “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” chapter 9 in <i>Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson</i> (2014), 125–35. |
| 2. Heeding the Words of Prophets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18; Mosiah 11:20–25; 13:33–35; 15:10–13; Helaman 13:24–33; 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11; 10:12; 12:1–2; Ether 7:23–27. Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2014, 74–77. Claudio R. M. Costa, “Obedience to the Prophets,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2010, 11–13. |
| 3. Obedience Brings Blessings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 2:1–20; 3:4–7, 15–16; 4:1–2; 7:12; 17:1–31; 18:1–4; 2 Nephi 31:6–10, 15–16; Mosiah 2:20–24, 41; 15:7; 3 Nephi 11:11; 12:19–20, 48. Thomas S. Monson, “Obedience Brings Blessings,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2013, 89–92. Robert D. Hales, “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2014, 35–38. |
| 4. The Fall of Adam and the Gift of Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 19–29; Alma 42:6–10, 14; Helaman 14:30–31; 3 Nephi 27:13; Moses 5:5–9. Robert D. Hales, “Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2010, 24–27. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2015, 104–6. |
| 5. The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 9:6–12, 20–22; Mosiah 3:5–11, 16; 15:7–9; Alma 7:11–13; 34:8–12; Moroni 8:8–12; Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9. Boyd K. Packer, “The Atonement,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2012, 75–78. D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2013, 109–12. |
| 6. The Book of Mormon Was Written for Our Day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 25:17–18; 3 Nephi 21:9–11; 29:1–4; Mormon 8:1–5, 26–35; Ether 12:22–26; Moses 7:62; Joseph Smith—History 1:34. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2009, 88–90. “Flooding the Earth and Our Lives with the Book of Mormon,” chapter 10 in <i>Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson</i> (2014), 137–45. |
| 7. The Book of Mormon and the Bible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ezekiel 37:15–19; 1 Nephi 13:20–41; 2 Nephi 3:11–14; 29:1–14. Russell M. Nelson, “Scriptural Witnesses,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2007, 43–46. Tad R. Callister, “The Book of Mormon—a Book from God,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2011, 74–76. |
| 8. Salvation Comes through Jesus Christ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 2:6–9; 25:23; 31:2–21; Mosiah 4:6–8; 3 Nephi 11:31–40; 27:13–22. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Gift of Grace,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2015, 107–10. L. Tom Perry, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2008, 44–46. |
| 9. “Seek Ye for the Kingdom of God” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew 6:33; Jacob 2:12–28; 3:10–12; Mosiah 2:20–25; 4:13, 21–26; Alma 7:14–16, 19, 21–24; 3 Nephi 12:27–30. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Pride and the Priesthood,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2010, 55–58. “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” chapter 1 in <i>Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson</i> (2014), 37–45. |
| 10. Prayer and Revelation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 10:17–19; 15:1–3, 7–11; 18:1–3; 2 Nephi 28:30; 32:8–9; Jacob 4:6; Alma 12:9–11; 26:22; 3 Nephi 14:7–11. Richard G. Scott, “How to Obtain Revelation and Inspiration for Your Personal Life,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2012, 45–47. David A. Bednar, “The Spirit of Revelation,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2011, 87–90. |
| 11. Protecting Ourselves against the False Doctrines of the Last Days | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 26:29; 28:3–9, 12–15; Jacob 7:1–12; Alma 1:2–6; 30:12–18, 39–44; 3 Nephi 18:24; 27:27; Ether 4:11–12; Moroni 7:12–17; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22. Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritual Whirlwinds,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2014, 18–21. |

| Lesson Title | Suggested Readings |
|---|---|
| 12. Our Need for Spiritual Rebirth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mosiah 3:19; 5:1–5, 7–8; 16:2–5; 27:24–26; Alma 5:14, 26–27; 41:10–11; Ether 12:27. David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” <i>Ensign</i>, Apr. 2012, 40–47. D. Todd Christofferson, “Born Again,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2008, 76–79. |
| 13. The Baptismal Covenant, the Sabbath, and the Sacrament | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exodus 31:13, 16–17; Mosiah 18:8–10, 23; 25:23–24; 3 Nephi 18:1–11; 20:3–9; Moroni 4:3; 5:2; 6:4–6. Russell M. Nelson, “The Sabbath Is a Delight,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2015, 129–32. |
| 14. God’s Power of Deliverance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 1:20; 6:4; Mosiah 7:33; 21:2–5, 14–16; 23:23–24; 24:13–15, 21; 29:20; Alma 34:9; 36:1–3, 27–29; 58:10–11; Helaman 5:9; 3 Nephi 4:33. L. Tom Perry, “The Power of Deliverance,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2012, 94–97. |
| 15. Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 13:37; Mosiah 15:14–19, 26–28; 28:3; Alma 17:2–3, 6, 9–12, 16, 25; 18:10, 33–35; 21:16; 22:1, 12–14; 23:5–6; 26:2–5, 11–12, 15, 26–29; 29:9–10; 31:30–34. M. Russell Ballard, “Put Your Trust in the Lord,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2013, 43–45. Don R. Clarke, “Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2006, 97–99. |
| 16. Repentance and Forgiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3, 11–12, 26; Alma 19:29–30, 33–36; 34:15–17; 36:19–21; 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22. Neil L. Andersen, “Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2009, 40–43. |
| 17. The Power of the Word | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 3:19–20; 5:21–22; 8:21–24, 29–30; 15:23–24; 2 Nephi 3:12; 32:3; 33:4–5; Jacob 2:8; 7:10–11; Omni 1:14–17; Mosiah 1:3–5; Alma 5:10–13; 31:5; 37:2–4, 8–10, 38–46; Helaman 3:29–30; 15:7–8. Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2011, 6–8. |
| 18. Preparing for the Final Day of Judgment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 9:12–13; Mosiah 15:21–26; 16:6–11; Alma 5:15–21; 7:21–25; 11:40–45; 16:6–11; 34:32–34; 40:4–7, 11–14, 19–24; 41:2–6. Dallin H. Oaks, “Resurrection,” <i>Ensign</i>, May 2000, 14–16. |
| 19. Defending Religious Freedom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mosiah 29:10–11, 16–18, 25–26, 32; Alma 2:1–10, 12, 27–28; 30:7–9; 44:1–5; 46:4–5, 10–16, 20–22. Robert D. Hales, “Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2015, 111–13. |
| 20. Strengthening Our Faith and Testimony | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 15:7–11; 2 Nephi 1:10–11; 9:28; 25:28–29; 28:21–23; Mosiah 2:36–37; 4:11–12; 15:11; 26:1–4; Alma 12:9–11; Alma 31:8–11; 46:7–8; Helaman 4:11–13; 13:24–26; 15:7–8; Mormon 5:16–18; 9:7–8. L. Whitney Clayton, “Choose to Believe,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2015, 36–39. Larry S. Kacher, “Trifle Not with Sacred Things,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2014, 104–6. |
| 21. The Coming of Jesus Christ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helaman 14:20–30; 16:1–5; 3 Nephi 9:1–5, 12–14; 10:12; 11:1–17. Dallin H. Oaks, “Preparation for the Second Coming,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2004, 7–10. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Preparing for the Second Coming,” <i>New Era</i>, Dec. 2013, 2–5. |
| 22. “Even as I Am” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John 17:9–11, 20–23; 3 Nephi 12:1–16, 43–45; 13:1, 5–7, 16–18, 22–24, 33; 14:1–5, 21–27; 19:19–23, 28–29; 27:21–22, 27. Henry B. Eyring, “Our Perfect Example,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2009, 70–73. |
| 23. The Scattering and Gathering of Israel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 15:12–16; 22:3–5, 8–12; 2 Nephi 25:15–17; 3 Nephi 5:24–26; 16:4–5; 20:13, 29–31; 21:1–7; 30:2. Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2006, 79–82. |
| 24. All Are Alike unto God | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 26:23–28, 33; Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:11, 20; Mosiah 28:1–3; Alma 27:1–2, 20–24; 53:10–11, 13–17; Helaman 6:1–8; 4 Nephi 1:1–3, 11–13, 15–18. Dallin H. Oaks, “All Men Everywhere,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2006, 77–80. |
| 25. Living Righteously in a Day of Wickedness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alma 37:21–22, 25–27; 62:41; Helaman 6:20–26, 37–40; 4 Nephi 1:42; Mormon 1:13–17, 19; 2:8, 14–15, 18–19; 3:2–3, 12, 22; Ether 8:18–26; Moroni 9:6, 22, 25–26. Quentin L. Cook, “Reaping the Rewards of Righteousness,” <i>Ensign</i>, July 2015, 33–39. |
| 26. After the Trial of Faith | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Nephi 27:23; 3 Nephi 17:5–9, 20–24; Mormon 9:9, 18–20; Ether 3:6–13, 17–20; 4:13–15; 12:6–7, 12, 19, 31. David A. Bednar, “Ask in Faith,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, May 2008, 94–97. Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2008, 13–14. |
| 27. Faith, Hope, and Charity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alma 32:26–29, 37–41; Ether 12:4, 8–9, 28, 33–34; Moroni 7:21, 25–28, 33, 40–48; 10:18–21. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Infinite Power of Hope,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2008, 21–24. Richard G. Scott, “The Transforming Power of Faith and Character,” <i>Ensign</i> or <i>Liahona</i>, Nov. 2010, 43–46. |
| 28. Come unto Christ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Nephi 6:4; Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 9:13–14; Moroni 7:18–26; 10:3–5, 30, 32–33. “A Christ-Centered Life,” chapter 24 in <i>Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson</i> (2014), 297–306. |



The Book of Mormon Is Another Testament of Jesus Christ

1

Introduction

Those who study the teachings and doctrine of the Book of Mormon will come to know that Jesus is the Christ. In this lesson, students will learn that the book's major authors were

eyewitnesses of the Son of God and that their words help deepen our understanding and testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel.

Background Reading

- Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 2–6.
- "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," chapter 9 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 125–35.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 13:40; 2 Nephi 25:17–18; Alma 33:22–23

The Book of Mormon is a testament of Jesus Christ

Display the following statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44), and ask a student to read it aloud:



"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (introduction to the Book of Mormon).

- Which of the Prophet's assertions about the Book of Mormon do you have a testimony of, and why?
- How does the Prophet's statement increase your motivation to study the Book of Mormon?

Invite students to highlight this statement in their own scriptures in the sixth paragraph of the introduction to the Book of Mormon, and suggest that they write next to it cross-references to 1 Nephi 13:40 and 2 Nephi 25:17–18. (*Note:* Cross-referencing is a scripture study skill that you might choose to emphasize throughout this course. As students strengthen their scripture study skills, they become more spiritually self-reliant.)

Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud from 1 Nephi 13:40 and 2 Nephi 25:17–18 while the class looks for a primary purpose of the Book of Mormon.

- According to these verses, what is one of the primary purposes of the Book of Mormon? (Students should identify the following truth: **God brought forth the Book of Mormon in the last days to convince all people that Jesus is the Christ.** [See also the title page of the Book of Mormon.])
- How does the Book of Mormon convince people that Jesus is the Christ?

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite students to read it silently:



"Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of those. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Truly, this divinely inspired book is a keystone in bearing witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 129–30).

- What are some realities of Jesus Christ's life and ministry that are confirmed in the Book of Mormon?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"I have read [the Book of Mormon] many times. I have also read much that has been written about it. Some authors have focused upon its stories, its people, or its vignettes of history. Others have been intrigued by its language structure or its records of weapons, geography, animal life, techniques of building, or systems of weights and measures.

"Interesting as these matters may be, study of the Book of Mormon is most rewarding when one focuses on its *primary* purpose—to testify of Jesus Christ. By comparison, all other issues are incidental.

"When you read the Book of Mormon, concentrate on the principal figure in the book—from its first chapter to the last—the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God" ("A Testimony of the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 69).

- Of all the messages of the Book of Mormon, why do you think it is most important to focus on the message about Jesus Christ?

Explain to students that after the prophet Alma taught the Zoramites about the Savior's ministry (see Alma 33:22), he invited his listeners to plant God's word in their hearts so that it might grow. Invite students to silently read Alma 33:22–23 and identify the truths that Alma encouraged his readers to "plant" in their hearts.

- What was the message that Alma wanted his hearers to plant in their hearts?
- What results did Alma promise if they would plant and nourish these beliefs about Jesus Christ? (Their testimonies would grow "unto everlasting life"; their burdens would be light.)
- How has studying the Book of Mormon helped you receive the blessings Alma describes?

1 Nephi 6:4; 2 Nephi 11:2–3; Jacob 1:7–8; Mormon 1:15; 3:20–22; Ether 12:38–39, 41

Book of Mormon writers were eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ

Explain that the Book of Mormon was largely written by four main authors: Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Moroni. (Exceptions are the books of Enos, Jarom, and Omni.)

Put the following chart on the board. To help students learn about these four main writers, invite them to select and silently read one of the following passages. Ask them to look for what qualified the writer to be a powerful witness of Jesus Christ.

| <i>Writer</i> | <i>Experience</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>1. Nephi</i> | <i>2 Nephi 11:2</i> |
| <i>2. Jacob</i> | <i>2 Nephi 11:3</i> |
| <i>3. Mormon</i> | <i>Mormon 1:15</i> |
| <i>4. Moroni</i> | <i>Ether 12:38–39</i> |

Allow students to share what they learned from each of the four passages. Then ask:

- Why is it important to understand that the major writers of the Book of Mormon were eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ? (As you discuss this question, help students identify the following truth: **By studying the Book of Mormon, we learn about Jesus Christ and His mission from those who saw and knew Him.** You might point out that the translator of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, was also an eyewitness of Jesus Christ.)

Add a third column to the chart on the board, as shown:

| <i>Writer</i> | <i>Experience</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>1. Nephi</i> | <i>2 Nephi 11:2</i> | <i>1 Nephi 6:4</i> |
| <i>2. Jacob</i> | <i>2 Nephi 11:3</i> | <i>Jacob 1:7–8</i> |
| <i>3. Mormon</i> | <i>Mormon 1:15</i> | <i>Mormon 3:20–22</i> |
| <i>4. Moroni</i> | <i>Ether 12:38–39</i> | <i>Ether 12:41</i> |

Ask each student to silently read one of the passages in the third column, looking for the reasons each writer recorded his message.

- Why did these Book of Mormon writers record their messages?
- Why do you think these writers were so intent on inviting others to come unto Christ?
- How do their invitations to come unto Christ apply to you personally? What thoughts and feelings do you have as you ponder these invitations?

2 Nephi 33:1–2, 4–5, 10–11

The Book of Mormon helps us to believe in Jesus Christ

Explain that while the lives of countless individuals have been changed through their testimonies of the Book of Mormon, others struggle with doubts about its truthfulness and authenticity.

- What advice would you give to help someone strengthen or gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon?

Ask a student to read 2 Nephi 33:1–2 aloud while the class identifies the power that allows the message of the Book of Mormon to enter one’s heart.

- What power did Nephi say would allow his message to enter a person’s heart? (The power of the Holy Ghost.)
- What did Nephi say would prevent some people from receiving the Holy Ghost?

Invite students to state and discuss a principle taught in these verses. (Help students identify the following principle: **The Holy Ghost can carry the message of the Book of Mormon into our hearts as long as we do not harden our hearts against the Holy Ghost.** Consider writing this principle on the board.)

Give students a moment to study 2 Nephi 33:4–5, looking for additional blessings that we can receive from studying the Book of Mormon. Ask students to share what they identified.

Display the following statement by Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“[We] must choose to open our hearts to the divine reality of the Savior. ... God does not force us to believe. Instead He invites us to believe by sending living prophets and apostles to teach us, by providing scriptures, and by beckoning to us through His Spirit. ... The decision to believe is the most important choice we ever make. It shapes all our other decisions” (“Choose to Believe,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 38).

- How can accepting the invitation of the Book of Mormon writers to believe in Jesus Christ shape all our other decisions?

Continue by inviting a student to read 2 Nephi 33:10–11 aloud while the class looks for how Nephi describes the relationship between believing in his words and believing in Jesus Christ.

- According to Nephi, what is the relationship between believing in his words and believing in Jesus Christ?
- What did Nephi say would happen “at the last day” to those who reject his words?

Invite students to share their testimonies of how the Book of Mormon has helped them draw closer to Jesus Christ.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 6:4; 13:40; 2 Nephi 11:2–3; 25:17–18; 33:1–2, 4–5, 10–11; Jacob 1:7–8; Alma 33:22–23; Mormon 1:15; 3:20–22; Ether 12:38–39, 41.
- “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” chapter 9 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 125–35.

Heeding the Words of Prophets

2

Introduction

God calls prophets to bear witness of Jesus Christ, to declare repentance, and to invite all to come unto the Savior. The Book of

Mormon teaches that those who heed these prophets are blessed, while those who oppose them experience regret and sorrow.

Background Reading

- Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 74–77.
- Claudio R. M. Costa, “Obedience to the Prophets,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 11–13.
- Carol F. McConkie, “Live according to the Words of the Prophets,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 77–79.
- “Our Need for Living Prophets,” chapter 1 in *Teachings of the Living Prophets Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 2010), 4–13.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18; Mosiah 11:20–25; 13:33–35

The role of prophets

Ask the class:

- How does our belief in a living prophet distinguish The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from other faiths?
- Why are living prophets as necessary today as they were in other periods of earth’s history?

Invite several students to take turns reading aloud from 1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18 while the class follows along, looking for how the Lord called and prepared Lehi to be a prophet.

- What did Lehi experience that prepared him to be a prophet? (He received a witness of Jesus Christ, and he foresaw the destruction of the wicked and the mercy granted to those who come unto God.)
- Why did the people of Jerusalem need prophets like Lehi? (As students respond, make sure they identify this truth: **God calls prophets and reveals His will through them.**)

Invite a student to read the following statement by President John Taylor (1808–87):



“We require a living tree—a living fountain—living intelligence, proceeding from the living priesthood in heaven, through the living priesthood on the earth. . . . And from the time that Adam first received a communication from God, to the time that John, on the Isle of Patmos, received his communication, or Joseph Smith had the heavens opened to him, it always required new revelations, adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which the churches or individuals were placed.

“Adam’s revelation did not instruct Noah to build his ark; nor did Noah’s revelation tell Lot to forsake Sodom; nor did either of these speak of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. These all

had revelations for themselves, and so had Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, and Joseph. And so must we" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* [2001], 158).

- Why is it important to know that the Lord continues today to reveal His will through living prophets?
- How could studying the role of prophets in the Book of Mormon help us in our day?

Write the following references on the board:

Mosiah 11:20–25

Mosiah 13:33–35

Explain that while prophets communicate many messages specific to their times, there are messages that all prophets deliver. Invite students to identify two such messages as they silently read the passages on the board. Ask students to mark in their scriptures the central message delivered by the prophet Abinadi in each passage. (*Note:* Scripture marking is a scripture study skill you might consider teaching throughout the course.)

Ask students to share what they identified, and summarize their findings by emphasizing this doctrine: **All prophets of God declare repentance and testify of Jesus Christ.**

Consider inviting students to take a few minutes to locate an example of a Book of Mormon prophet declaring repentance or testifying of Jesus Christ. (Examples of declaring repentance include Isaiah in 2 Nephi 16:9–11; Jacob in Jacob 2–3; Abinadi in Mosiah 11–12; Samuel in Helaman 13–16; and Mormon in Mormon 3. Examples of teaching about Jesus Christ include Nephi in 1 Nephi 19 and in 2 Nephi 25; Alma in Alma 7; and Mormon in Mormon 7.) Invite students to share their examples with the class.

- Why do you think prophets consistently declare repentance and testify of Jesus Christ?
- How does hearkening to these messages help us attain salvation?

Helaman 13:24–33; 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11

Rejecting God's prophets leads to regret

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite a student to read it aloud:



"When the prophet points out the sins of the world, the worldly either want to close the mouth of the prophet, or else act as if the prophet didn't exist, rather than repent of their sins. Popularity is never a test of truth. ... As we come closer to the Lord's second coming you can expect that as the people of the world become more wicked, the prophet will be less popular with them" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 152).

- Why do you think some people fail to heed the words of a prophet?

Invite the class to silently search the prophet Samuel's words in Helaman 13:24–29, looking for reasons why individuals reject prophetic warnings. You might again encourage students to mark what they identify.

- According to Samuel, why did the Nephites reject God's prophets?
- Although we are not guilty of abusing or slaying the prophets, how can these verses serve as a warning to us today?

Ask a student to read Helaman 13:30–33 aloud while the class looks for the consequences that Samuel the Lamanite prophesied would come to those who rejected the prophets' words. Then invite the class to read the fulfillment of this prophecy in 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11.

- What truth can we summarize from these verses? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we reject the words of the Lord's prophets, we will experience regret and sorrow.** [See also 3 Nephi 28:34.]

Invite a student to read the following statements by President Ezra Taft Benson:



"If we want to know how well we stand with the Lord then let us ask ourselves how well we stand with His mortal captain—how close do our lives harmonize with the Lord's anointed—the living Prophet—President of the Church, and with the Quorum of the First Presidency" (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 150).

"How we respond to the words of a living prophet when he tells us what we need to know, but would rather not hear, is a test of our faithfulness" (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 152).

- How do President Benson's statements help motivate you to be more diligent in following the counsel of the living prophet?
- What prophetic messages do you consider to be among the most important for Latter-day Saints today?

Mosiah 15:10–13; 3 Nephi 10:12; 12:1–2; Ether 7:23–27

Following God's prophets brings blessings

Tell students that the prophet Abinadi taught King Noah and his wicked priests about the importance of giving heed to the words of the prophets. Ask a student to read Mosiah 15:10–13 while the class considers how to summarize the verses as a statement of principle.

- How would you express Abinadi's words as a statement of principle? (Students could summarize this passage as follows: **Those who hearken to the words of the prophets, believe in Jesus Christ's redeeming power, and repent of their sins are heirs of the kingdom of God.**)

Ask students to think of and share examples from the Book of Mormon of faithful individuals and groups who were blessed by heeding the words of prophets. Some examples might include the following: Lehi's family escaped destruction by following the counsel to flee Jerusalem (2 Nephi 1:4); Alma the Elder hearkened to the words of Abinadi and was able to teach many people (Mosiah 17:1–4; 18:1–3); Captain Moroni's army learned where to go to defend themselves against the Lamanite army by seeking Alma's counsel (Alma 43:23–24).

Write the following scripture references on the board (do not include the bold principles):

3 Nephi 10:12 (Safety comes from following the prophets of God.)

3 Nephi 12:1–2 (Prophets teach us how to receive remission of our sins.)

Ether 7:23–27 (As we follow the counsel of prophets and remember the Lord, He will bless us according to our needs.)

Assign students to read one of the passages on the board and summarize what they read as a statement of principle. As students share their statements, consider writing the suggested statements of principle next to each reference.

To help students understand that additional blessings come from following the prophet, display the following statement by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"It is no small thing, my brothers and sisters, to have a prophet of God in our midst. Great and wonderful are the blessings that come into our lives as we listen to the word of the Lord given to us through him. ... When we hear the counsel of the Lord expressed through the words of the President of the Church, our response should be positive and prompt. History has shown that there is safety, peace, prosperity, and happiness in responding to prophetic counsel" ("His Word Ye Shall Receive," *Ensign*, May 2001, 65).

- When have you been blessed by responding positively and promptly to prophetic counsel?
- As you look forward to the future, why do you think it will be important to have prophets on the earth?

Challenge students to ponder whether their own actions reflect their desire to faithfully follow the Lord's prophets. Ask them to consider what they might need to change in their lives in order to more fully enjoy the blessings promised to the faithful.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18; Mosiah 11:20–25; 13:33–35; 15:10–13; Helaman 13:24–33; 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11; 10:12; 12:1–2; Ether 7:23–27.
- Russell M. Nelson, "Sustaining the Prophets," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 74–77.
- Claudio R. M. Costa, "Obedience to the Prophets," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 11–13.

Obedience Brings Blessings

3

Introduction

Our obedience to God's commandments is one way that we demonstrate our gratitude for His marvelous blessings. The Savior is a perfect example of obedience. Our desire to be obedient grows

as our love for God increases. Obedience to the commandments makes it possible for God to provide the help we need as we seek to accomplish difficult tasks.

Background Reading

- Thomas S. Monson, "Obedience Brings Blessings," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 89–92.
- Robert D. Hales, "If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 35–38.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 2:2–4, 9–13, 16, 19–20; Mosiah 2:20–24, 41

Through our obedience, we show our gratitude to God and receive His greatest blessings

Display the following statement by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and invite a student to read it aloud:



"How can we ever repay the debt we owe to the Savior? He paid a debt He did not owe to free us from a debt we can never pay. Because of Him, we will live forever. Because of His infinite Atonement, our sins can be swept away, allowing us to experience the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life.

"Can such a gift have a price? Can we ever make compensation for such a gift?"
("Earthly Debts, Heavenly Debts," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 43).

Give students a moment to discuss possible answers to the last question asked by Elder Wirthlin. Encourage students to look for principles and doctrines during the lesson that help to answer this question.

Invite students to silently read Mosiah 2:20–24. Ask them to look for what King Benjamin taught about how we should view ourselves in relation to God.

- Why do you think King Benjamin taught that no matter what we do, we are still "unprofitable servants" of God?
- Though we can never repay our debt to God, what do these verses suggest we can do to show our gratitude for all that He has done for us? (Help students identify the following principle: **When we recognize our eternal debt to God, we desire to serve Him and keep His commandments.**)

Tell students that one of the great scriptural accounts of obedience to God is found at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, which records how the prophet Lehi and his family responded when they were asked by God to do something very difficult. Ask a student to read 1 Nephi 2:2–4 aloud.

- Why would it have been difficult for Lehi's family to obey God's command to leave Jerusalem?

Invite students to study 1 Nephi 2:9–13, 16, looking for differences between the attitudes and behaviors of Laman and Lemuel and those of Nephi in response to this commandment. (*Note:* This activity will encourage students to practice the important scripture study skill of comparing and contrasting.)

- What words and phrases describe Laman and Lemuel's response? (They were stiffnecked, they murmured, and they did not know the dealings of God.)
- How did Nephi respond to the commandment to leave Jerusalem? (He was humble; he desired to know the things of God; he had faith in the words of his father, who was a prophet; and he prayed.)
- Why did Nephi respond to the words of his father differently from his brothers?

Give students a moment to ponder whether they are more like Laman and Lemuel or like Nephi when they are asked by the Lord or the leaders of His Church to do something difficult.

Invite a student to read 1 Nephi 2:19–20 aloud. Ask the class to follow along and identify the Lord's promise to Nephi.

- What statement in these verses summarizes what the Lord promised Nephi? (Make sure that students understand the following principle: **If we keep the commandments, we will prosper in the land.** You might point out that this is one of the most oft-repeated themes in the Book of Mormon. You might encourage students, as they study the Book of Mormon, to watch for the many ways this theme is repeated.)
- What qualities did the Lord commend in Nephi? Why do you think these qualities are important for each of us to have in our relationship with the Lord?
- Though obedience may not always result in temporal prosperity, what blessings can we expect as a result of obedience to the Lord? (To help answer this question, consider reading Mosiah 2:41.)

2 Nephi 31:6–10, 15–16; Mosiah 15:7; 3 Nephi 11:11; 12:19–20, 48

Following the Savior's example of obedience helps us come unto Him and the Father

Display the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Of all the lessons we learn from the life of the Savior, none is more clear and powerful than the lesson of obedience" ("If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 35).

- What examples from the Savior's life illustrate His obedience?

To help students further discuss this question, ask them to read Mosiah 15:7 and 3 Nephi 11:11, looking for what Jesus was willing to do in order to obey His Father.

Invite students to take turns reading 2 Nephi 31:6–10, 15–16 aloud while class members look for what we can learn from the Savior's example about the importance of obedience and the blessings that come from obedience.

- What can we learn from the Savior's example about the importance of obedience? What can we learn from His example about the blessings that come from obedience? (Make sure students identify this principle: **As we follow the Savior's example of obedience to His Father, we will remain on the narrow path that leads to salvation.**)

Display the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"Spiritually mature obedience is 'the Savior's obedience.' It is motivated by true love for Heavenly Father and His Son. ... Our love of the Savior is the key to Savior-like obedience" ("If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments," 36–37).

- Why is love for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ "the key" to obeying the commandments?

Point out that the resurrected Jesus Christ taught the Nephites about the purposes of obeying the commandments. Ask students to silently read 3 Nephi 12:19–20, 48 to discover these purposes.

- According to these verses, what did the Savior say were the reasons we have been given the commandments? (Students should identify the following principle: **As we come unto Christ and keep the commandments, we will become more like Him and our Father in Heaven, and we will be saved.**)
- In what ways has your obedience helped you to come to the Savior?

Give students a moment to ponder what they might do to be more obedient to Heavenly Father's commandments so they can be more like Him and His Son.

1 Nephi 3:4–7, 15–16; 4:1–2; 7:12; 17:1–31; 18:1–4

The Lord provides help to those who are obedient

Invite students to consider a time when keeping a particular commandment of God seemed difficult or when fulfilling a Church calling or assignment seemed challenging. Remind students that Nephi and his brothers faced danger and possible death when God commanded them to return to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. Ask students to read 1 Nephi 3:4–7 and identify a principle that they learn from Nephi's example that can increase their own capacity to be obedient.

- What principle can we learn from Nephi's response to a difficult commandment from God? (Write the following principle on the board as students discover it: **If we seek to do what the Lord commands, He will prepare a way for us to accomplish it.**)

To help students understand this principle, write the following references on the board and give students time to search them, looking for how Nephi responded when seeking to accomplish the difficult things he was commanded to do: 1 Nephi 3:15–16; 4:1–2; 7:12. After students share what they discovered, explain that Nephi later described some ways in which the Lord helps those who keep His commandments. Ask students to read 1 Nephi 17:1–4 and identify the ways the Lord helps us. Also ask students to highlight Nephi's phrase "and thus we see," which is used throughout the Book of Mormon to prepare the reader to give particular attention to the words that follow.

As students share their responses, write the following words on the board:

Nourish
Strengthen
Provide means

Invite students to take a few minutes to scan the account in 1 Nephi 17:5–31; 18:1–4, looking for examples of how the Lord nourished, strengthened, or provided means for Lehi’s family.

- In what ways did the Lord nourish or strengthen Lehi’s family? How did He provide means to help them?
- What blessings given by the Lord to Lehi’s family are similar to blessings we need today?
- When have you experienced the Lord’s help in one of these ways as you have endeavored to obey Him?

Remind students that the Lord asks for our obedience so that He can provide us with rich blessings in our efforts to become like Him. Share the following statement by President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973):



“The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you are having the most difficulty keeping today. . . . Put that aright and then you start on the next one that is most difficult for you to keep. That’s the way to sanctify yourself by keeping the commandments of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 30).

Invite students to think about a commandment that they find difficult to obey. Encourage them to make a plan to become more obedient in order to more fully qualify to receive the Lord’s help.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 2:1–20; 3:4–7, 15–16; 4:1–2; 7:12; 17:1–31; 18:1–4; 2 Nephi 31:6–10, 15–16; Mosiah 2:20–24, 41; 15:7; 3 Nephi 11:11; 12:19–20, 48.
- Thomas S. Monson, “Obedience Brings Blessings,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 89–92.
- Robert D. Hales, “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 35–38.

The Fall of Adam and the Gift of Agency

4

Introduction

The Fall of Adam was an integral part of God's plan. It brought about the conditions under which we could come to earth and be tested. God's plan also includes giving His children agency (see

2 Nephi 2:27). In this lesson, students will learn that the key to exercising our agency well is to seek to do God's will, thus following the example set by Jesus Christ.

Background Reading

- Robert D. Hales, "Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 24–27.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 104–6.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 2:19–26, 28; Alma 42:6–10, 14; Moses 5:5–9

The Fall of Adam

Display the following statement by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"Since the fifth century, Christianity taught that Adam and Eve's Fall was a tragic mistake. ... That view is wrong. ... The Fall was not a disaster. It wasn't a mistake or an accident. It was a deliberate part of the plan of salvation" ("The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 97).

- Why do you think it is important to understand that the Fall was not a mistake or accident but rather a deliberate part of the plan of salvation?

Invite students to study 2 Nephi 2:19–25 and make a list of the effects of the Fall—the things that happened to Adam and Eve after they partook of the forbidden fruit. Then ask students to write items from their lists on the board. (*Note:* Looking for lists within a scripture passage is a scripture study skill you might teach with this passage; see *Gospel Teaching and Learning* [2012], 23.) The list should include the following: Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden; they brought forth children; they entered a probationary state; they became lost and needed repentance; and they experienced opposition, which allowed them to experience good and evil and use their agency wisely.

- How does the list on the board help explain why the Fall of Adam was a necessary part of Heavenly Father's plan? (Students will likely provide a variety of answers that could be summarized with this principle: **The Fall of Adam made it possible for us to enter mortality and to progress toward eternal life.**)
- What does it mean that "all men ... were lost" because of the Fall? (2 Nephi 2:21).

To help answer this question, invite several students to take turns reading Alma 42:6–10, 14 aloud while the class looks for additional effects of the Fall. As students share what they found, you might add their responses to the list on the board.

- What does it mean to be “cut off ... from the presence of the Lord”?

Display the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“[Adam and Eve] transgressed a commandment of God which required that they leave their garden setting but which allowed them to have children before facing physical death. To add further sorrow and complexity to their circumstance, their transgression had spiritual consequences as well, cutting them off from the presence of God forever. Because we were then born into that fallen world and because we too would transgress the laws of God, we also were sentenced to the same penalties that Adam and Eve faced. ...

“... From the moment those first parents stepped out of the Garden of Eden, the God and Father of us all, anticipating Adam and Eve’s decision, dispatched the very angels of heaven to declare to them—and down through time to us—that this entire sequence was designed for our eternal happiness. It was part of His divine plan, which provided for a Savior, the very Son of God Himself—another ‘Adam,’ the Apostle Paul would call Him [see 1 Corinthians 15:45]—who would come in the meridian of time to atone for the first Adam’s transgression. That Atonement would achieve complete victory over physical death. ... Mercifully it would also provide forgiveness for the personal sins of all, from Adam to the end of the world, conditioned upon repentance and obedience to divine commandments” (“Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 105–6).

- Why are we “sentenced to the same penalties that Adam and Eve faced”? (We are born into a fallen world, and we transgress God’s laws.)

Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud 2 Nephi 2:26, 28 and Moses 5:5–9, while the class looks for how the effects of the Fall can be overcome in our lives.

- According to these passages, how can we be redeemed from the spiritual effects of the Fall? (Answers should include the following principle: **If we repent and call upon God for forgiveness, we can be redeemed from our sins through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.**)

Invite students to ponder the role of the Fall in the plan of salvation and how it was “designed for our eternal happiness.” Ask one or two students to share their thoughts with the class.

2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 26–29; Helaman 14:30–31; 3 Nephi 27:13

The gift of agency

Display the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“Adam and Eve [through the Fall] became mortal. Happily for us, they could also beget children and fulfill the purposes for which the world was created. ... Other blessings came to us through the Fall. It activated two closely coupled additional gifts from God, nearly as precious as life itself—*agency and accountability*” (“Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 34, italics added).

- In what ways are agency and accountability “nearly as precious as life itself”?

Ask students to study 2 Nephi 2:14, 16, and 26, looking for what these verses teach about how God’s children differ from His other creations.

- What difference do these verses highlight between God’s children and His other creations? (Students should identify the following doctrine: **God’s children are created to act for themselves rather than to be acted upon.**)
- What does it mean that God created us to act rather than to be acted upon?
- Why is it important to know that God’s children were created to act for themselves and not to be acted upon?

To help answer this question, you might discuss the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“The old saying ‘The Lord is voting for me, and Lucifer is voting against me, but it is *my* vote that counts’ describes a doctrinal certainty that our agency is more powerful than the adversary’s will. Agency is precious. We can foolishly, blindly give it away, but it cannot be forcibly taken from us.

“There is also an age-old excuse: ‘The devil made me do it.’ Not so! He can deceive you and mislead you, but he does not have the power to force you or anyone else to transgress” (“Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 74).

Ask some students to read 2 Nephi 2:26–29 and others to read Helaman 14:30–31. Encourage students to highlight words and phrases that show future consequences of choices we make now. Invite students to share some of the words and phrases they highlighted.

- What truth can we learn from these passages about the effects of our choices? (Students should identify the following truth: **The way we use our agency determines our spiritual progress and eternal blessings.**)

To help students understand this truth, ask a student to read the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“When we choose to do the will of our Heavenly Father, our agency is preserved, our opportunities increase, and we progress. . . . The opposite is also true: when we don’t keep the commandments or follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, our opportunities are reduced; our abilities to act and progress are diminished. . . . Obedience to the commandments ultimately protects our agency” (“Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,”

Ensign or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 25–26).

- What are some consequences that come from the misuse of agency?
- How does obedience to God’s commandments protect our agency?
- Why is using our agency “to do the will of our Heavenly Father” the key to our spiritual progress?

Ask students to silently read 3 Nephi 27:13 and consider Jesus Christ’s example of the righteous use of the gift of agency.

- In what ways can the Savior’s words “I came . . . to do the will of my Father” help us to use the gift of agency wisely?

Share the following statement by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to help students understand the great blessings that come from using our agency righteously:



"The Lord is intent on your personal growth and development. That progress is accelerated when you willingly allow Him to lead you through every growth experience you encounter, whether initially it be to your individual liking or not. When you trust in the Lord, when you are willing to let your heart and your mind be centered in His will, when you ask to be led by the Spirit to do His will, you are assured of the greatest happiness along the way and the most fulfilling attainment from this mortal experience. If you question everything you are asked to do, or dig in your heels at every unpleasant challenge, you make it harder for the Lord to bless you. [See 1 Nephi 3:7.]

"Your agency, the right to make choices, is not given so that you can get what you want. This divine gift is provided so that you will choose what your Father in Heaven wants for you. That way He can lead you to become all that He intends you to be. [See D&C 58:26–32.]" ("Finding Joy in Life," *Ensign*, May 1996, 25).

Ask students to think about times when they made decisions to act in righteousness. Invite a few students to share how the consequences of those decisions brought blessings to them.

Encourage students to ponder how they can better follow the example of Jesus Christ in doing the will of Heavenly Father. Share your testimony that the proper use of our agency can lead us to eternal life.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 19–29; Alma 42:6–10, 14; Helaman 14:30–31; 3 Nephi 27:13; Moses 5:5–9.
- Robert D. Hales, "Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 24–27.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 104–6.

The Infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ

5

Introduction

The Atonement of Jesus Christ—the greatest event to ever take place—makes it possible for all people to be forgiven from sin and to dwell with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ throughout eternity. Through the Atonement, all will be resurrected and return to the

presence of God to be judged. Because the Atonement required Jesus Christ to suffer in an infinite number of ways, He has perfect empathy for each of us.

Background Reading

- Boyd K. Packer, “The Atonement,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 75–78.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 109–12.

Suggestions for Teaching

Mosiah 3:5–11; Alma 34:8–12

Only Jesus Christ could accomplish the infinite Atonement

Display and invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency:



“I wish to speak about the greatest event in all history. That singular event was the incomparable Atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. This was the most transcendent act that has ever taken place” (“The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 18).

Invite two or three students to take turns reading aloud from Alma 34:8–12 while the class marks key words and phrases that illustrate why the Atonement is the greatest event in history.

- Why is the Atonement of Jesus Christ the greatest event ever to take place? (Emphasize this truth: **The Atonement of Jesus Christ is infinite and eternal, making salvation possible for all mankind.**)

Consider sharing the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“An infinite atonement was required to redeem Adam, Eve, and all of their posterity. ... According to eternal law, that atonement required a personal sacrifice by an immortal being not subject to death. Yet He must die and take up His own body again. The Savior was the only one who could accomplish this. From His mother He inherited power to die. From His Father He obtained power over death” (“Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*,

Nov. 1993, 34).

- Why was Jesus Christ the only one who could redeem all people? (He was an immortal being not subject to death.)
- In what ways is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ infinite and eternal?

To help answer this question, display the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"[Jesus Christ's] Atonement is infinite—without an end. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. ... It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all. And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him. It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension" ("The Atonement," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

Explain that at the end of his reign, King Benjamin taught his people that an angel had declared to him a message of "glad tidings of great joy" that would cause the people to be "filled with joy" (Mosiah 3:2–4). Ask a few students to take turns reading aloud from Mosiah 3:5–11 while the class follows along, looking for the "glad tidings" that King Benjamin described.

- What messages in these verses do you think would have caused King Benjamin's people to be filled with joy? (As students respond, emphasize that Jesus Christ makes salvation possible.)
- What words or phrases describe the price that Jesus Christ paid for our salvation?

Invite a student to read the following statement by Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Christ's agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. ... He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so" (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 613).

- What thoughts and feelings do you have as you ponder the magnitude of Jesus Christ's suffering for us?

2 Nephi 9:6–12, 20–22

Jesus Christ overcame both physical and spiritual death

Ask students to imagine what would have occurred if there had been no Atonement. To help students visualize what the state of mankind would have been if there had been no Atonement, ask a student to read 2 Nephi 9:6–9 aloud. Invite the class to follow along, looking for phrases that describe what our fate would be without the Atonement.

- According to the prophet Jacob, what would happen to our bodies if there were no Atonement? What would happen to our spirits?

Remind students that the central message of the gospel is that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ we do not have to experience this awful fate.

Ask two students to take turns reading aloud from 2 Nephi 9:10–12, 20–22 while the class looks for the means by which we are delivered from spiritual and physical death.

- What is the means provided for us to escape from spiritual and physical death? (Help students summarize this doctrine: **Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ overcame the effects of physical and spiritual death.**)
- What do these verses teach about the blessings of the Resurrection? (Our physical bodies and our spirits will be reunited for eternity. We will be brought back into the presence of God for judgment.)

Display the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"By His Atonement and Resurrection, Jesus Christ has overcome all aspects of the Fall. Physical death will be temporary, and even spiritual death has an end, in that all come back into the presence of God, at least temporarily, to be judged" ("The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 112).

- When have you felt gratitude that Jesus Christ has overcome physical and spiritual death?

Mosiah 3:11, 16; 15:7–9; Alma 7:11–13; Moroni 8:8–12; Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9

Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ offers redemption to all people

Remind students that in addition to delivering all mankind from the physical and spiritual death caused by the Fall, Jesus Christ can deliver us from the spiritual death caused by our own sins. Invite a student to read Mosiah 15:7–9 aloud while the class looks for how Christ makes it possible for us to be redeemed from our sins.

- What do these verses teach about how Christ makes it possible for us to be redeemed from our sins? (Emphasize this doctrine: **Through the Atonement, Jesus Christ broke the bands of death and took our iniquities upon Himself, satisfying the demands of justice and gaining power to make intercession for us.**)
- What does the word *intercession* mean? (*Intercession* is the act of intervening between parties to help them reconcile differences. In this case, Jesus intercedes between us and God in order to reconcile the broken relationship caused by our sins.)

Explain that the Book of Mormon helps us understand how the Atonement of Jesus Christ saves little children and people who have died without receiving the gospel or being baptized.

Have part of the class silently read Mosiah 3:16 and cross-reference it to Moroni 8:8–12. Have another part of the class silently read Mosiah 3:11 and cross-reference it to Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9.

- What do these verses teach about the salvation of children who die before being baptized?
- What do these verses teach about the salvation of those who "died not knowing the will of God"? (Mosiah 3:11).

Tell students that through the Atonement the Savior gained perfect empathy to understand us and help us through the challenges of mortality. Ask students to search Alma 7:11–13, looking for words that describe the mortal challenges that Jesus Christ

experienced as part of the Atonement. As students report their findings, list the following words on the board: *pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, death, infirmities (weaknesses or inabilities), and sins*. Point out the phrase “of every kind” in Alma 7:11, and ask students to share examples of the various conditions listed on the board.

Point out that the phrase “take upon him” is repeated several times in verses 11–13. (*Note:* Identifying repetition is a scripture study skill that you might emphasize here. Noting scriptural repetitions can help learners identify key points of emphasis.)

- According to verses 11–12, why did Jesus Christ “take upon him” our pains, sicknesses, infirmities, and other conditions listed on the board? (Help students identify this principle: **The Savior took upon himself our pains, sicknesses, and infirmities so He could succor us as we face the challenges of mortality.**)

Display the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“I testify that the Savior’s Atonement lifts from us not only the burden of our sins but also the burden of our disappointments and sorrows, our heartaches and our despair [see Alma 7:11–12]. From the beginning, trust in such help was to give us both a reason and a way to improve, an incentive to lay down our burdens and take up our salvation” (“Broken Things to Mend,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 70–71).

- How can trusting in the Savior’s Atonement affect your actions and your eternal perspective?
- How can understanding the truths in Alma 7:11–13 help you as you face challenges?

Invite students to share experiences in which they felt the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ in their lives (caution them not to share anything that is too sacred or personal).

Invite students to write down what they can do to better apply the healing and strengthening power of the Savior’s Atonement in their own lives. Invite them to act on their impressions.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 9:6–12, 20–22; Mosiah 3:5–11, 16; 15:7–9; Alma 7:11–13; 34:8–12; Moroni 8:8–12; Doctrine and Covenants 137:7–9.
- Boyd K. Packer, “The Atonement,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 75–78.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Redemption,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 109–12.

The Book of Mormon Was Written for Our Day

6

Introduction

The Book of Mormon and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are part of “a marvelous work and a wonder” wrought by God in the latter days (2 Nephi 25:17). Because the Book of Mormon contains

a fulness of the gospel, it plays a key role in overcoming apostasy and bringing souls to Christ. This lesson emphasizes that this sacred record was written by inspired writers who saw our day.

Background Reading

- Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 88–90.
- “Flooding the Earth and Our Lives with the Book of Mormon,” chapter 10 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 137–45.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 27:6, 29–30, 35; 3 Nephi 29:1–2; Moses 7:62; Joseph Smith—History 1:34

The role of the Book of Mormon in the latter-days

Explain to students that the Book of Mormon records prophecies that there will be wickedness and apostasy on the earth in the latter days (see 2 Nephi 27:1, 4–5). The Book of Mormon also records the Lord’s solution to these problems. Ask a student to read 2 Nephi 27:6, 29–30, 35 aloud while the class looks for the Lord’s solution.

- According to these verses, what will the Lord do in the last days to counteract wickedness and apostasy?
- In what ways does the Book of Mormon provide a solution to the wickedness of the latter days?

Tell students that Mormon recorded a prophecy about an additional role the Book of Mormon would play in the last days. Give students a few minutes to study 3 Nephi 29:1–2 and look for that prophecy. You might point out that the phrase “these sayings” refers to the Book of Mormon.

- What important work would begin with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon? (The gathering of Israel.)

Explain that President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) described the central role of the Book of Mormon in the Restoration of the gospel and the commencement of the Lord’s work in the last days. Invite a student to read aloud the following statement:



“[The Book of Mormon] was published just a few days before the Church was organized. The Saints were given the Book of Mormon to read before they were given the revelations outlining such great doctrines as the three degrees of glory, celestial marriage, or work for the dead. It came before priesthood quorums and Church organization. Doesn’t this tell us something about how the Lord views this sacred work?” (“The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 4).

- Why do you think that the coming forth of the Book of Mormon preceded so many other important events of the Restoration and is so central to the Lord’s work of gathering Israel and overcoming wickedness in the last days?

To help answer this question, ask a student to read Joseph Smith—History 1:34 aloud. Invite the class to look for what the Book of Mormon contains.

- What does the Book of Mormon contain? (Help students identify the following truth: **The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.**)
- What is the meaning of Moroni’s declaration that the Book of Mormon contains “the fulness of the everlasting Gospel”?

To help answer this question, display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson and ask a student to read it:



“The Lord Himself has stated that the Book of Mormon contains the ‘fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ’ (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 131).

- What are some of the “doctrines required for our salvation” contained in the Book of Mormon? (These doctrines include the Atonement, faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.)

Explain that the Lord taught the prophet Enoch about the significance of the Book of Mormon in the last days. Invite a student to read Moses 7:62 aloud. (You might write on the board that “righteousness [sent] down out of heaven” refers to the revelations that made the Restoration possible and “truth [sent] forth out of the earth” refers to the Book of Mormon. Encourage students to write these definitions in the margin of their scriptures or create a note in their electronic scriptures.)

- According to this verse, how will the Book of Mormon be used in the latter days? (To help gather God’s elect into the Church from the four corners of the earth.)
- When have you seen the Book of Mormon help someone become converted to the gospel and join the Lord’s Church?
- What are some ways that we can “sweep the earth” with righteousness and the message of the Book of Mormon “as with a flood”?

Invite students to commit to do something to “flood” their hearts, their homes, and the earth with the message of the Book of Mormon during the coming week.

3 Nephi 21:9–11

The truth of the Book of Mormon withstands opposition

Ask students to consider a time when they defended the Book of Mormon or the message of the Restoration of the gospel against opposition.

Invite a student to read 3 Nephi 21:9–11 aloud. Before the student begins reading, explain that Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified the “servant” in these verses as the Prophet Joseph Smith (see *Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 287–88).

- How does the Prophet Joseph Smith fit the description found in these verses?

- According to these verses, what will the Savior show the people who oppose Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon in the latter days? (Help students identify the following doctrine: **God's wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.**)
- How does the Book of Mormon help to show that God's "wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil"?

Display and read the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"For [more than 180] years this book has been examined and attacked, denied and deconstructed, targeted and torn apart like perhaps no other book in modern religious history—perhaps like no other book in *any* religious history. And still it stands. Failed theories about its origins have been born and parroted and have died. ... None of these frankly pathetic answers for this book has ever withstood examination because *there is no other answer* than the one Joseph gave as its young unlearned translator. In this I stand with my own great-grandfather, who said simply enough, 'No wicked man could write such a book as this; and no good man would write it, unless it were true and he were commanded of God to do so' (*"Safety for the Soul," Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 89).

- Why do you think there is so much opposition to the Book of Mormon?
- What experiences have taught you that the Book of Mormon can withstand the opposition brought against it?
- What have you felt and what have you learned as you have taught others about the Book of Mormon or defended its truthfulness?

Mormon 8:1–5, 26–35

The Book of Mormon was written for our day

Remind students that Moroni witnessed the destruction of his civilization. Ask students to read Mormon 8:1–5 and consider what Moroni might have been required to do to protect the gold plates.

- Imagine that you were Moroni. What are some reasons why you would want others to read your record?

Ask students to read Mormon 8:26–35, looking for what Moroni prophesied about the conditions at the time when the Book of Mormon would be brought forth. You might encourage students to mark what they find.

- How did Moroni describe the time when the Book of Mormon would be brought forth? (It would be a day of apostasy and wickedness.)
- What conclusions can you make based upon verse 35? (You might point out that in addition to Moroni, other prophets including Nephi, Jacob, and Mormon stated that they were writing for future generations. Consider having students cross-reference verse 35 with 2 Nephi 25:21–22 and Mormon 7:1.)
- Why is it important to know that Moroni and other Book of Mormon writers were aware of the problems we face today? (As you discuss this question, emphasize the following truth: **The teachings in the Book of Mormon are of great worth to us today because the writers were aware of the problems we would face.**)

To help students understand this truth, invite a student to read the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson:



"The Book of Mormon ... was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us.

"Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. ... If they saw our day and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, 'Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?'" (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 140).

- How might remembering that the Book of Mormon was written for our day change the way we read it?

Invite students to give examples of how the Book of Mormon has given them direction, strength, answers to questions, or solutions to problems.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 25:17–18; 3 Nephi 21:9–11; 29:1–4; Mormon 8:1–5, 26–35; Ether 12:22–26; Moses 7:62; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Safety for the Soul," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 88–90.
- "Flooding the Earth and Our Lives with the Book of Mormon," chapter 10 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 137–45.

The Book of Mormon and the Bible

7

Introduction

As a companion to the Bible, the Book of Mormon is a witness of Jesus Christ's divinity and His role as the Savior of the world. The Book of Mormon restores plain and precious truths that have been

lost from the Bible. When we study the Book of Mormon, our understanding of the doctrines in the Bible is clarified.

Background Reading

- Russell M. Nelson, "Scriptural Witnesses," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 43–46.
- Tad R. Callister, "The Book of Mormon—a Book from God," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 74–76.

Suggestions for Teaching

Ezekiel 37:15–19; 2 Nephi 3:11–12; 29:3–10

The Bible and the Book of Mormon are united witnesses of Jesus Christ

Ask students what they might say to someone who expresses doubts about the Book of Mormon because God has already given us the Bible.

Invite students to silently read 2 Nephi 29:3–10 and mark phrases that indicate the Lord's reasons for providing more than one book of scripture.

- What did the Lord say about those who react with doubt to scripture in addition to the Bible?
- According to verse 8, what did the Lord say was His purpose for revealing scripture in addition to the Bible? (Students may give a variety of answers, but they should identify the following truth: **The Bible and the Book of Mormon together bear witness of Jesus Christ.**)
- What do you learn from this passage that helps you understand the importance of having additional scriptural witnesses?

To deepen students' understanding of how the Bible and the Book of Mormon work together to testify of Jesus Christ, display the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"Scriptural witnesses authenticate each other. This concept was explained long ago when a prophet wrote that the Book of Mormon was 'written for the intent that ye may believe [the Bible]; and if ye believe [the Bible] ye will believe [the Book of Mormon] also' [Mormon 7:9]. Each book refers to the other. Each book stands as evidence that God lives and speaks to His children by revelation to His prophets.

"Love for the Book of Mormon expands one's love for the Bible and vice versa. Scriptures of the Restoration do not compete with the Bible; they complement the Bible" ("Scriptural Witnesses," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 43).

- What stands out to you in President Nelson's description of the relationship between these two books of scripture, and why?

Remind students that the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel prophesied that the stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph would be joined together. Explain that a “stick” can refer to either a wooden tablet or a scroll that was rolled around wooden rods (see Boyd K. Packer, “Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 51). Invite a student to read Ezekiel 37:15–19 aloud.

- What do these sticks represent? (As necessary, explain that the “stick of Judah” refers to the Bible and the “stick of Ephraim” to the Book of Mormon.)
- What do you think it means that these two sticks or books of scripture “shall become one in thine hand”? (verses 17, 19).

To help answer this question, share the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Explain that shortly before President Packer made this statement, the Church had published new editions of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Each book contained footnotes and other scripture helps that referred to the other book, thereby uniting the two in a new way. Invite students to listen for blessings that are available to those who study the Bible and the Book of Mormon together.



“The stick or record of Judah ... and the stick or record of Ephraim ... are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other; as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands. Ezekiel’s prophecy now stands fulfilled.

“With the passing of years, these scriptures will produce successive generations of faithful Christians who know the Lord Jesus Christ and are disposed to obey His will. ...

“... The revelations will be opened to [new generations] as to no other in the history of the world. Into their hands now are placed the sticks of Joseph and of Judah. They will develop a gospel scholarship beyond that which their forebears could achieve. They will have the testimony that Jesus is the Christ and be competent to proclaim Him and to defend Him” (“Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 53).

- What blessings are available when we study the Book of Mormon and Bible together as one? (Students should identify the following principle: **When we study the Bible and the Book of Mormon together, we receive a greater witness that Jesus is the Christ.**)
- How has studying the Book of Mormon and Bible together deepened your knowledge and testimony of Jesus Christ?

Ask a student to read 2 Nephi 3:11–12. (It may be helpful to clarify that these verses are part of a prophecy by Joseph of Egypt. In these verses Joseph mentioned two books—the book written by the descendants of Joseph is the Book of Mormon, and the book written by the descendants of Judah is the Bible.)

- What impact will the Book of Mormon and Bible have on the world as these two books “grow together”? (Students should identify these ideas: The books will confound false doctrines, lay down contentions, and establish peace.)

Ask students to ponder how they might use the Book of Mormon and Bible together to strengthen their testimonies and faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Invite students to share their thoughts and impressions. Also invite them to act on the promptings they receive.

1 Nephi 13:23–29, 35–36, 38–41*Plain and precious truths have been restored*

Remind students that the Prophet Joseph Smith was commanded by the Lord to make an inspired revision of the King James Version of the Bible. This revision is known as the Joseph Smith Translation. Display and read the following statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44):



"I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 207).

- Why was an inspired revision of the Bible needed?

Remind students that Nephi had a vision of the coming forth of the Bible. Invite a student to read 1 Nephi 13:23–25 aloud. Ask the class to look for Nephi's description of the Bible when it was originally written.

- What did the angel teach Nephi about the Bible when it was first created? (It "contained the covenants of the Lord," it was "of great worth," and it "contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord.")

Invite students to read 1 Nephi 13:26–28, looking for what Nephi learned would happen to the Bible and for what reasons.

- What did the great and abominable church do to the Bible? (Emphasize that the great and abominable church is not any specific church or organization but rather a general term referring to all those who fight against Christ [see 1 Nephi 13:4–9; 14:10].)
- According to verse 27, why were these plain and precious parts removed?

Invite a student to read 1 Nephi 13:29 aloud while the class looks for the results of the plain and precious parts being removed from the Bible.

- What happened as a result of the plain and precious teachings of the Lord being removed from the Bible?
- What evidence do you see in today's world that "an exceedingly great many do stumble" as the result of a lack of plain and precious truths?

Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud from 1 Nephi 13:35–36, 38–41 while the class looks for the Lord's solution to this problem.

- What would the Lord do to overcome the problems caused by the removal of the plain and precious truths from the Bible?
- In addition to the Book of Mormon, what "other books" has the Lord brought forth as part of the Restoration? (Encourage students to make a note in their scriptures that "other books" could include the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.)
- According to verse 40, how do the Book of Mormon and the "other books" resolve the problems caused by the removal of the plain and precious parts of the Bible? (Students should understand the following truth: **The Book of Mormon and**

latter-day scriptures help to establish the truth of the Bible and restore plain and precious truths that have been taken away from it.)

To illustrate how the Book of Mormon confirms our understanding of the doctrine and principles found in the Bible, share the following statement by Elder Tad R. Callister, who served in the Presidency of the Seventy:



"The Bible is one witness of Jesus Christ; the Book of Mormon is another. Why is this second witness so crucial? The following illustration may help: How many straight lines can you draw through a single point on a piece of paper? The answer is infinite. For a moment, suppose that single point represents the Bible and that hundreds of those straight lines drawn through that point represent different interpretations of the Bible and that each of those interpretations represents a different church.

"What happens, however, if on that piece of paper there is a second point representing the Book of Mormon? How many straight lines could you draw between these two reference points: the Bible and the Book of Mormon? Only one. Only one interpretation of Christ's doctrines survives the testimony of these two witnesses.

"Again and again the Book of Mormon acts as a confirming, clarifying, unifying witness of the doctrines taught in the Bible" ("The Book of Mormon—a Book from God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 75).

- Why is it important to have both the Book of Mormon and the Bible as witnesses of the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Invite students to bear testimony and share examples of how the Book of Mormon has helped them to better understand the Bible or to grow closer to the Savior.

Student Readings

- Ezekiel 37:15–19; 1 Nephi 13:20–41; 2 Nephi 3:11–14; 29:1–14.
- Russell M. Nelson, "Scriptural Witnesses," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 43–46.
- Tad R. Callister, "The Book of Mormon—a Book from God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 74–76.

Salvation Comes through Jesus Christ

8

Introduction

Our efforts to follow Jesus Christ and keep His commandments are necessary but insufficient to qualify us for salvation. Our salvation is made possible only through the merits, mercy, and grace of Jesus

Christ. The doctrine of Christ helps us understand that through His grace, we can learn the gospel, receive ordinances, and press forward on the path that leads to eternal life.

Background Reading

- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Gift of Grace,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 107–10.
- L. Tom Perry, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 44–46.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 2:6–9; 25:23; Mosiah 4:6–8

Salvation is possible because of Jesus Christ

Display and read the following statement by Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“Many people wonder, ‘Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?’ Our Eternal Father did not send us to earth on an aimless, meaningless journey. He provided for us a plan to follow. He is the author of that plan. It is designed for man’s progress and ultimate salvation and exaltation” (“The Plan of Salvation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 69–70).

- When people discover that God has not left them to wander alone through mortal life but has provided a plan for their salvation, what do you think they might feel?

Invite students to read 2 Nephi 2:6–9, looking for what the prophet Lehi said makes salvation possible.

- According to Lehi, what makes salvation possible in God’s plan? (Students should identify the following: **We can be saved only through the merits, mercy, and grace of Jesus Christ.** You might share the following definition of what it means to be saved or to receive salvation: “*Salvation* in its true and full meaning is synonymous with *exaltation* or *eternal life* and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom. With few exceptions this is the salvation of which the scriptures speak” [Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 670].)
- What is meant by the *merits*, *mercy*, and *grace* of Jesus Christ? (The *merits* of Jesus Christ are His righteous acts, particularly His Atonement. *Mercy* refers to the compassion and forbearance He extends toward us despite our sins. *Grace* refers to the help He extends to us in the form of mercy, love, kindness, and the enabling power that allows us to receive eternal life and exaltation after we have expended our own best efforts. See also Bible Dictionary, “Grace.”)

To help deepen students’ understanding of this doctrine, display the following statement by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"We cannot earn our way into heaven; the demands of justice stand as a barrier, which we are powerless to overcome on our own.

"But all is not lost.

"The grace of God is our great and everlasting hope.

"Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the plan of mercy appeases the demands of justice [see Alma 42:15]" ("The Gift of Grace," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 108).

- Why is a person's own righteousness not enough to meet "the demands of justice" and obtain eternal life? (Though in time we may learn to live the commandments perfectly, no one has lived a perfect life except the Savior [see Romans 3:23]. Although we may stop sinning, we cannot erase the harm or the guilt of our past actions. This is why the Atonement and grace are necessary.)

Remind students that while we are saved only through the merits, mercy, and grace of Jesus Christ, the prophets in the Book of Mormon taught what we must do to access the Savior's redeeming power.

Invite a student to read Mosiah 4:6–8 aloud, and ask the class to look for what King Benjamin taught we must do to receive salvation through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

- According to King Benjamin, what must we do to receive salvation through the Atonement? (Come to a knowledge of God and of the Atonement, put our trust in God, keep the commandments diligently, and continue faithfully to the end of our lives.)

Ask students to read 2 Nephi 25:23.

- What doctrine did Nephi teach regarding our salvation? (Students should identify the following doctrine: **Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can be saved by grace after all we can do.** Help students understand that only through Jesus Christ can we become holy and like our Father in Heaven.)

To help students better understand this doctrine, invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994):



"'After all we can do' includes extending our best effort. It includes living his commandments.

"'After all we can do' includes loving our fellow men and praying for those who regard us as their adversary. It means clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, and giving 'succor [to] those that stand in need of [our] succor' (Mosiah 4:16)—remembering that what we do unto one of the least of God's children, we do unto him.

"'After all we can do' means leading chaste, clean, pure lives, being scrupulously honest in all our dealings and treating others the way we would want to be treated" ("Redemption through Christ after All We Can Do," *Liahona*, Dec. 1988, 5).

- In what ways have you experienced the Savior's grace helping you beyond your own abilities as you have extended your best efforts to come to Him?

Use the following statement, also by President Ezra Taft Benson, to help students ponder this question before they respond:



"As a Church, we are in accord with Nephi, who said, 'It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.' (2 Nephi 25:23.) ...

"By grace, the Savior accomplished his atoning sacrifice so that all mankind will attain immortality.

"By his grace, and by our faith in his atonement and repentance of our sins, we receive the strength to do the works necessary that we otherwise could not do by our own power.

"By his grace we receive an endowment of blessing and spiritual strength that may eventually lead us to eternal life if we endure to the end.

"By his grace we become more like his divine personality" ("Redemption through Christ after All We Can Do," 4–5).

- What do you think we can do to show our gratitude for what Jesus Christ makes possible?

Testify that only through grace made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ can we overcome the effects of the Fall of Adam and Eve, obtain a remission of sins, overcome imperfections, and progress toward perfection. Encourage students to ponder whether they are doing all they can to receive the blessings of the Lord's grace.

2 Nephi 31:2, 10–21; 3 Nephi 11:31–40; 3 Nephi 27:13–22

The doctrine of Christ

Write the following references on the board:

2 Nephi 31:2, 10–21

3 Nephi 11:31–40

3 Nephi 27:13–22

Assign one part of the class to study 2 Nephi 31:2, 10–21, a second part of the class to study 3 Nephi 11:31–40, and a third part to study 3 Nephi 27:13–22. Before students begin, point out that these passages contain the terms "doctrine of Christ," "my doctrine," or "my gospel." Explain that the doctrine or gospel of Christ consists of what Jesus Christ has done and continues to do to draw us to the Father. It also consists of what we must do to access the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Invite each group to identify and mark what their assigned verses teach about the doctrine of Christ—what Christ has done and what we must do.

After students have had a few minutes to study their assigned passages, ask them to list what they find on the board beside each reference. Then ask:

- What has Jesus Christ done to draw us to the Father?
- What are some of the things we must do to access the blessings of Christ's Atonement? (We must have faith, repent, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, endure to the end, and receive and obey personal revelation.)
- How might you summarize the importance of living the doctrine or gospel of Jesus Christ? (Students should identify a principle like the following: **As we live according to the doctrine of Christ, we can access the blessings of the Atonement and receive eternal life.**)

According to the needs of your students, consider asking questions like the following to help them further analyze the scripture passages they read:

- What is a phrase in 2 Nephi 31:20 that has particular meaning to you, and how does it help you access the blessings of the Atonement?
- As taught in 2 Nephi 31:13–14, 17, what does it mean to be baptized “by fire”? (A person receives the remission of sins and the cleansing that comes through the Holy Ghost.)
- According to 3 Nephi 11:39–40, why is so important for each person to accept the doctrine of Christ? (You may want to invite students to cross-reference this passage with Helaman 5:12.)
- According to 3 Nephi 27:14–16, what happens to us as we live according to the doctrine or gospel of Jesus Christ?

Conclude by displaying the following statement from *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*. Invite students to read it and look for ways in which living the doctrine of Christ can bless them throughout their lives.

“Individuals and families begin to follow Christ as they exercise faith in Him and repent of their sins. They receive a remission of sins through baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost from one who has authority from God to perform these ordinances. They then endure to the end, or, in other words, they continue throughout their lives in exercising faith in Jesus Christ, repenting, and renewing the covenants they have made. These are not just steps that they experience once in their lives; rather, when repeated throughout life these principles become an increasingly rewarding pattern of living. In fact, it is the only way of living that will bring peace of conscience and enable Heavenly Father’s children to return to live in His presence” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 6).

- In what ways has living the doctrine of Christ “become an increasingly rewarding pattern of living” for you?

Encourage students to ponder how well they are living the doctrine of Christ. Ask them to think about what they might do better to access the blessings of living the doctrine of Christ.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 2:6–9; 25:23; 31:2–21; Mosiah 4:6–8; 3 Nephi 11:31–40; 27:13–22.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Gift of Grace,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 107–10.
- L. Tom Perry, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 44–46.

"Seek Ye for the Kingdom of God"

9

Introduction

When the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob encouraged his people to seek for the kingdom of God (see Jacob 2:18), he did so at a time when the sins of pride, love of riches, and immorality were serious problems. These sins are a threat to the unity and progress

of God's kingdom on earth. To seek for the kingdom of God is to make living the gospel a top priority in our lives. This lesson will help students commit to forsake sin and more fully seek after God's kingdom.

Background Reading

- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Pride and the Priesthood," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 55–58.
- "Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods before Me," chapter 14 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 145–53.
- "The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," chapter 1 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 37–45.

Suggestions for Teaching

Alma 7:14–16, 19, 21–24

The Book of Mormon teaches us how to follow the path to God's kingdom

Ask students to consider things that need to be checked regularly to keep them in good working condition (for example, checking engine oil or smoke detector batteries, or getting a checkup by a doctor or dentist).

- What are the benefits of checking on these regularly? (We can fix problems and avoid trouble or danger in the future.)

Explain that we similarly need to consistently review the condition of our spiritual lives to assess weaknesses and avoid danger.

Tell students that when Alma the Younger was serving as high priest, he visited the people of the Church in Gideon and urged them to evaluate their spiritual condition. Ask students to read Alma 7:19 silently, looking for the spiritual condition of the people in Gideon.

- How did Alma describe the spiritual condition of the people of Gideon? (The people were "in the path which leads to the kingdom of God.")

Explain that the "kingdom of God" has at least two separate meanings—one earthly and one celestial. Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and help students understand that in Alma 7:19 the "kingdom of God" refers to the celestial kingdom:



"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it is now constituted is *the kingdom of God on earth*. ... In the eternal worlds, *the celestial kingdom is the kingdom of God*. ... The gospel is designed to prepare men for an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 415–17.)

Ask students to read Alma 7:14–16 and look for what Alma instructed the people they must do to inherit eternal life.

- Why do you think that Alma invited the people to repent when they were already on the path of righteousness? (The people of Gideon needed to stay on the path of righteousness.)

Invite a few students to take turns reading from Alma 7:21–24 aloud. Ask the class to look for actions and attributes that will help us inherit the kingdom of God.

- What do we need to *do* and *be* in order to follow the path leading to the kingdom of God? (Summarize student responses by writing the following principle on the board: **By living the principles of the gospel, we follow the path that leads to the kingdom of God.**)

Invite students to consider how their actions are helping them to become more like Jesus Christ and to progress toward the kingdom of God. Ask them to consider how they feel about the progress they are currently making.

1 Nephi 10:21; 2 Nephi 9:39; Jacob 2:12–14, 20–28; 3:10–12; Mosiah 2:20–25; 4:13, 21–26; 3 Nephi 12:27–30

Love of riches, pride, and immorality keep us from seeking God's kingdom

Explain that throughout the Book of Mormon, God's prophets warned the people against sin. For example, Jacob was commanded by the Lord to rebuke his people for sins that were "abominable unto God" (Jacob 2:5).

Write the following references on the board: Jacob 2:12–14, Jacob 2:20–21, and Jacob 2:23–28. Ask students to scan these passages, looking for specific sins that Jacob mentioned. Suggest that students mark words or phrases that describe these sins. After sufficient time, invite students to share the sins Jacob addressed in each passage. Write each sin they identify above the related reference on the board as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Love of riches</i> | <i>Pride</i> | <i>Immorality</i> |
| <i>Jacob 2:12–14</i> | <i>Jacob 2:20–21</i> | <i>Jacob 2:23–28</i> |

Invite a student to read Jacob 3:10–12 aloud, and ask the class to look for words and phrases that Jacob used to illustrate the seriousness of the people's sins.

- What words or phrases illustrate the seriousness of the people's sins?
- Jacob used the phrase "the awful consequences" of sin (verse 12). Invite students to cross-reference Jacob 3:12 with 2 Nephi 9:39 and 1 Nephi 10:21. Ask a student to read each of these verses aloud. Ask the class to look for additional consequences of sin. Invite the class to identify a truth from these passages about how sins such as pride, immorality, and the love of riches can affect someone who is seeking the kingdom of God. (Students should identify a truth such as the following: **Sin leads to spiritual death and prevents us from entering God's kingdom.**)

Add the following scripture references to the board:

| <i>Love of riches</i> | <i>Pride</i> | <i>Immorality</i> |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Jacob 2:12–14</i> <i>Mosiah 4:13, 21–26</i> | <i>Jacob 2:20–21</i> <i>Mosiah 2:20–25</i> | <i>Jacob 2:23–28</i> <i>3 Nephi 12:27–30</i> |

Invite students to select and read one of the new passages. Ask them to look for ways to avoid the sins of love of riches, pride, and immorality. After sufficient time, ask them to share what they found.

- How would following the counsel in these passages help a member of the Church to seek the kingdom of God and to strengthen the Lord's Church on earth?

Matthew 6:33; Jacob 2:17–19

We should seek for God's kingdom above all other interests

Explain that in addition to warning his people about the love of riches, pride, and immorality, Jacob gave counsel to help them overcome their unrighteous desires. Ask a student to read Jacob 2:17–19 aloud while the class looks for the counsel that Jacob gave.

- What can we learn from Jacob's counsel that can help us avoid sin? (Students should identify the following: **God has commanded us to seek for the kingdom of God above all other interests.**)
- What does it mean to you to seek first the kingdom of God?

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite a student to read it aloud:



"When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 40).

- What are some examples of things that "fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives" when we make God our first priority?
- What is an example of something that has fallen into place or dropped out of your life as you have put Heavenly Father and His kingdom first in your life?
- What effect would putting God first have on us when we are tempted by pride, love of riches, immorality, or other sins?

Invite a student to read Matthew 6:33 aloud. Tell students that the Joseph Smith Translation reads as follows: "*Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 [in Matthew 6:33, footnote a]).

Display the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"'Seek ... first to build up the kingdom of God' means to assign first priority to God and to His work. The work of God is to bring to pass the eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39), and all that this entails. ... Everything else is lower in priority. ... As someone has said, if we do not choose the kingdom of God first, it will make little difference in the long run what we have chosen instead of it" ("Focus and Priorities,"

Ensign, May 2001, 83–84).

- What are some ways a young adult member of the Church can "build up the kingdom of God"?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"By choosing to be in [God's] kingdom, we separate—not isolate—ourselves from the world. Our dress will be modest, our thoughts pure, our language clean. The movies and television we watch, the music we listen to, the books, magazines, and newspapers we read will be uplifting. We will choose friends who encourage our eternal goals, and we will treat others with kindness. We will shun the vices of immorality, gambling, tobacco, liquor, and illicit drugs. Our Sunday activities will reflect the commandment of God to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. We will follow the example of Jesus Christ in the way we treat others. We will live to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord" ("The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 8).

- How can seeking God's kingdom significantly influence every aspect of our lives?
- How has seeking God's kingdom influenced your life or the life of a family member or acquaintance?

Encourage students to ponder what they might do to continually seek God's kingdom. Encourage them to listen for the promptings of the Spirit and write down what they plan to do. Testify of the blessings that come from putting God first in our lives.

Student Readings

- Matthew 6:33; Jacob 2:12–28; 3:10–12; Mosiah 2:20–25; 4:13, 21–26; Alma 7:14–16, 19, 21–24; 3 Nephi 12:27–30.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Pride and the Priesthood," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 55–58.
- "The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," chapter 1 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 37–45.

Prayer and Revelation

10

Introduction

Prayer is a sacred privilege and commandment that allows us to communicate with a loving Heavenly Father. He hears and answers our prayers. Those who diligently seek the Lord's guidance can be

blessed with personal revelation. This lesson highlights what we can do to prepare our hearts and our minds to receive answers to our prayers.

Background Reading

- Boyd K. Packer, "The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 51–56.
- Richard G. Scott, "How to Obtain Revelation and Inspiration for Your Personal Life," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 45–47.
- David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 87–90.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 32:8–9; 3 Nephi 14:7–11

God hears our prayers

Ask students to list some of the ways in which we can use technology to communicate with others. Write the students' responses on the board.

- While technology allows us to communicate with nearly anyone we choose, why do we sometimes find it difficult to communicate effectively with our Heavenly Father?

Invite a student to read 3 Nephi 14:7–11 aloud while the class looks for what the Savior taught about Heavenly Father's willingness to answer our prayers.

- What principle did the Savior teach about Heavenly Father's willingness to answer our prayers? (Student responses should include the following principle: **Heavenly Father hears and responds to us when we ask, seek, and knock.**)

To deepen students' understanding of this principle, share the following statement by President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency:



"No earthly authority can separate us from direct access to our Creator. There can never be a mechanical or electronic failure when we pray. There is no limit on the number of times or how long we can pray each day. There is no quota of how many needs we wish to pray for in each prayer. We do not need to go through secretaries or make an appointment to reach the throne of grace. He is reachable at any time and any place"

("The Lifeline of Prayer," *Ensign*, May 2002, 59).

- What might you say to help individuals who do not pray often because they do not believe that God hears or answers their prayers?

Invite a student to read 2 Nephi 32:8–9 aloud, and ask the class to look for what Nephi taught about prayer. You might ask questions such as the following:

- What do you think it means to "pray always"?

- What example have you seen of someone who prays always? How has this person been blessed because of this practice?
- What does it mean to you that the Lord will “consecrate” your efforts for the welfare of your soul when you pray for His help? (It may be helpful to point out that to *consecrate* something means to dedicate it for a special or sacred purpose or to make it holy.)

Encourage students to be diligent in praying always. Assure them that Heavenly Father does hear their prayers and greatly desires to bless them.

1 Nephi 10:17–19; 15:1–3, 7–11; Jacob 4:6; Alma 26:22

All followers of Jesus Christ can receive personal revelation

Ask students to list some questions or circumstances for which young adults might desire revelation from God.

Remind students of Lehi’s dream of the tree of life, and point out that after Nephi heard about this inspired dream, he desired to learn more about it. Ask several students to take turns reading 1 Nephi 10:17–19 aloud. Ask the class to look for what these verses teach about revelation, including who is entitled to revelation.

- What do these verses teach about personal revelation? (Ensure that the following doctrine is identified: **God reveals truth by the power of the Holy Ghost to all those who diligently seek to know.**)

Display the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“[The spirit of revelation] is not restricted to the presiding authorities of the Church; rather, it belongs to and should be operative in the life of every man, woman, and child who reaches the age of accountability and enters into sacred covenants. Sincere desire and worthiness invite the spirit of revelation into our lives” (“The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 87).

- Why is this insight from Elder Bednar encouraging to you?

Explain that because of Nephi’s desires, his worthiness, and his faith, he too was shown a vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11–14). Also point out that Laman and Lemuel’s response to their father’s vision was quite different from Nephi’s. Ask two students to read 1 Nephi 15:1–3, 7–9 aloud, and invite the class to follow along and consider what they learn from these verses.

- What is most important to you in these verses?

Ask another student to read 1 Nephi 15:10–11 aloud. Consider pointing out to students that verse 11 is an example of an “if-then” statement in the scriptures. Write the following on the board and ask students how they would fill in the blanks based on what they read in verses 10–11:

If _____, then _____.

Invite students to cross-reference verse 11 with Alma 26:22, and then ask:

- How might you use what is taught in 1 Nephi 15:10–11 and Alma 26:22 to teach someone how to seek answers to his or her prayers?

Ask a student to read Jacob 4:6 aloud, and invite the class to look for what Jacob's people did, in addition to asking in faith, to invite revelation. You may want to explain that "we search the prophets" refers to reading the words of the prophets in the scriptures.

- Why do you think that studying the words of both ancient and latter-day prophets can lead to receiving revelation from the Lord?

Display and read the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"When we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

"If you have not heard His voice speaking to you lately, return with new eyes and new ears to the scriptures. They are our spiritual lifeline" ("Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 26–27).

Invite students to think of a challenge or decision they are facing. Ask them to consider whether they have inquired of the Lord in prayer and turned to the scriptures for answers.

To help students see examples of how the Lord provides personal revelation to us, write the following scripture references on the board.

1 Nephi 4:6

1 Nephi 8:2

Jacob 7:5

Enos 1:10

Helaman 13:5

3 Nephi 11:3

Assign a few students to each of the passages. Ask them to read their assigned passages and find one way in which God gives personal revelation to His children. Invite students to share what they discovered. As you consider the needs of your students, you might share the following statements by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) and Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"The Spirit does not get our attention by shouting or shaking us with a heavy hand. Rather it whispers. It caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all. ...

"Occasionally it will press just firmly enough for us to pay heed. But most of the time, if we do not heed the gentle feeling, the Spirit will withdraw and wait until we come seeking and listening and say in our manner and expression, like Samuel of ancient times, 'Speak [Lord], for thy servant heareth.' (1 Sam. 3:10.)" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).



"His answers will seldom come while you are on your knees praying, even when you may plead for an immediate response. Rather, He will prompt you in quiet moments when the Spirit can most effectively touch your mind and heart. Hence, you should find periods of quiet time to recognize when you are being instructed and strengthened" ("Using the Supernal Gift of Prayer," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 9).

Remind students that we do not choose how God will reveal truth to us, but when we act in faith, we better prepare our hearts and minds to receive revelation. Invite a few students to share how they have received personal revelation, if the experience is not too personal or sacred.

1 Nephi 18:1–3; 2 Nephi 28:30; Alma 12:9–11

Receiving and acting upon revelation

Ask students to silently compare 2 Nephi 28:30 and Alma 12:9–11 and identify principles that can help them receive increased personal revelation.

- What do these passages teach that will help us receive increased personal revelation? (Though they may use different words, students should identify the following principles: **The Lord reveals truth to us according to how diligently we give heed to His word. Revelation often comes to us line upon line.**)
- Why do you think the Lord requires us to be obedient to what He has already revealed to us before He reveals additional knowledge?
- What does it mean that revelation comes to us "line upon line"?

As time permits, you might discuss 1 Nephi 18:1–3 with the class to illustrate how Nephi received incremental revelation to learn how to build a ship.

Display and ask a student to read the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar:



"Most frequently, revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our desire, worthiness, and preparation. Such communications from Heavenly Father gradually and gently 'distil upon [our souls] as the dew from heaven' (D&C 121:45). This pattern of revelation tends to be more common than rare" ("The Spirit of Revelation," 88).

- As you think back over your life, how has the Lord directed you incrementally in making a decision or seeking understanding from Him?

Conclude the lesson by displaying and asking a student to read aloud the following statement by President Thomas S. Monson:



"If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now. William Cowper declared, 'Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees' ['Exhortation to Prayer,' in *Olney Hymns*]" ("A Royal Priesthood," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 61).

Ask students to think about the effort they currently give to prayer in their daily lives. Encourage them to follow the principles discussed in this lesson to invite increased personal revelation through prayer and scripture study. Invite students to share how they know Heavenly Father answers prayers. Share your testimony that our loving

Heavenly Father will inspire us with understanding and direction if we prepare ourselves to receive it.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 10:17–19; 15:1–3, 7–11; 18:1–3; 2 Nephi 28:30; 32:8–9; Jacob 4:6; Alma 12:9–11; 26:22; 3 Nephi 14:7–11.
- Richard G. Scott, “How to Obtain Revelation and Inspiration for Your Personal Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 45–47.
- David A. Bednar, “The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 87–90.

11

Protecting Ourselves against the False Doctrines of the Last Days

Introduction

In addition to teaching “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9), the Book of Mormon fortifies followers of Christ against the false teachings and ideas prevalent in the last days. One way it accomplishes this is by exposing the enemies of Christ

and identifying the false doctrines they spread. As students study accounts of false teachers in the Book of Mormon, they will learn to discern between the truths of the gospel and the false concepts of the world.

Background Reading

- Dallin H. Oaks, “Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 43–46.
- Dallin H. Oaks, “As He Thinketh in His Heart” (evening with Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Feb. 8, 2013), lds.org/broadcasts.
- Neil L. Andersen, “Spiritual Whirlwinds,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18–21.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 28:3–9, 12–15; Jacob 7:1–12; Alma 1:2–6; 30:12–18, 39–44; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22

Identifying and protecting ourselves against false doctrines

Ask students to consider the diverse opinions that exist in the world about issues such as the following: God-given truth versus moral relativism (the idea that there is no universal right or wrong), religious liberty versus the rights of special interest groups, and the right to an abortion versus the right to life. As you discuss these issues, consider writing them on the board. Give students a few moments to discuss why we must be careful to embrace ideas that are correct.

Explain that near the end of His life, Jesus Christ prophesied of dangerous spiritual conditions that would exist in the last days. Invite a student to read Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22. You may want to point out that the phrase “the elect according to the covenant” refers to members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

- What threats do “false Christs” and “false prophets” pose in our day?

Display and read the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994):



“The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Ne. 3:12.) It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 132).

- What does this statement teach about how studying the Book of Mormon can protect us from false teachings? (Make sure students identify this principle: **As we**

study the Book of Mormon and apply its teachings, we are fortified against the devil and the false teachings and concepts of our day.)

- What advantage is there in learning about Satan's strategies before you actually encounter them?

Ask a few students to take turns reading 2 Nephi 28:3–9 aloud while the class looks for false ideas that Nephi said would be prevalent in our day. You might encourage students to mark important words and phrases. Invite students to share what they identified, and then ask:

- What are some modern-day examples of these false ideas? (Examples may include the following: moral relativism; belief that because of God's great love for us He will not punish sin; and prejudice against Christians, who are often seen as bigots or fanatics.)

To help answer this question, share the following statement by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask students to listen for false teachings they have encountered.



"False prophets and false teachers are those who declare that the Prophet Joseph Smith was a duplicitous deceiver; they challenge the First Vision as an authentic experience. They declare that the Book of Mormon and other canonical works are not ancient records of scripture. They also attempt to redefine the nature of the Godhead, and they deny that God has given and continues to give revelation today to His ordained and sustained prophets. ...

"Perhaps most damningly, they deny Christ's Resurrection and Atonement, arguing that no God can save us. They reject the need for a Savior. In short, these detractors attempt to reinterpret the doctrines of the Church to fit their own preconceived views, and in the process deny Christ and His messianic role.

"False prophets and false teachers are also those who attempt to change the God-given and scripturally based doctrines that protect the sanctity of marriage, the divine nature of the family, and the essential doctrine of personal morality. They advocate a redefinition of morality to justify fornication, adultery, and homosexual relationships" ("Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 63–64).

Ask students to search 2 Nephi 28:12–15, looking for the consequences of believing in false teachings.

- What are some of the consequences of believing in false teachings and ideas?

Display the following statement by Elder Ulisses Soares of the Presidency of the Seventy, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"We cannot allow ourselves to be confused by popular messages that are easily accepted by the world and that contradict the doctrine and true principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many of these worldly messages represent nothing more than an attempt of our society to justify sin" ("Yes, We Can and Will Win!" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 75).

- What did Elder Soares say is the purpose of many of the popular messages that contradict the gospel of Jesus Christ? (Help students identify this truth: **Satan uses false teachings to entice us to commit sin.** You might refer to Alma 30:53 for more information about this truth.)

Divide the class into three groups. Write the following scripture passages on the board, and assign each group to study one of the passages: Jacob 7:1–7; Alma 1:2–6; or Alma 30:12–18. Ask students to identify some of the false teachings taught by Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor and to write them on the board under the appropriate headings.

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Sherem (Jacob 7:1–7) | Nehor (Alma 1:2–6) | Korihor (Alma 30:12–18) |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|

- How have you seen false teachings or ideas such as those listed on the board affect Church members today?

Invite students to compare Jacob 7:5, 8–12 and Alma 30:39–44 to see what fortified Jacob and Alma against the false teachings of Sherem and Korihor. (*Note:* Comparing is a scripture study skill. Noting similarities “between teachings, people, or events can bring gospel truths into sharper focus” [*Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (2012), 22].)

- What fortified Jacob and Alma against false teachings? (Answers should include the following: previous spiritual experiences, knowledge of the scriptures, knowledge gained from the Holy Ghost, and a testimony of Christ.)
- What is a principle we might learn from the responses of Jacob and Alma to these false teachings? (Help students identify this principle: **When we rely on our testimonies of Christ and seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we can overcome challenges to our faith.**)
- How has your testimony strengthened you against false teachings or criticisms of your beliefs?

Encourage students to share what they are doing to protect themselves from the false teachings that can erode their faith in Jesus Christ and His restored gospel.

2 Nephi 26:29; 3 Nephi 18:24; 27:27

Recognizing the dangers of priestcrafts

Tell students that some spiritual dangers to the Church come from members within the Church. Ask a student to read 2 Nephi 26:29 aloud while the class looks for the spiritual danger described by Nephi.

- According to this passage, what are priestcrafts? (When people preach the gospel for personal fame or wealth rather than for the welfare of God’s children.)
- In what ways could priestcrafts create spiritual dangers for members of the Church?

To help answer these questions, invite a student to read the following statement by Elder M. Russell Ballard:



“Let us beware of false prophets and false teachers, both men and women, who are self-appointed declarers of the doctrines of the Church and who seek to spread their false gospel and attract followers by sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God’s true prophets and who actively proselyte others with reckless disregard for the eternal well-being of those whom they seduce” (“Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 63).

- How can you protect yourself and others from priestcrafts?
- How can you defend the doctrines of the Church when others speak in opposition to God's latter-day prophets?

Tell students that the Savior taught His disciples how those who represent Him should teach and influence others. Ask students to silently search 3 Nephi 18:24 and 3 Nephi 27:27, looking for how true gospel service differs from priestcraft.

- How do the motives and actions of righteous teachers and leaders differ from the motives and actions of those guilty of priestcraft? (Students should identify the following truth: **Disciples of Jesus Christ seek to serve and bless others by pointing them to Him.**)

Moroni 7:12–17; Ether 4:11–12

Discerning truth and error

Ask students to think of a time when someone questioned or criticized their religious beliefs. Invite one or two students to briefly share their experiences.

Invite several students to take turns reading aloud from Moroni 7:12–17 and Ether 4:11–12 while the class follows along, looking for how to discern whether something is from the Lord or from the devil.

- What do you learn from this passage about how we can judge between good and evil? (Make sure students understand the following principle: **Everything that is of God invites us to do good, to believe in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve God.**)

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson:



"May I suggest three short tests to avoid being deceived. ...

"1. What do the standard works have to say about it? ...

"2. The second guide is: what do the latter-day Presidents of the Church have to say on the subject—particularly the living President? ...

"3. The third and final test is the Holy Ghost—the test of the Spirit. ... This test can only be fully effective if one's channels of communication with God are clean and virtuous and uncluttered with sin" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 16–17).

To conclude, ask students to ponder how they can better use the scriptures, the words of the prophets, and the Holy Ghost to identify false teachings and avoid being deceived. You might encourage them to study Jacob 7, Alma 1, and Alma 30 in more detail and ponder how these chapters can help them better discern between truth and error.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 26:29; 28:3–9, 12–15; Jacob 7:1–12; Alma 1:2–6; 30:12–18, 39–44; 3 Nephi 18:24; 27:27; Ether 4:11–12; Moroni 7:12–17; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22.
- Neil L. Andersen, "Spiritual Whirlwinds," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18–21.

12

Our Need for Spiritual Rebirth

Introduction

From the Book of Mormon we learn that “the natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). In this lesson, students are instructed that through repenting and exercising faith in Jesus

Christ, we can overcome the natural man, be “born again,” and experience a mighty change of heart. This change is necessary to enter the kingdom of God.

Background Reading

- David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Born Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 76–79.

Suggestions for Teaching

Mosiah 3:19; 16:2–5; Alma 41:10–11

Putting off the natural man

On the board, write the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), quoted from “To ‘the Rising Generation,’ ” *New Era*, June 1986, 5:

“You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible!” (President Ezra Taft Benson)

- Why is it impossible to be happy when making wrong choices?

Ask a student to read Alma 41:10–11 aloud while the class looks for the consequences of wickedness. (Emphasize the following truth: **Wickedness never was happiness.**)

- What are some deceptions that Satan uses to convince us that breaking the commandments leads to happiness?
- According to verse 11, what does it mean to be in a “state of nature”? (To be “in a carnal state,” “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,” and “without God in the world.”)
- How does Alma 41:10–11 help explain why sinfulness cannot lead to happiness? (It is contrary to the nature of God, and the “nature of God” is the “nature of happiness.”)

Remind students that we have all inherited the effects of the Fall of Adam. Ask a student to read Mosiah 16:2–5 aloud while the class identifies words and phrases describing humankind’s fallen state.

- What words and phrases did Abinadi use to describe humankind’s fallen state?
- What is the significance of the word “persists” in verse 5? (*Note:* Identifying key words is an important scripture study skill that you may choose to emphasize here.)
- What makes it possible for us to be redeemed from our sinful and fallen state?

Ask students to silently read Mosiah 3:19 and identify how we can overcome our fallen state.

- What does it mean to “yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit”?

- What must we do to “[put] off the natural man”? (Students should identify the following principle: **As we follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit and draw upon the power of the Atonement, we can put off the natural man.**)

Invite students to consider evidence they have seen that the Savior is able to change us into better people than we could ever become on our own. Ask a few students to share their insights.

Invite students to silently answer the following questions:

- What can you do to more fully “[yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit”?
- Which attributes of a child listed in Mosiah 3:19 do you most need to develop?

Mosiah 5:1–5, 7–8; 27:24–26

Being born again

Ask students to list names of people in the Book of Mormon who experienced a change in their nature because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Remind students that Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah were, for a time, among the unbelievers in Zarahemla who persecuted Church members (see Mosiah 27:8). Following the visit of an angel, Alma was left without strength and was unable to speak. After three days, Alma’s strength was restored and he testified of a miraculous change that had taken place within him (see Mosiah 27:11–24).

Ask a student to read Mosiah 27:24–26 aloud while the class looks for how Alma described this miraculous change.

- What words and phrases in these verses help define what it means to be born again?
- How does verse 26 help explain why we need to be born again? (Make sure students understand this truth: **Only by becoming new creatures in Christ can we inherit the kingdom of God.**)

To help students understand what happens as we are spiritually reborn, ask a student to read Mosiah 5:1–5, 8 aloud. Ask the class to look for words or phrases indicating that King Benjamin’s people had experienced a spiritual rebirth.

- What evidence did you find that King Benjamin’s people had experienced a spiritual change? (Answers should include the following: they had no more disposition to do evil, they desired to do good continually, their minds were enlightened, and they were filled with joy and willing to make covenants with the Lord.)
- According to verses 2 and 4, what is required in order to receive a “mighty change of heart”? (Students should identify this principle: **As we exercise faith in Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, we can experience a mighty change of heart.**)

Display the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask a student to read it aloud as the class looks for how Elder Bednar describes the mighty change of heart.



"Please note that the conversion described in [Mosiah 5] is mighty, not minor—a spiritual rebirth and fundamental change of what we feel and desire, what we think and do, and what we are. Indeed, the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ entails a fundamental and permanent change in our very nature made possible through our reliance upon 'the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah' (2 Nephi 2:8)" ("Ye Must Be Born Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 20).

- What stood out to you in Elder Bednar's description of the mighty change of heart?

Invite students to discuss what we might do in order to continue to experience a mighty change of heart.

Ask students to read Mosiah 5:7 silently and look for how our relationship to Jesus Christ changes as we are born again.

- In what way do we become the children of Jesus Christ?

Invite students to think about the significance of becoming "the children of Christ," and invite them to share how this should motivate us as we seek to become born again.

Alma 5:14, 26–27; Ether 12:27

Spiritual rebirth requires time and effort

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles while the class listens for how he describes the process of receiving a change of heart:



"You may ask, Why doesn't this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin's people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical. For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.

"At the same time, let us not justify ourselves in a casual effort. Let us not be content to retain some disposition to do evil. Let us worthily partake of the sacrament each week and continue to draw upon the Holy Spirit to root out the last vestiges of impurity within us. I testify that as you continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy" ("Born Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 78).

- According to Elder Christofferson, why is being born again more of a process than an event?
- How does the process of spiritual rebirth help us become holy like Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ? (Help students identify this truth: **Through the grace of Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven and receive help to continue on the path of spiritual rebirth.**)

To help students better understand the meaning of *grace*, consider sharing this statement from the Bible Dictionary:

"It is ... through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise

would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts" (Bible Dictionary, "Grace").

Invite students to read Alma 5:14, 26–27 silently and look for what Alma taught those who had already begun the process of spiritual rebirth and experienced a change of heart. Invite students to ponder how they would answer Alma's questions.

- According to verse 27, what must we do after we receive a change of heart? (We must continue to walk blameless before God, be humble, and seek forgiveness of our sins.)
- Why do you think Alma taught that humility is such an important part of maintaining our change of heart?

Tell students that the Lord taught Ether why the power of humility is so important as we seek to have a change of heart. Remind students that scriptural principles often use the words *if* and *then*, and then invite them to review Ether 12:27 silently, looking for "if-then" principles. Discuss the following principles as students identify them: **If we come unto Jesus Christ, then He will show us our weakness. If we are humble and have faith in the Lord, then He will make weak things become strong unto us.**

- Why do you think it is important for us to recognize our weakness?
- What do you think is meant by the phrase "my grace is sufficient for all ... that humble themselves before me"?

Display the following statement by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy, and invite a student to read it aloud:



2004, 97).

"If you have problems in your life, don't assume there is something wrong with you. Struggling with those problems is at the very core of life's purpose. As we draw close to God, He will show us our weaknesses and through them make us wiser, stronger. If you're seeing more of your weaknesses, that just might mean you're moving nearer to God, not farther away" ("The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May

- What might we do to avoid getting discouraged when we recognize our weaknesses?

Share your testimony that the grace of Jesus Christ will help us to overcome our weaknesses as we seek to be spiritually reborn.

Student Readings

- Mosiah 3:19; 5:1–5, 7–8; 16:2–5; 27:24–26; Alma 5:14, 26–27; 41:10–11; Ether 12:27.
- David A. Bednar, "The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality," *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47.
- D. Todd Christofferson, "Born Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 76–79.

13

The Baptismal Covenant, the Sabbath, and the Sacrament

Introduction

Through the ordinance of baptism, followers of Jesus Christ covenant to take His name upon them. In this lesson, students will learn that the Book of Mormon teaches that the members of Christ's Church are to gather together on the Sabbath day and

enjoy the sacred privilege of partaking of the sacrament. When we partake of the sacrament, we renew our baptismal covenants and invite the Holy Ghost to be with us.

Background Reading

- L. Tom Perry, "The Sabbath and the Sacrament," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 6–9.
- Russell M. Nelson, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.
- Dallin H. Oaks, "Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 17–20.

Suggestions for Teaching

Mosiah 18:8–10; 25:23–24

Taking upon ourselves the name of Christ

Ask a few students to describe something meaningful they remember about their baptisms—for example, the baptismal service, the ordinance itself, or thoughts and feelings they had. Then give students a moment to ponder how well they feel they have kept their baptismal covenants.

Remind students that Alma taught about the baptismal covenant at the Waters of Mormon, and then ask a student to read Mosiah 18:8–10 aloud. Ask the class to follow along, looking for what we covenant to do when we are baptized.

On the board, write the following:

When we are baptized, we covenant to ...

- What do we covenant to do when we are baptized? (As students respond, list their answers on the board to complete the doctrinal statement: **When we are baptized, we covenant to bear one another's burdens, stand as witnesses of God, serve Him, and keep His commandments.**)

Help students understand the context of the next scripture passage by explaining that after Alma and his people joined with the believers in Zarahemla, Alma established many congregations of believers. Invite a few students to take turns reading from Mosiah 25:23–24 aloud, and ask the class to look for additional insights into our baptismal covenant. After students discuss what they identified, ask:

- How were the people blessed as a result of being baptized and joining the Church of God? (Help students see the following principle: **As we take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and live accordingly, the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon us.**)

- As you have lived according to your baptismal covenant, how has your life been affected by having the Lord's Spirit poured out upon you?

Invite students to ponder how their baptismal covenants can strengthen their commitment to be a follower of Jesus Christ in their decisions and actions.

Exodus 31:13, 16–17; Mosiah 18:17, 23–25; Moroni 6:4–6

Worshipping on the Sabbath day

Explain that the Book of Mormon illustrates some of the ways in which members of the Church of Christ are to keep the baptismal covenant.

Assign half of the students to study Mosiah 18:17, 23–25 while the other half studies Moroni 6:4–6. Suggest that students mark words or phrases that describe the worship practices observed by Christ's followers. Then invite them to share what they identified.

- What were some reasons that members gathered together often? (Students should identify the following truths: **When we become members of Christ's Church, we are commanded to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. As Church members, we are to meet together often to be nourished by the good word of God, to fast, to pray, to strengthen each other, and to partake of the sacrament.**)

Read the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Most people don't come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven" ("A Teacher Come from God," *Ensign*, May 1998, 26).

- How does gathering together with other Church members on the Sabbath help you to feel "strengthened by the powers of heaven"?
- What do you do at Church to draw closer to and properly worship Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ?

To help students further understand why Church members are commanded to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, invite them to read Exodus 31:13, 16–17 and cross-reference it with Mosiah 18:23.

- What does it mean that the Sabbath is a "sign" between us and the Lord?

Read the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"How do we *hallow* the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things *not* to do on the Sabbath. It wasn't until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a *sign* between me and my Heavenly Father. With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don'ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, 'What *sign* do I want to give to God?' That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear" ("The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 130).

- How can asking ourselves “What *sign* do I want to give to God?” help us to make better choices about what we do on the Sabbath?
- How do you think your efforts to keep the Sabbath day holy affect the other days of the week?

Invite students to assess their own efforts to keep the Sabbath day holy. Ask them to consider whether their thoughts and actions demonstrate sincere worship of the Father on that day. Invite students to set a specific goal to improve their Sabbath-day worship.

3 Nephi 18:1–11; 20:3–9; Moroni 4:3; 5:2

Partaking of the sacrament

On the board, write the following statement by Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (from “As Now We Take the Sacrament,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 39):

“Partaking of the sacrament provides us with a sacred moment in a holy place.” (Elder L. Tom Perry.)

- How might this idea of “a sacred moment” and “a holy place” influence our thoughts and actions as we partake of the sacrament?

Remind students that the resurrected Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament when He visited the Nephites in Bountiful. Invite several students to take turns reading from 3 Nephi 18:1–11 aloud while the class looks for what the Savior taught about the purpose of the sacrament.

- What is a principle taught by the Savior about the purpose of the sacrament? (As students respond, write the following principle on the board: **As we partake of the sacrament and always remember Jesus Christ, we will have His Spirit to be with us.**)
- What do you do to remember the Savior while partaking of the sacrament and during the rest of the week?

Remind students that Moroni recorded the words that the followers of Jesus Christ used when blessing the sacrament. Consider inviting students to scan the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4:3 and 5:2 and underline phrases that relate to the principle written on the board.

- What might be the result if we fail to “always remember him”? (Moroni 4:3; 5:2).

Remind students that when Jesus visited the Nephites on the day after He instituted the sacrament, He again administered the ordinance to them. Invite a few students to taking turns reading aloud from 3 Nephi 20:3–9. Ask the class to look for additional blessings that come from partaking of the sacrament.

- What does it mean that our souls “shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled”?
- In what ways has partaking of the sacrament satisfied your spiritual hunger and thirst?
- How might partaking of the sacrament with humility and gratitude help us to better remember the Savior during the rest of the week?

Invite students to consider their behavior during the sacrament service as a student reads aloud the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks:



"During sacrament meeting—and especially during the sacrament service—we should concentrate on worship and refrain from all other activities, especially from behavior that could interfere with the worship of others. ... Sacrament meeting is not a time for reading books or magazines. Young people, it is not a time for whispered conversations on cell phones or for texting persons at other locations. When we partake of the sacrament, we make a sacred covenant that we will always remember the Savior. How sad to see persons obviously violating that covenant in the very meeting where they are making it" ("Sacrament Meeting and the Sacrament," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 18–19).

As you consider the needs of your students and the promptings of the Spirit, you might read Mark 14:37 with them and point out that one application of this verse is for us to set aside all distractions and give the Lord our full attention each week as we worship in sacrament meeting.

Invite students to consider what they can do to have a more sacred experience when partaking of the sacrament. Ask if any of them would like to share a testimony of the importance of the Sabbath day and the sacrament. Share your testimony that the Lord will bless us with His Spirit as we honor our baptismal covenants and strive to always remember Him.

Student Readings

- Exodus 31:13, 16–17; Mosiah 18:8–10, 23; 25:23–24; 3 Nephi 18:1–11; 20:3–9; Moroni 4:3; 5:2; 6:4–6.
- Russell M. Nelson, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 129–32.

14

God's Power of Deliverance

Introduction

The Book of Mormon contains numerous accounts of individuals and societies that were subjected to bondage in some form. Many of these accounts illustrate that Jesus Christ is the Great Deliverer and the source of help when escape or rescue seem impossible. As

we draw close to the Lord through repentance, humility, and prayer, we are more spiritually prepared to call upon and receive God's power of deliverance.

Background Reading

- L. Tom Perry, "The Power of Deliverance," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 94–97.
- Dallin H. Oaks, "He Heals the Heavy Laden," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 6–9.
- David A. Bednar, "Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 87–90.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 1:20; Alma 36:1–3, 27–29

God has power to grant deliverance

Invite students to consider when they have been impressed by the courage and strength of someone who has faced great challenges or difficulties. Ask them to briefly share what they have observed.

Ask students to silently read 1 Nephi 1:1, looking for what Nephi said about the difficulties he had experienced in his life.

- How did Nephi summarize his feelings after having experienced "many afflictions"?
- Why do you suppose that a person can feel "highly favored of the Lord" even when experiencing challenges or difficulties?

Tell students to cross-reference 1 Nephi 1:1 with 1 Nephi 1:20 and look for one reason why Nephi described feeling "highly favored of the Lord."

- What principle in this verse might help a person feel hope when experiencing challenges or difficulties? (Students should identify the following principle: **As we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, we can receive God's mercy and deliverance.**)

Explain that the phrase "I, Nephi, will show unto you" suggests that Nephi intended to record examples of God's power of deliverance. Invite students to scan 1 Nephi chapters 1–8 and 16–18, looking for examples from Nephi's life that illustrate God's power of deliverance. Invite students to briefly share examples they identified. If students struggle to find examples, you might direct them to one or more of the following passages: 1 Nephi 3:23–31; 4:1–18; 7:16–19; 8:7–12; 16:10, 18–31, 36–39; 17:48–55; and 18:1–3, 11–21.

Read aloud the following statement by Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Many of the stories of the Book of Mormon are stories of deliverance. Lehi's departure into the wilderness with his family was about deliverance from the destruction of Jerusalem. The story of the Jaredites is a story of deliverance, as is the story of the Mulekites. Alma the Younger was delivered from sin. Helaman's stripling warriors were delivered in battle. Nephi and Lehi were delivered from prison. The theme of deliverance is evident throughout the entire Book of Mormon" ("The Power of Deliverance," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 94).

As an example of spiritual deliverance, explain that Alma described his deliverance from sin to his son Helaman. Ask a student to read Alma 36:1–3 aloud, and invite another student to read Alma 36:27–29 aloud (note that Alma 5:1–12 contains similar counsel). Ask the class to follow along, looking for insights that might help a person who is struggling with afflictions or difficulties.

- What insights did you find in these passages that might help someone who is facing physical or spiritual difficulties?
- What types of physical or spiritual bondage do people face today? (Examples include poor health, drug and pornography addictions, poverty, abuse, discrimination, sin, unbelief, and rebellion.)

Display and read the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Are you battling a demon of addiction—tobacco or drugs or gambling, or the pernicious contemporary plague of pornography? Is your marriage in trouble or your child in danger? Are you confused with gender identity or searching for self-esteem? Do you—or someone you love—face disease or depression or death? Whatever other steps you may need to take to resolve these concerns, come *first* to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Trust in heaven's promises. In that regard Alma's testimony is my testimony: 'I do know,' he says, 'that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions' [Alma 36:3]" ("Broken Things to Mend," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 70).

- What did Elder Holland say would help us begin to resolve our concerns and challenges?

1 Nephi 6:4; Mosiah 21:2–5, 14–16; 23:23–24; 24:13–15, 21; Alma 34:9; Helaman 5:9

Jesus Christ is the source of deliverance

Invite students to describe different reasons why an author might be motivated to write a book. (For example, an author might want to tell a story, share expertise on a subject, or earn a living.) After a few students have shared their ideas with the class, invite students to silently read 1 Nephi 6:4, looking for one of the reasons why Nephi was motivated to write.

- What did the prophet Nephi say was his purpose in writing his record? (He desired to persuade people to come unto God and be saved.)

Testify to students that God's power to save is the power to deliver.

Copy the following on the board, and explain to students that these passages describe people who were in need of deliverance:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Limhi's people</i> | <i>Alma's people</i> | <i>All people</i> |
| <i>Mosiah 21:2–5, 14–16</i> | <i>Mosiah 23:23–24; 24:21</i> | <i>Alma 34:9; Helaman 5:9</i> |

Ask students to silently read the passages on the board, looking for what each passage teaches about the source of deliverance from challenges and difficulties.

- What do you learn from these passages about the source of deliverance? (As students respond, emphasize the following doctrine: **Jesus Christ has the power to deliver us from our lost and fallen state and from other challenges in mortality.**)

Display the following statement by President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"I wish to bear witness of God's power of deliverance. At some point in our lives we will all need that power. Every person living is in the midst of a test. ... Two things will be the same for all of us. They are part of the design for mortal life.

"First, the tests at times will stretch us enough for us to feel the need for help beyond our own. And, second, God in His kindness and wisdom has made the power of deliverance available to us" ("The Power of Deliverance" [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 15, 2008], 1; speeches.byu.edu).

- When have you received "help beyond [your] own" during difficulties?

As time permits, you might refer to the account of Alma's people in Mosiah 24:13–15 to illustrate the idea that God's deliverance does not always mean that our burdens will be removed; instead, God often delivers us by strengthening our ability to bear our burdens. Patience and endurance are required in these situations, such as when health issues continue throughout one's life. Deliverance comes in God's own way and according to His timetable.

Mosiah 7:33; 29:20; Alma 58:10–11; 3 Nephi 4:33

Accessing the power of deliverance

Testify that there is hope for each of us when we find ourselves in circumstances from which escape or rescue seems impossible. Remind students that the scriptures contain instructions about how to access the Savior's power of deliverance.

List the following references on the board. (Do not include the information in parentheses, which is provided for teacher use only.) Invite students to read each passage, searching for actions that help us access the Savior's power of deliverance.

Mosiah 7:33 (Turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, trust in Him, serve Him diligently)

Mosiah 29:20 (Be humble, cry mightily unto God)

Alma 58:10–11 (Pour out one's soul in prayer, hope for deliverance)

3 Nephi 4:33 (Repent, be humble)

After sufficient time, invite students to share and discuss any actions they identified, and write students' responses on the board. Emphasize the following principle: **When we turn to God with full purpose of heart and pray for His help, having a spirit of repentance and humility, we can access His power of deliverance.**

Display the following statement by President Henry B. Eyring:



"The Lord always wants to lead us to deliverance through our becoming more righteous. That requires repentance. And that takes humility. So the way to deliverance always requires humility in order for the Lord to be able to lead us by the hand where He wants to take us through our troubles and on to sanctification" ("The Power of Deliverance" [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 15, 2008], 4; speeches.byu.edu).

- How do repentance, humility, and prayer help us to access the Lord's power of deliverance?
- When have you or someone you know of turned to the Lord for deliverance and received it? How has this experience increased your trust in Jesus Christ?

Encourage students to ponder a time when they experienced the Lord's power of deliverance in their lives. Encourage them to record their experiences for future remembrance. Consider inviting students to share their experiences that are not too sacred or personal.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 1:20; 6:4; Mosiah 7:33; 21:2–5, 14–16; 23:23–24; 24:13–15, 21; 29:20; Alma 34:9; 36:1–3, 27–29; 58:10–11; Helaman 5:9; 3 Nephi 4:33.
- L. Tom Perry, "The Power of Deliverance," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 94–97.

15

Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God

Introduction

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of peace for a troubled world. Those who become instruments in God's hands can share the gospel and help others to become converted. In this lesson,

students will study and apply principles from Book of Mormon accounts of missionaries who became instruments in God's hands and helped others receive eternal life.

Background Reading

- M. Russell Ballard, "Put Your Trust in the Lord," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 43–45.
- Don R. Clarke, "Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 97–99.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 13:37; Mosiah 15:14–19, 26–28

Blessings are promised to those who share the gospel

On the board, write the following statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) from *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 330:

"After all that has been said, the greatest and most important duty is to preach the Gospel." (The Prophet Joseph Smith)

Invite students to silently read the statement. Then ask:

- Why is it our most important duty to share the gospel with others?
- What blessings have you received from accepting and fulfilling this duty?

Explain that Nephi foresaw the Restoration of the gospel and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 13:34–36). He also described the blessings available to those who would proclaim the gospel and assist others in coming unto Christ.

Invite students to read 1 Nephi 13:37 silently, and encourage them to mark or highlight the blessings promised to those who seek to share the gospel in the last days.

- What blessings come to those who seek to bring forth Zion and publish peace? (Students should understand the following principle: **When we seek to share the gospel, we are blessed with the Holy Ghost and can be saved in God's kingdom.**)

Tell students that Abinadi quoted Isaiah and explained what it means to publish peace and why we should seek to share the gospel (see Isaiah 52:7). Invite a few students to read aloud from Mosiah 15:14–19, 26–28 while the class looks for what Abinadi taught.

- What does it mean to publish peace and salvation? (see verse 14).
- Why does salvation need to be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people?

To help students better understand Abinadi's words, invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Peace and good tidings; good tidings and peace. These are among the ultimate blessings that the gospel of Jesus Christ brings a troubled world and the troubled people who live in it, solutions to personal struggles and human sinfulness, a source of strength for days of weariness and hours of genuine despair. ... It is the Only Begotten Son of God Himself who gives us this help and this hope. ...

"The search for peace is one of the ultimate quests of the human soul. ... There are times in all of our lives when deep sorrow or suffering or fear or loneliness make us cry out for the peace which only God Himself can bring. These are times of piercing spiritual hunger when even the dearest friends cannot fully come to our aid" ("The Peaceable Things of the Kingdom," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 82).

- In what ways is the gospel of Jesus Christ a message of peace?

To help answer this question, consider discussing the following statement by President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) of the First Presidency:



"The bringing of peace requires the elimination of Satan's influence. Where he is, peace can never be. Further, peaceful coexistence with him is impossible. ... He promotes nothing but the works of the flesh. ...

"As a prelude to peace, then, the influence of Satan must be completely subjugated. ...

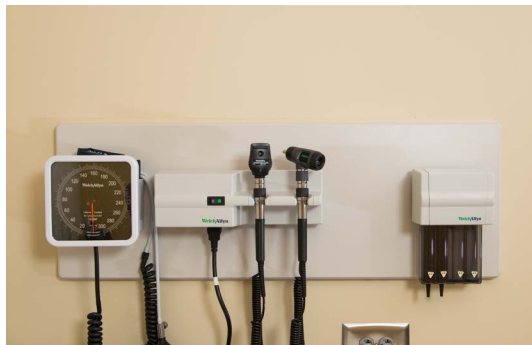
"As the works of the flesh have universal application, so likewise does the gospel of peace. If one man lives it, he has peace within himself. If two men live it, they each have peace within themselves and with each other. If the citizens live it, the nation has domestic peace. When there are enough nations enjoying the fruit of the Spirit to control world affairs, then, and only then, will the war-drums throb no longer" ("The Price of Peace," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 4, 6).

- When have you seen the gospel bring peace into someone's life?
- What are some ways in which we can effectively share the gospel?

Encourage students to consider whether they know someone whom they can help to experience the peace that comes from the gospel. Invite them to begin making a plan to share the gospel with that person, and encourage them to think about how they can apply the principles they learn as the lesson progresses.

Mosiah 28:3; Alma 17:2–3, 6, 9–12, 16, 25; 18:10; 21:16; 22:1, 12–14; 26:11–12, 26–29; 31:30–34

Becoming instruments in God's hands



Consider showing students one or all of the pictures above (violin, shop tools, medical instruments) or pictures like them. Then ask:

- What can these items do in the hands of someone skilled in their use?
- What might it mean to be an instrument in God's hands?

Invite a student to read Alma 17:2–3, 9–11 aloud. Ask students to look for what the sons of Mosiah did to become instruments in God's hands.

- What can we learn from the example of the sons of Mosiah about how to become instruments in the hands of God? (As students respond, write the following

principle on the board: **As we pray, fast, search the scriptures, and set a good example for others, we can become instruments in God's hands.**)

Explain that the Book of Mormon contains many other examples of what Alma and the sons of Mosiah did to become effective instruments in the hands of God. Write the following scripture references on the board (without the accompanying summaries in parentheses). Assign one or more passages to each student. Ask students to look for what the Lord's servants did that contributed to their success in sharing the gospel.

Mosiah 28:3 (Desired to declare salvation so that no soul should perish.)

Alma 17:6 (Were willing to give up worldly recognition in order to preach the gospel.)

Alma 17:11–12 (Were patient, courageous, and good examples.)

Alma 17:16 (Desired to help others repent and learn of the plan of redemption.)

Alma 17:25; 18:10 (Desired to be a servant.)

Alma 21:16; 22:1 (Were led by the Spirit.)

Alma 22:12–14 (Taught from the scriptures about Christ and the plan of redemption.)

Alma 26:11–12 (Were humble, recognizing God as the source of their strength.)

Alma 26:26–29 (Did not give up when they were discouraged. Were willing to patiently suffer for the cause of Christ. Taught the gospel in various settings.)

Alma 31:30–34 (Prayed for assistance in bringing others to Christ.)

After sufficient time, ask students to share what they learned. Consider summarizing students' responses by writing the passage summaries on the board. You might encourage students to write down these scripture references and later, after class, create a scripture chain labeled "Important elements of sharing the gospel."

- If you have had the opportunity to share the gospel with others, can you share an experience or bear testimony of how these elements contributed to your success?
- How do the principles recorded in these passages apply to other callings or to being a good friend or neighbor?
- When have you had an opportunity to help others as an instrument in God's hands?

Alma 18:33–35; 23:5–6; 26:2–5, 15; 29:9–10

Helping others become converted

Remind the students that besides teaching us that we can become instruments in the hands of God, the Book of Mormon also teaches about the effect we can have on others as these instruments.

Invite a student to read Alma 18:33–35 aloud while the class looks for what Ammon was to accomplish as an instrument in the hands of God. Invite students to summarize what they discover as a statement of principle. (Help students identify the following:

When we become instruments in God's hands, He grants us power to help others come to a knowledge of the truth.)

To help students see the effect of helping others come to a knowledge of the truth, invite the class to silently read Alma 23:5–6. Ask students to look for what happened to the Lamanites as they came to the knowledge of the truth.

- What words or phrases describe the effect that the preaching of the gospel had on the Lamanites?
- What principle can we learn about what can happen when we bring others to the knowledge of the truth? (Students should identify the following truth: **When we bring others to the knowledge of the truth, we help them become converted to the Lord.**)

Explain that both Ammon and Alma bore testimony of these truths. Ask a few students to take turns reading aloud Alma 26:2–5, 15 and Alma 29:9–10 while the class looks for the influence we can have upon others when we share the gospel as instruments in God’s hands.

- What impressed you about the feelings summarized by Ammon and Alma?

Invite students to share what they have experienced as they have shared the gospel with others.

Encourage students to ponder the opportunities they have to help others learn the gospel and become converted. Invite them to consider how to incorporate the principles and practices they have learned in this lesson into their daily efforts to share the gospel.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 13:37; Mosiah 15:14–19, 26–28; 28:3; Alma 17:2–3, 6, 9–12, 16, 25; 18:10, 33–35; 21:16; 22:1, 12–14; 23:5–6; 26:2–5, 11–12, 15, 26–29; 29:9–10; 31:30–34.
- M. Russell Ballard, “Put Your Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 43–45.
- Don R. Clarke, “Becoming Instruments in the Hands of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 97–99.

Repentance and Forgiveness

16

Introduction

In order to be cleansed from sin, we must exercise faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance. As we sincerely repent, we can receive a remission of sins, which brings joy and peace of conscience to our

souls. We can retain a remission of sins throughout our lives as we faithfully keep God's commandments and love and serve one another.

Background Reading

- D. Todd Christofferson, "The Divine Gift of Repentance," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 38–41.
- Neil L. Andersen, "Repent . . . That I May Heal You," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40–43.
- Craig A. Cardon, "The Savior Wants to Forgive," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 15–17.

Suggestions for Teaching

Alma 34:15–17; 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22

Exercising faith in Christ unto repentance

Ask students to imagine they have been asked to speak in sacrament meeting about repentance. Invite a few students to share what they might say to help Church members better understand this doctrine. After they share their responses, display and read the following statement by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency:



"We need a strong faith in Christ to be able to repent" ("Point of Safe Return," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 100).

- Why is this statement true?

Invite a student to read aloud Alma 34:15–17, which records Amulek's teachings to the Zoramites regarding repentance. Encourage the class to follow along and look for what Amulek taught is required of us in order to be forgiven.

- What principle about receiving forgiveness is taught in these verses? (As students respond, write this principle on the board: **In order to receive the merciful blessings of forgiveness, we must exercise faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance.** Point out to students that the phrase "faith unto repentance" is mentioned four times in these verses. This is an opportunity to emphasize the scripture study skill of recognizing word repetitions.)
- Why must we exercise faith in Jesus Christ in order to repent and be forgiven? (We must have faith in His atoning sacrifice in order for this sacrifice to be effective in our lives. Only through His Atonement can we be forgiven so that our hearts are changed and cleansed from sin [see Mosiah 5:2].)

To help students better understand how we come to the Savior and repent, explain that following the widespread destruction in the Americas that bore witness of His Crucifixion, the Savior taught the people what they must do to repent and receive forgiveness from Him. Invite students to study 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22 with a partner, looking for phrases that describe what the Savior said we must do to come unto Him and repent. After sufficient time, invite students to share what they discovered.

- What principle does the Lord teach in these verses about what we must do to repent? (Although students may choose other words, they should identify the following principle: **If we come unto Christ with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He will receive us and redeem us from our sins.**)
- How can the Savior’s invitation to “[come] unto me as a little child” (verse 22) and “return unto me” (verse 13) help us better understand what it means to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit?
- What life experiences might cause a person to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy. Consider giving a copy of the statement to each student. Encourage students to listen for insights into how we offer a broken heart and a contrite spirit as we repent.



“What are a broken heart and a contrite spirit? ... The Savior’s perfect submission to the Eternal Father is the very essence of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Christ’s example teaches us that a broken heart is an eternal attribute of godliness. When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in all its forms. Like malleable clay in the hands of a skilled potter, the brokenhearted can be molded and shaped in the hands of the Master.

“A broken heart and a contrite spirit are also preconditions to repentance [see 2 Nephi 2:6–7]. ... When we sin and desire forgiveness, a broken heart and a contrite spirit mean to experience ‘godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance’ (2 Corinthians 7:10). This comes when our desire to be cleansed from sin is so consuming that our hearts ache with sorrow and we yearn to feel at peace with our Father in Heaven. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them, without resistance or resentment. We cease doing things our way and learn to do them God’s way instead. In such a condition of submissiveness, the Atonement can take effect and true repentance can occur” (“A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 32).

- According to Elder Porter, what does it mean to come unto Christ with a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Invite students to ponder what they can do to more fully exercise their faith in Jesus Christ by offering to Him a broken heart and a contrite spirit. You may wish to give them a few minutes to write the impressions that come to them through the Spirit.

Testify that the Savior’s merciful gift of repentance is available to each of us. Invite a few students to share their feelings about the Savior’s atoning sacrifice and the gift of repentance.

Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3; Alma 19:29–30, 33–36; 36:19–21*Forgiveness of sins brings feelings of joy and peace*

- How might you respond to individuals who want to know how they can know whether they have been forgiven of a past sin?

Invite students to search Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3; and Alma 36:19–21, looking for ways in which people can know they are receiving a remission of their sins.

- According to these verses, how can we know that we are receiving a remission of our sins? (Help students identify the following principle: **As we sincerely repent and receive a remission of our sins, our guilt is swept away, we are filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and we feel joy and peace.** As prompted by the Spirit, you might share the following statement by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “For those who are truly repentant but seem unable to feel relief: continue keeping the commandments. I promise you, relief will come in the timetable of the Lord. Healing also requires time” [“Repent ... That I May Heal You,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 42].)

To further illustrate this principle, ask a few students to read aloud several verses describing the conversion of King Lamoni and his people, found in Alma 19:29–30, 33–36. Invite the class to look for blessings that the people received because of their repentance and faith.

- What specific blessings did King Lamoni, his wife, and many other Lamanites receive because of their repentance and faith? (Their hearts were changed, angels ministered to them, they were baptized, the Church was established, and the Lord poured out His Spirit upon them.)
- When have you seen others experience some of these same blessings as they have repented and moved closer to the Lord?

To help students feel the truth and importance of the principle above, ask a student to read the following testimony from President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“Letters come from those who have made tragic mistakes. They ask, ‘Can I ever be forgiven?’

“The answer is *yes!*

“The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.

“‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ That is, Isaiah continued, ‘if ye be willing and obedient’ [Isaiah 1:18–19]” (“The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19).

Invite students to ponder experiences when they have felt the joy and peace of conscience that accompany complete repentance.

Mosiah 4:11–12, 26*Retaining a remission of our sins*

Ask a student to read Mosiah 4:11–12, 26 aloud. Invite students to look for what King Benjamin taught about how we can retain a remission of our sins.

- According to these words of King Benjamin, how can we retain a remission of our sins throughout our lives? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we remember God’s love and goodness toward us, stand steadfast in our faith, and love and serve others, we can retain a remission of our sins.**)

To deepen students’ understanding of this principle, invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“Repentance means striving to change. It would mock the Savior’s suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross for us to expect that He should transform us into angelic beings with no real effort on our part. Rather, we seek His grace to complement and reward our most diligent efforts (see 2 Nephi 25:23). Perhaps as much as praying for mercy, we should pray for time and opportunity to work and strive and overcome. Surely the Lord smiles upon one who desires to come to judgment worthily, who resolutely labors day by day to replace weakness with strength. Real repentance, real change may require repeated attempts, but there is something refining and holy in such striving” (“The Divine Gift of Repentance,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 39).

- What thoughts and feelings do you have as you consider that the Lord “smiles upon” you when you labor to overcome sin and mortal weakness?

Share your testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Assure students that as they repent, they will experience joy and peace of conscience. Encourage students to examine their lives and to exercise their faith in Jesus Christ unto repentance.

Student Readings

- Enos 1:4–8; Mosiah 4:1–3, 11–12, 26; Alma 19:29–30, 33–36; 34:15–17; 36:19–21; 3 Nephi 9:13–14, 19–22.
- Neil L. Andersen, “Repent ... That I May Heal You,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40–43.

The Power of the Word

17

Introduction

Book of Mormon prophets went to great efforts to produce and preserve scripture that would bless us in our day. In this lesson, students will be reminded that as they study and abide by the

words of prophets, they can receive power to overcome Satan, navigate their way through mortality, and eventually obtain eternal life.

Background Reading

- Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 6–8.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 32–35.
- “The Power of the Word,” chapter 8 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 115–24.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 3:19–20; 5:21–22; Omni 1:14–17; Mosiah 1:3–5; Alma 37:3–4, 8

The importance of scripture

Display the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask students how they would answer the question he poses:



“We owe [a great] debt to those who faithfully recorded and preserved the word through the ages, often with painstaking labor and sacrifice—Moses, Isaiah, Abraham, John, Paul, Nephi, Mormon, Joseph Smith, and many others. What did they know about the importance of scriptures that we also need to know?” (“The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 32).

- What do you think these writers knew about the importance of scriptures that we also need to know?

Remind students that Nephi and his brothers were commanded by the Lord to return to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud from 1 Nephi 3:19–20 and 5:21–22 while the class looks for reasons the brass plates were so important to Lehi and his family.

- According to these verses, why are the scriptures so important? (Students should identify the following truth: **Scriptures preserve God’s words and commandments as communicated through His prophets.**)

To help reinforce this truth, remind students that hundreds of years after Lehi’s family arrived in the promised land, their descendants encountered the people of Zarahemla (the Mulekites), who had traveled from Jerusalem shortly after Lehi’s family had.

Invite students to silently read Omni 1:14–17 and Mosiah 1:3–5 and note the contrast between those who had the scriptures (the Nephites) and those who did not (the Mulekites). (*Note:* To learn about the “compare and contrast” scripture study skill, see *Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* [2012], 22.)

- What consequences did the Mulekites experience because they did not have the scriptures? (See also 1 Nephi 4:13.)
- What blessings came to the Nephites because they had scriptures?

Invite a student to read Alma 37:3–4, 8 aloud while the class looks for the blessings that the Nephites received from the brass plates.

- According to verse 8, what were some of the blessings that the Nephites received from the brass plates?
- What do you think Alma meant when he said that the scriptures “have enlarged the memory of this people”?

To help clarify the meaning of this phrase, ask a student to read the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson aloud while the class looks for additional insights into how the scriptures enlarge our memory:



“The scriptures enlarge our memory by helping us always to remember the Lord and our relationship to Him and the Father. They remind us of what we knew in our premortal life. And they expand our memory in another sense by teaching us about epochs, people, and events that we did not experience personally. ...

“The scriptures also enlarge our memory by helping us not forget what we and earlier generations have learned. Those who either don’t have or ignore the recorded word of God eventually cease to believe in Him and forget the purpose of their existence” (“The Blessing of Scripture,” 33).

- What are some ways in which the scriptures enlarge our memory?
- What doctrines, principles, or stories in the scriptures have enlarged or expanded your memory of the Lord and your relationship with Him?

1 Nephi 8:21–24, 29–30; 15:23–24; 2 Nephi 3:12; 32:3; 33:4–5; Jacob 2:8; 7:10–11; Alma 5:10–13; 31:5; 37:2, 8–10; Helaman 3:29–30; 15:7–8

The word of God brings blessings

Invite a student to briefly summarize Lehi’s vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8). Then ask the class what the iron rod represented and why it was such an important part of the vision. If needed, invite students to read 1 Nephi 8:21–24, 29–30.

Ask students to search 1 Nephi 15:23–24 and look for the blessings that come to those who hold fast to the word of God. You might encourage students to mark what they find.

- What do you think it means to “hold fast” to the word of God?
- According to these verses, what blessings can we receive by holding fast to the word of God? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we hold fast to the word of God, we will never spiritually perish and the adversary will not be able to overpower us.**)

Display the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and invite a student to read it aloud:



"Let me suggest that holding fast to the iron rod entails, in large measure, the prayerful, consistent, and earnest use of the holy scriptures as a sure source of revealed truth and as a reliable guide for the journey along the strait and narrow path to the tree of life—even to the Lord Jesus Christ" ("Lehi's Dream: Holding Fast to the Rod," *Ensign*, Oct. 2011, 36).

Explain that several Book of Mormon prophets taught of additional blessings that come to those who hold fast to the word of God. Write the following references on the board. Invite each student to study one or two, seeking to discover blessings that come from studying the word of God. Then ask students to write the blessings they identify on the board next to the corresponding reference:

2 Nephi 3:12

2 Nephi 32:3

2 Nephi 33:4–5

Jacob 2:8

Jacob 7:10–11

Alma 5:10–13

Alma 31:5

Alma 37:2, 8–10

Helaman 3:29–30

Helaman 15:7–8

- When have you experienced one of these blessings?

Invite students to describe what a young single adult can do in daily life to hold fast to the iron rod.

Ask students to consider whether their use of the scriptures could be described as holding fast to the iron rod.

Invite students to consider and write down specific things they can do to better hold fast to the iron rod and more fully receive these blessings.

Alma 37:38–46

The word of God leads to eternal life

Remind students that the prophet Lehi received an instrument from the Lord called the Liahona. Invite a student to read Alma 37:38–42 aloud while the class looks for how the Liahona blessed Lehi's family.

- How did the Liahona bless Lehi's family?
- What was required of Lehi's family to make the Liahona function properly? (The compass functioned only when they heeded its instructions and exercised faith and diligence. See also 1 Nephi 16:28.)

Explain that Alma taught that the use of the Liahona was a "type" and a "shadow"—meaning a symbol—of how we should use the word of God. Ask a

student to read Alma 37:43–46 aloud while the class identifies parallels that Alma drew between the Liahona and the words of Christ.

- What principle regarding the words of Christ did Alma teach in these verses? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we give heed to the words of Christ, we will be led in a straight course to eternal life.** You might encourage students to mark occurrences of the word *if* in verses 45–46. Tell students that learning to identify cause-and-effect relationships is an important skill that can enhance their study of the scriptures.)
- What do you think it means to be led in a “straight course” to eternal life?
- What are some things we can do to go beyond simply reading the words of Christ and begin to “give heed” to them?

Conclude the lesson by displaying the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar, and invite students to read it and ponder Elder Bednar’s questions.



“A constant flow of living water is far superior to sporadic sipping.

“Are you and I daily reading, studying, and searching the scriptures in a way that enables us to hold fast to the rod of iron ... ? Are you and I pressing forward toward the fountain of living waters—relying upon the word of God? These are important questions for each of us to ponder prayerfully” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007], 7, lds.org/broadcasts).

Ask if any students would like to share their testimonies of how studying the word of God has blessed them. Encourage students to continue to ponder the questions Elder Bednar asked, and invite them to follow through with the thoughts and impressions they received during the lesson to make their study of the word of God more effective and meaningful.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 3:19–20; 5:21–22; 8:21–24, 29–30; 15:23–24; 2 Nephi 3:12; 32:3; 33:4–5; Jacob 2:8; 7:10–11; Omni 1:14–17; Mosiah 1:3–5; Alma 5:10–13; 31:5; 37:2–4, 8–10, 38–46; Helaman 3:29–30; 15:7–8.
- Richard G. Scott, “The Power of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 6–8.

Preparing for the Final Day of Judgment

18

Introduction

Mortal life is the time for us to prepare to meet God. The Book of Mormon explains what happens to our spirits between death and the Resurrection. After our spirits are restored to our immortal

bodies, we will stand before the judgment seat of God, where our actions and the desires of our hearts will determine our eternal reward.

Background Reading

- Dallin H. Oaks, “Resurrection,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 14–16.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 111–14.
- “Understanding Death and Resurrection,” chapter 37 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 273–78.

Suggestions for Teaching

Alma 34:32–34; 40:6–7, 11–14

After death, the righteous go to paradise and the wicked go to spirit prison

Before class, write the following question on the board:

How might people who do not understand the purpose of their mortal lives and do not believe in life after death live differently from people who do understand these things?

Ask students to respond to this question. Then remind them that the Book of Mormon helps us to understand the purpose of life on earth and teaches us that life continues after death.

Invite a student to read Alma 34:32–34 aloud while the class looks for what Amulek taught the people of Ammonihah about the purpose of life.

- What important doctrines about the purpose of life on earth did Amulek teach? (Students should identify several doctrines in this passage, including the following: **This life is the time for us to prepare to meet God.**)
- In what ways does this doctrine help you understand how you should live your daily life here in mortality?

To help students better understand this doctrine, consider sharing the following statement by President Thomas S. Monson:



“We understand we have come to earth to learn, to live, to progress in our eternal journey toward perfection. Some remain on earth but for a moment, while others live long upon the land. The measure is not how long we live, but rather how well we live” (“He Is Risen,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 18).

- Why did Amulek warn us not to procrastinate the day of our repentance?

Display the following statement from President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency and ask a student to read it aloud while the class looks for why there is danger in procrastination:



"There is a danger in the word *someday* when what it means is 'not this day.' 'Someday I will repent.' 'Someday I will forgive him.' 'Someday I will speak to my friend about the Church.' 'Someday I will start to pay tithing.' 'Someday I will return to the temple.' 'Someday ...' The scriptures make the danger of delay clear [see Alma 34:33–34]. ... This day is a precious gift of God. The thought 'Someday I will' can be a thief of the opportunities of time and the blessings of eternity" ("This Day," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 89).

Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud from Alma 40:6–7, 11–14. Ask the class to follow along, looking for what Alma taught his son Corianton about what happens to our spirits after we die. (It may be helpful to point out that when Alma used the phrase "outer darkness," he was not referring to the final state of Satan and those who are damned. Instead, he was referring to the state of the wicked between the time of their death and their resurrection. We usually refer to this state as spirit prison.)

- What is the difference between the state of the righteous and the state of the wicked after death? (Although they may use different words, students should identify the following doctrine: **Between death and resurrection, the spirits of the righteous dwell in paradise and the spirits of the wicked dwell in spirit prison.**)
- Why it is important to understand that our mortal actions will affect what we experience after death?

2 Nephi 9:12–13; Mosiah 15:21–26; 16:6–11; Alma 11:40–45; 40:4–5, 19–24
Our spirits will be restored to our bodies in the Resurrection

Remind students that when Abinadi taught King Noah and his priests, he described what will happen to us after death. The doctrines he taught describe what will happen to us after our time in the spirit world, either paradise or spirit prison. Ask a few students to take turns reading Mosiah 16:6–11 aloud while the class looks for what Abinadi taught.

- What doctrines did Abinadi teach about what will happen to us after our time in the spirit world? (Emphasize the following truths: **Because Jesus Christ has broken the bands of death, we will each be resurrected and receive an immortal body. The righteous will inherit endless happiness, and the wicked will be delivered to endless damnation.**)

Tell students that many Book of Mormon prophets testified of the Resurrection and explained what it will be like. Write the following scripture passages on the board (without the accompanying summaries) and assign each student to read one of the passages. Make sure all passages are assigned. Ask students to read their passages silently, looking for additional details about the Resurrection.

2 Nephi 9:12–13 (Paradise will deliver up righteous spirits, and spirit prison will deliver up wicked spirits. Spirits will be restored to their bodies and become immortal souls.)

Mosiah 15:21–26 (The righteous will come forth in the First Resurrection, as well as those who died in ignorance and little children. The wicked have no part in the First Resurrection.)

Alma 11:40–45 (All people, wicked and righteous, will have their spirits and bodies reunited in their perfect form and will stand before God to be judged according to their works.)

Alma 40:4–5, 19–24 (There is a time between death and Resurrection when spirits go to the spirit world. After that, there is a time appointed for the spirits of all people to be eternally restored to their perfect bodies and stand before God to be judged.)

Give students time to explain what they learned about the Resurrection from their assigned passages. Consider writing some of their insights on the board next to the corresponding passages. If needed, ask one or more questions like the following to deepen students' understanding of these passages:

- How do these truths strengthen your belief that the Resurrection is real and is an important part of Heavenly Father's plan?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask the class to listen for how a testimony of the Resurrection can bless us in mortality.



"The Apostle Peter referred to the fact that God the Father, in His abundant mercy, 'hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Pet. 1:3; see also 1 Thes. 4:13–18).

"The 'lively hope' we are given by the resurrection is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in the destined transition from mortality to immortality. This hope changes the whole perspective of mortal life. ...

"The assurance of resurrection gives us the strength and perspective to endure the mortal challenges faced by each of us and by those we love, such things as the physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies we bring with us at birth or acquire during mortal life. Because of the resurrection, we know that these mortal deficiencies are only temporary!

"The assurance of resurrection also gives us a powerful incentive to keep the commandments of God during our mortal lives. ...

"Our sure knowledge of a resurrection to immortality also gives us the courage to face our own death—even a death that we might call premature. ...

"The assurance of immortality also helps us bear the mortal separations involved in the death of our loved ones. ... We should all praise God for the assured resurrection that makes our mortal separations temporary and gives us the hope and strength to carry on" ("Resurrection," *Ensign*, May 2000, 15–16).

- When has the assurance of the Resurrection given you strength or motivated you to live more righteously?

Share your own testimony about the reality of the Resurrection.

Alma 5:15–21; 7:21–25; 41:2–6

Preparing for the Final Judgment

Explain that Alma encouraged the Church members in Zarahemla to prepare for the Final Judgment by asking them to imagine themselves standing before God to be

judged. Invite several students to take turns reading Alma 5:15–21 aloud. Ask the class to look for what Alma asked his listeners to consider.

- Which of Alma’s questions is most meaningful to you, and why?
- What principle can we learn from Alma’s testimony in verse 21 about what we must do to be saved? (Help students identify the following principle: **We cannot be saved unless we have been washed clean through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ.**)

To help students better understand this principle, display the following statement by President Joseph Fielding Smith, and invite a student to read it aloud:



“I know of nothing that is more important or necessary at this time than to cry repentance, even among the Latter-day Saints, and I call upon them ... to heed these words of our Redeemer. Now he has stated definitely that no unclean thing can enter his presence. Only those who prove themselves faithful and have washed their garments in his blood through their faith and their repentance—none others shall find the kingdom of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* [2013], 91).

Ask students to study Alma 7:21–25 silently, and invite them to look for and mark qualities we should seek to develop so that our garments will be found spotless.

- What attributes or qualities did you identify in these passages that are vital for us to develop as we prepare to be judged by the Lord?

Encourage students to consider whether their actions and the desires of their hearts are preparing them to meet God at the Final Judgment. Encourage them to make whatever changes are necessary so that the Judgment Day may be a happy one.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 9:12–13; Mosiah 15:21–26; 16:6–11; Alma 5:15–21; 7:21–25; 11:40–45; 16:6–11; 34:32–34; 40:4–7, 11–14, 19–24; 41:2–6.
- Dallin H. Oaks, “Resurrection,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 14–16.

Defending Religious Freedom

19

Introduction

Religious freedom is the sacred privilege to believe and act as we choose—to define ourselves and then live in the way our consciences dictate—while at the same time respecting others' rights (see D&C 134:4). In this lesson, students will examine Book

of Mormon accounts in which individuals and groups sought to overthrow the Church of God and to undermine religious rights and freedoms. Students will be reminded that religious freedom needs to be protected and preserved today.

Background Reading

- Robert D. Hales, "Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 111–13.
- Dallin H. Oaks, "Balancing Truth and Tolerance," *Ensign*, Feb. 2013, 24–31.
- "Why We Need Religious Freedom," mormonnewsroom.org/article/why-religious-freedom.
- "An Introduction to Religious Freedom," mormonnewsroom.org/article/introduction-religious-freedom.

Suggestions for Teaching

Mosiah 29:10–11, 16–18, 25–26, 32; Alma 30:7–9

The importance of agency and religious freedom

Remind students that before we came to earth, we participated in the Council in Heaven. Ask students to share some of the major purposes and outcomes of this council. Then display and read aloud the following statements by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994):



"The central issue in that premortal council was: Shall the children of God have untrammelled agency to choose the course they should follow, whether good or evil, or shall they be coerced and forced to be obedient? Christ and all who followed Him stood for the former proposition—freedom of choice; Satan stood for the latter—coercion and force" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 60–61).

"The scriptures make clear that there was a great war in heaven, a struggle over the principle of freedom, the right of choice" (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 61).

"The war that began in heaven over this issue is not yet over. The conflict continues on the battlefield of mortality" (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 61).

- What evidence have you seen that the premortal conflict over freedom and choice continues in mortality?
- Why do you think Satan seeks to destroy freedom?

As students respond, consider sharing the following statement by President David O. McKay (1873–1970):



"Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God's greatest gift to man" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* [2003], 208).

Remind students that for centuries after Lehi arrived in the promised land, the Nephites were ruled by kings. King Mosiah, however, proposed that a new form of government be instituted. Ask students to study Mosiah 29:10–11, 16–18, 25–26 and look for why Mosiah proposed a new form of government.

- What reasons did King Mosiah give for desiring to implement a new form of government?

Explain to students that the system of judges was appropriate and necessary to preserve freedom in Nephite society. Other societies have similarly sought to establish and preserve freedom, although their systems of government may have been organized differently. Ask a student to read Mosiah 29:32 aloud while the class looks for why Mosiah wanted to preserve his people's liberty.

- Why was it necessary to preserve the Nephites' liberty?
- Whose responsibility is it to help preserve our rights and privileges? How can this preservation be accomplished?

Explain that exercising individual freedoms should not supersede the principle of obeying laws of the land.

Invite students to search Alma 30:7–9 and identify one of the rights guaranteed by the new Nephite government.

You might explain that this passage shows that the Lord forbids discriminating against others based on their belief or nonbelief in God (see also D&C 134:4).

- How does protecting religious freedom benefit society?

To help students answer this question, invite a student to read the following:

"Religious freedom, or freedom of conscience, is critical to the health of a diverse society. It allows different faiths and beliefs to flourish. Religious freedom protects the rights of all groups and individuals, including the most vulnerable, whether religious or not" ("Religious Freedom," mormonnewsroom.org/official-statement/religious-freedom).

To help students understand the basic elements of religious freedom, display the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it:



"There are four cornerstones of religious freedom that we as Latter-day Saints must rely upon and protect.

"The first is freedom to believe. ...

"The second cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to share our faith and our beliefs with others. ...

"The third cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to form a religious organization, a church, to worship peacefully with others. ...

"The fourth cornerstone of religious liberty is the freedom to live our faith—free exercise of faith not just in the home and chapel but also in public places" ("Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 112).

Summarize these four cornerstones by writing the following on the board:

Freedom to believe, share, organize, and live.

- How would the restriction of any of these four cornerstones inhibit opportunities for spiritual growth?
- How has your life been affected by these elements of religious freedom?

Alma 2:1–10, 12, 27–28; 44:1–5; 46:4–5, 10–16, 19–22

Preserving religious freedom

Write the following references on the board, and explain that these passages contain examples of threats to religious freedom:

Alma 2:1–4

Alma 46:4–5, 10

Assign half of the class to study the first passage and the other half to study the second. Ask students to look for the objective of those who threatened religious freedom.

- According to these passages, what were the objectives of Amlici and Amalickiah?
- How would the loss of religious freedom have affected the societies in these accounts?

Add the following bold text to the references on the board:

Alma 2:1–4, 5–10, 12, 27–28

Alma 46:4–5, 10, 11–16, 19–22

Invite students to read the verses that were added to the passage they read, and ask them to look for what righteous people did to protect their religious freedom.

- What truths can we learn from these passages about the importance of preserving religious freedom? (Students should identify the following truths: **It is our duty to defend our families, our religion, and our freedom. When we call upon God and covenant to keep His commandments, He will strengthen us in defending our rights and religion.**)

Time permitting, you might also read Alma 44:1–5 with the class and discuss how the Nephites' faith strengthened them against Zerahemnah and the Lamanites.

- In the Book of Mormon, religious freedom was often threatened through persecution and war. How do individuals and groups threaten religious freedom today?

As needed to help answer this question, read the following statement about growing threats to religious liberty in the United States. Point out that while this statement deals with issues within the United States specifically, many other countries are facing similar challenges to religious liberty. (*Note: Use this statement only to give examples of how some religious freedoms are being challenged. Do not let this become a discussion of gay rights or other political issues.*)

"Challenges to religious freedom are emerging from many sources. Emerging advocacy for gay rights threatens to abridge religious freedom in a number of ways. Changes in health care threaten the rights of those who hold certain moral convictions about human life. These and other developments are producing conflict and beginning to impose on religious organizations and people of conscience. They are threatening ... to restrict how religious organizations can manage their employment and their property. They are bringing about the coercion of religiously-affiliated universities, schools and social-service entities. ... In these and in many other circumstances, we see how religious freedom and freedom of conscience are being subtly but steadily eroded" ("An Introduction to Religious Freedom," mormonnewsroom.org/article/introduction-religious-freedom).

Point out that the Church has advocated for fairness for all. Consistent with Articles of Faith 1:11, we must claim our right of religious freedom in a fair and balanced way that also respects the rights and interests of others (see "Mormon Leaders Call for Laws That Protect Religious Freedom," mormonnewsroom.org/article/church-news-conference-on-religious-freedom-and-nondiscrimination).

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44):



"If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a 'Mormon,' I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

"It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 345).

- Why is it important to safeguard religious freedom for all people and not just for Latter-day Saints? (Such safeguards enable others to use their agency according to God's plan and promote a peaceful and just society. If we want our religious beliefs protected and respected, then we must protect and respect the beliefs of others.)
- What are some appropriate actions we might take to preserve and strengthen religious freedom?

To help answer this question, invite a student to read the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales aloud:



"Brothers and sisters, we are responsible to safeguard these sacred freedoms and rights for ourselves and our posterity. What can you and I do?

"First, we can become informed. Be aware of issues in your community that could have an impact on religious liberty.

“Second, in your individual capacity, join with others who share our commitment to religious freedom. Work side by side to protect religious freedom.

“Third, live your life to be a good example of what you believe—in word and deed. How we live our religion is far more important than what we may say about our religion” (“Preserving Agency,” 112).

- How can you become aware of issues that affect religious liberty in your community?
- What other groups in your area share your commitment to religious freedom?
- What have you done or seen others do to promote religious freedom?

Inform students of the religious freedom resources available on mormonnewsroom.org. Encourage students to consider what they might do to promote and defend religious freedom, and share your testimony that Heavenly Father will guide them in their efforts.

Student Readings

- Mosiah 29:10–11, 16–18, 25–26, 32; Alma 2:1–10, 12, 27–28; 30:7–9; 44:1–5; 46:4–5, 10–16, 20–22.
- Robert D. Hales, “Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 111–13.

20

Strengthening Our Faith and Testimony

Introduction

Faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel brings strength and spiritual protection to God's children. The Book of Mormon illustrates attitudes and behaviors that can lead individuals to dwindle in

unbelief. Book of Mormon prophets warned of these behaviors and attitudes and taught gospel principles that will fortify and strengthen our faith and testimony.

Background Reading

- Neil L. Andersen, "Spiritual Whirlwinds," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18–21.
- L. Whitney Clayton, "Choose to Believe," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 36–39.
- Larry S. Kacher, "Trifle Not with Sacred Things," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 104–6.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 1:10–11; 9:28; Mosiah 2:36–37; 26:1–4; Alma 12:9–11; 31:8–11; 46:7–8; Helaman 4:11–13; 13:24–26; Mormon 9:7–8

Attitudes and behavior that can undermine faith and testimony

Display the following question and invite students to briefly respond:

- How is it possible for those who have experienced the blessings of the gospel to lose their faith and testimony?

Remind students that the prophet Lehi warned that his posterity would one day lose faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. Invite a student to read 2 Nephi 1:10–11 aloud, and ask students to look for the effect that unbelief ultimately had on Lehi's posterity. (It may be helpful to explain that the phrase "dwindle in unbelief" means to degenerate spiritually because of unbelief.)

- What effect did unbelief ultimately have on the descendants of Lehi?

Point out that while there were many factors that led to the destruction of the Nephite civilization, the root cause of the Nephites' decline was their loss of faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. For this reason, the Book of Mormon writers repeatedly warned of behaviors and attitudes that weaken faith in the Lord and continually taught how to build and strengthen testimony.

Ask a student to read Mosiah 26:1–4 aloud, and encourage the class to look for attitudes and behaviors that undermined the faith of some individuals during the reign of King Mosiah.

Invite students to identify a principle taught in these verses about what happens to people who choose not to believe and act upon truth. Among the principles students may identify is the following: **When people choose not to believe and act on the truths they are taught, their hearts become hardened and they cannot enjoy the blessings of faith and testimony.**

- When people choose not to believe and act on truths they are taught, why do you think their hearts become hardened to the Spirit?

To help students identify additional attitudes and behaviors that can lead to a loss of faith and testimony, write the following scripture passages on the board. Assign each student to read one or two of the passages, and make sure each passage is assigned. Ask students to search their assigned passages for attitudes or behaviors that can lead people to lose faith and testimony.

2 Nephi 9:28
Mosiah 2:36–37
Alma 12:9–11
Alma 31:8–11
Alma 46:7–8
Helaman 4:11–13
Helaman 13:24–26
Mormon 9:7–8

After sufficient time, ask students to share the attitudes or behaviors they have identified and explain how these can weaken faith and testimony. Summarize the students' responses on the board next to the corresponding passages.

- Which of these attitudes or behaviors do you think are most dangerous for young adult members of the Church today? Why?

Ask students to select an attitude or behavior listed on the board and explain what we can do to guard against that attitude or behavior.

Give students a moment to ponder which of the attitudes or behaviors have threatened their own faith and testimony and what they can do to strengthen themselves.

2 Nephi 28:21–23; Mormon 5:16–18

The consequences of losing faith and testimony

Remind students that as the prophet Mormon led the Nephite armies, there came a time when he observed the wicked and hopeless condition of his people. Ask students to study Mormon 5:16–18, looking for Mormon's description of the spiritual condition of his people.

- What do you think it means to live “without Christ and God in the world”?
- What principle can we learn from Mormon's words about those who lose faith in the Lord and refuse to repent? (Although they may use different words, students should identify the following principle: **If we allow ourselves to lose faith and we refuse to repent, the Spirit will withdraw from us and we will lose the Lord's guidance.**)
- According to verse 18, what did Mormon warn would be the effect of losing the Lord's guidance?

Explain that Nephi taught that the process of losing the Spirit and being led captive by the devil is often slow and gradual. Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud from 2 Nephi 28:21–23, and ask the class to identify words and phrases that describe this gradual spiritual decline.

- What attitudes did Nephi identify that can lead to a person's spiritual decline?

- Why do you think these attitudes are particularly dangerous to our faith?

Ask a student to read aloud the following story by President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency:



"Just as truth is given to us line upon line and the light brightens slowly as we obey, even so, as we disobey, our testimony of truth lessens almost imperceptibly, little by little, and darkness descends so slowly that the proud may easily deny that anything is changing.

"I have heard the boast of a man who walked away from the Church slowly. At first he just stopped teaching his Sunday School class, then he stayed away from Church, and then he forgot to pay tithing now and then. ... He could not sense the difference, but I could. The light in his eyes and even the shine in his countenance was dimming. He could not tell, since one of the effects of disobeying God seems to be the creation of just enough spiritual anesthetic to block any sensation as the ties to God are being cut. Not only did the testimony of the truth slowly erode, but even the memories of what it was like to be in the light began to seem to him like a delusion" ("A Life Founded in Light and Truth" [Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 15, 2000], 3, speeches.byu.edu).

- What do you think are some indications that a person is beginning to lose his or her faith and testimony?

1 Nephi 15:7–11; 2 Nephi 25:28–29; Mosiah 4:11–12; 15:11; Helaman 15:7–8 *Strengthening faith and testimony*

Display and invite a student to read the following statement by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"In nature, trees that grow up in a windy environment become stronger. As winds whip around a young sapling, forces inside the tree do two things. First, they stimulate the roots to grow faster and spread farther. Second, the forces in the tree start creating cell structures that actually make the trunk and branches thicker and more flexible to the pressure of the wind. These stronger roots and branches protect the tree from winds that are sure to return.

"You are infinitely more precious to God than a tree. You are His son or His daughter. He made your spirit strong and capable of being resilient to the whirlwinds of life. The whirlwinds in your youth, like the wind against a young tree, can increase your spiritual strength, preparing you for the years ahead" ("Spiritual Whirlwinds," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18).

- What can we do to gain spiritual strength and withstand challenges to our faith and testimony?

Remind students that the Book of Mormon contains gospel principles that can guide individuals who seek to have stronger faith and a stronger testimony.

Ask a student to read 2 Nephi 25:28–29 aloud, and explain that these verses summarize a powerful sermon Nephi gave to his people about how to be saved. Ask class members to look for what Nephi taught is the most important decision we will make in our lives.

- What did Nephi teach is the most important decision we will make in our lives? (Help students identify the following principle: **If we choose to believe in Jesus Christ and worship Him with all our might, mind, and strength, then we will remain spiritually strong and not be cast out.**)

Display the following statement by Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy and ask a student to read it:



"Prophets across the ages have encouraged us and even implored us to believe in Christ. ... The decision to believe is the most important choice we ever make. It shapes all our other decisions. ...

"Belief and testimony and faith are not passive principles. They do not just happen to us. Belief is something we choose—we hope for it, we work for it, and we sacrifice for it. We will not accidentally come to believe in the Savior and His gospel any more than we will accidentally pray or pay tithing. We actively choose to believe, just like we choose to keep other commandments" ("Choose to Believe," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 38).

- What do you think it means that "belief and testimony and faith are not passive principles"?
- Why do you think that striving to live the principles of the gospel is the best way to strengthen our faith and testimony?

To help students discover some of the ways that we can make efforts to strengthen our faith and testimony, write the following passages on the board and ask each student to read at least one of them silently. Invite them to look for principles that can help us to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

1 Nephi 15:7–11

Mosiah 4:11–12

Mosiah 15:11

Helaman 15:7–8

Invite students to share insights that they found in these scripture passages. You might invite students to bear testimony of how they have applied these or other principles in their lives and been blessed with increased faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel. Encourage students to make the efforts necessary to strengthen their faith in the Lord.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 15:7–11; 2 Nephi 1:10–11; 9:28; 25:28–29; 28:21–23; Mosiah 2:36–37; 4:11–12; 15:11; 26:1–4; Alma 12:9–11; Alma 31:8–11; 46:7–8; Helaman 4:11–13; 13:24–26; 15:7–8; Mormon 5:16–18; 9:7–8.
- L. Whitney Clayton, "Choose to Believe," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 36–39.
- Larry S. Kacher, "Trifle Not with Sacred Things," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 104–6.

21

The Coming of Jesus Christ

Introduction

The conditions and events associated with Jesus Christ's visit to the Americas serve as a pattern for His Second Coming. This lesson will help students apply principles from the Book of Mormon to be

better prepared for the "great and dreadful day" (3 Nephi 25:5) when Christ will come again.

Background Reading

- Dallin H. Oaks, "Preparation for the Second Coming," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 7–10.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Preparing for the Second Coming," *New Era*, Dec. 2013, 2–5.

Suggestions for Teaching

Helaman 14:20–30; 16:1–5; 3 Nephi 9:1–5, 12–14; 10:12

Signs are given to help us believe and prepare for the Lord's Second Coming

Invite students to share examples of events or activities in their lives that have required preparation (for example, a mission). Then ask:

- What difference did your preparation make in your overall experience?
- How do you think the experience would have been different if you had not prepared?

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite a student to read it aloud. Ask the class to listen for what President Benson taught that the Book of Mormon can help us prepare for:



"In the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ's coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 140).

- According to President Benson, why should we carefully study the Book of Mormon account of the visit of Jesus Christ to His people in the Americas? (Make sure that students understand that by studying the Book of Mormon account of the events surrounding Jesus Christ's visit to the Americas, we can learn a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming.)

Invite students to look for principles and doctrines as they study the account of the Savior's visit to the Americas that will help them to prepare for the Second Coming.

Remind students that prior to the Savior's birth, Samuel the Lamanite foretold the signs that would accompany the Savior's birth and death. Ask students to scan Helaman 14:20–27 and identify the signs of Christ's death.

- What are some of the signs that Samuel told the Nephites would accompany Jesus Christ's death?

Assign half of the students to read Helaman 14:28–30 while the other half read Helaman 16:4–5. Ask them to look for reasons these signs would be given to the Nephites. You might encourage students to pay particular attention to instances of the phrase “to the intent that ...”

- According to these verses, why does the Lord give signs? (Help students identify the following doctrine: **The Lord provides signs and wonders so that we might believe in Him and be saved.** Consider writing this doctrine on the board.)
- What does Helaman 14:29 indicate will happen to those who do not believe in the signs and wonders? (A righteous judgment will come upon them.)

Explain that in the account found in 3 Nephi, the promised signs and wonders—including the destruction foretelling the Savior’s death—began to be fulfilled. Ask a few students to take turns reading aloud from 3 Nephi 9:1–5, 12–14; 10:12 as the class looks for what happened to those who believed in the messages of Samuel and Nephi as well as what happened to those who did not.

- According to these verses, why were some of the people destroyed? Why were some spared?

Point out that followers of Jesus Christ today have been taught to watch for the signs that will precede His Second Coming. Ask students to discuss how understanding and recognizing the signs of the Second Coming, which the prophets have foretold, can help Church members today be better prepared for His coming.

3 Nephi 11:1–17

Preparing to meet the Savior

Display an image of Jesus Christ appearing to the Nephites. As students review the account of the Savior’s visit to the Nephites, encourage them to look for the blessings received by those who believed in the signs of the Lord’s death and prepared for His coming.

Invite several students to take turns reading from 3 Nephi 11:1–12 aloud.

- How did belief in the promised signs of the Lord’s coming prepare people for this experience?
- In what way can these verses remind us of our own need to prepare?

Invite students to take turns reading 3 Nephi 11:13–17 aloud and imagine how it might have felt to be present on that occasion.

- How might this experience represent what the Lord Jesus Christ desires for each of us? (Answers should reflect the following truth: **Jesus Christ invites all to come unto Him and to receive a testimony that He is the God of the whole earth.**)
- In what ways might these events be similar to what will happen at Jesus’s Second Coming?
- What might you do to follow the Savior’s invitation so that you will be prepared to stand before Him someday?

Conclude by displaying the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"What if the day of His coming were tomorrow? If we knew that we would meet the Lord tomorrow—through our premature death or through His unexpected coming—what would we do today? What confessions would we make? What practices would we discontinue? What accounts would we settle? What forgivenesses would we extend? What testimonies would we bear?

"If we would do those things then, why not now? Why not seek peace while peace can be obtained?" ("Preparation for the Second Coming," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 9).

- Why is it important to prepare ourselves as if the Lord's coming were tomorrow?

Invite students to seek and respond to the promptings of the Spirit as they prepare to meet the Lord.

Student Readings

- Helaman 14:20–30; 16:1–5; 3 Nephi 9:1–5, 12–14; 10:12; 11:1–17.
- Dallin H. Oaks, "Preparation for the Second Coming," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 7–10.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Preparing for the Second Coming," *New Era*, Dec. 2013, 2–5.

"Even as I Am"

22

Introduction

The resurrected Jesus Christ invited His disciples to follow His example. By studying the principles He taught the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, we can learn how to become like Him. The Savior prayed that all those who believe in Him might experience

unity with Him and our Heavenly Father. This lesson is designed to help students understand what they can do to become more like Jesus Christ.

Background Reading

- Henry B. Eyring, "Our Perfect Example," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 70–73.
- Lynn G. Robbins, "What Manner of Men and Women Ought Ye to Be?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 103–5.

Suggestions for Teaching

3 Nephi 27:21–22, 27

Becoming like Jesus Christ

Begin class by displaying the following statement by Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Presidency of the Seventy, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"Many of us create *to do* lists to remind us of things we want to accomplish. But people rarely have *to be* lists. Why? *To do*'s are activities or events that can be checked off the list when *done*. *To be*, however, is never done. You can't earn checkmarks with *to be*'s. I can take my wife out for a lovely evening this Friday, which is a *to do*. But *being* a good husband is not an event; it needs *to be* part of my nature—my character, or who I am" ("What Manner of Men and Women Ought Ye to Be?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 104).

- What do you think the Lord would have us become as members of His Church?

Invite students to silently read 3 Nephi 27:21–22, 27 and look for the instructions that Jesus Christ gave to His Nephite disciples.

- What did the Savior command His disciples to do and to become? (Write the following truth on the board: **The Lord asks His disciples to do His works and become as He is.**)
- How do you think we become more like the Savior?
- What are some of His works you have been able to do?

Invite students to discuss how the teachings of the Book of Mormon can help us to become like Jesus Christ. Consider writing students' responses on the board. Share your testimony that studying the Book of Mormon and applying its teachings will help us to become more like the Savior.

3 Nephi 12:1–16, 43–45; 13:1, 5–7, 16–18, 22–24, 33; 14:1–5, 21–27

Christ's sermon at the temple in Bountiful teaches us how to be like Him

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and ask a student to read it aloud:



"That man is greatest and most blessed and joyful whose life most closely fits the pattern of the Christ. This has nothing to do with earthly wealth, power, or prestige. The only true test of greatness, blessedness, joyfulness is how close a life can come to being like the Master, Jesus Christ. He is the right way, the full truth, and the abundant life" ("Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations," *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 2).

- According to President Benson, what happens when we choose to make Jesus Christ the pattern for our lives?

Remind students that when the resurrected Savior appeared to His people at the temple in Bountiful, He delivered a sermon that was similar to His biblical Sermon on the Mount. The sacred principles that the Savior taught in the Sermon on the Mount and at the temple in Bountiful are designed to help us to become like Him.

Display the following statement by President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973). If needed, explain that the word *blueprint* refers to the plans used to construct a building.



"In his Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of his own character, which was perfect, ... and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 200).

Write the following scripture references on the board:

3 Nephi 12:1–12
 3 Nephi 12:13–16, 43–45
 3 Nephi 13:1, 5–7, 16–18
 3 Nephi 13:22–24, 33
 3 Nephi 14:1–5
 3 Nephi 14:21–27

Assign students to each read one of these passages and identify a principle that can help them to become more like Jesus Christ. You might encourage students to mark or highlight these principles in their scriptures. Invite them to consider whether they know someone who exemplifies the principles they identify.

After sufficient time, invite students to share what they found. As needed and as prompted by the Spirit, you might ask additional questions like the following:

- How might consistently living this principle help you to become more Christlike?
- What experiences have you had that illustrate the importance of the principle you identified?

Invite students to make a goal to be more like the Savior by incorporating one or more of these principles in their lives.

John 17:9–11, 20–23; 3 Nephi 19:19–23, 28–29***Becoming one with the Father and the Son***

Explain that during His visit to the Nephites, Jesus Christ prayed for the twelve disciples He had chosen and for all those who would believe in their words. Invite a few students to read from 3 Nephi 19:19–23, 28–29 aloud. Ask students to look for the blessings that Jesus prayed would be bestowed upon those who believe in Him.

- What is a principle we might learn from the Savior's prayer for us to become one with the Father and the Son? (Students should identify the following principle: **Through faith, we can be purified and become one with Jesus Christ, as He is one with the Father.**)

To help students further understand this principle, explain that a prayer similar to the one Christ offered at the temple in Bountiful is recorded in the New Testament. Ask students to cross-reference these verses with John 17:9–11, 20–23. Invite them to read the verses silently and consider how they apply to us.

- How does it affect you to know that Jesus Christ prayed to the Father for *you*?
- In what ways can we experience the unity that exists between the Father and the Son?

Ask a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Invite students to look for what we must do to become one with Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.



"Jesus achieved perfect unity with the Father by submitting Himself, both flesh and spirit, to the will of the Father. His ministry was always clearly focused because there was no debilitating or distracting double-mindedness in Him. Referring to His Father, Jesus said, 'I do always those things that please him' (John 8:29). ...

"Surely we will not be one with God and Christ until we make Their will and interest our greatest desire. Such submissiveness is not reached in a day, but through the Holy Spirit, the Lord will tutor us if we are willing until, in process of time, it may accurately be said that He is in us as the Father is in Him" ("That They May Be One in Us," *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 72–73).

- According to Elder Christofferson, what must we do to become one with the Father and the Son?

Write the following questions on the board, and invite students to take a few minutes to write down their answers:

In what ways did Jesus show that He was perfectly submissive to the will of Heavenly Father?

What are some ways that you could become more submissive to the will of Heavenly Father?

Conclude by sharing your testimony that becoming submissive to the will of the Father makes it possible for us to become more like our Savior Jesus Christ.

Student Readings

- John 17:9–11, 20–23; 3 Nephi 12:1–16, 43–45; 13:1, 5–7, 16–18, 22–24, 33; 14:1–5, 21–27; 19:19–23, 28–29; 27:21–22, 27.

- Henry B. Eyring, "Our Perfect Example," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 70–73.

The Scattering and Gathering of Israel

23

Introduction

The Lord scattered the house of Israel because they hardened their hearts against Him, but He promised that they would be gathered in the last days. Prophecies in the Book of Mormon make clear that

the long-promised gathering has begun. Members of the Church have the responsibility to bless the families of the earth by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Background Reading

- Russell M. Nelson, “The Gathering of Scattered Israel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 79–82.
- C. Scott Grow, “The Book of Mormon, the Instrument to Gather Scattered Israel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 33–35.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 22:3–5; 2 Nephi 25:15–17; 3 Nephi 5:24–26; 20:13, 29–31; 30:2

The scattering and gathering of the house of Israel

Invite a student who is a convert to the Church or has helped someone else join the Church to share his or her experience. Encourage students to think about someone they know who might be open to hearing the message of the gospel. Ask students to look for gospel truths throughout today’s lesson that can encourage and help them in their efforts to share the gospel with others.

Ask students to read 1 Nephi 22:3–5 to see what Nephi prophesied about the house of Israel.

- What does it mean that the house of Israel was “scattered”?

Explain that the scattering of the house of Israel was an important subject to Nephi because his family was part of the scattering. They were scattered to the Americas from Jerusalem because of the wickedness of the people in the land of Judah.

Tell students that many Book of Mormon prophecies contain the comforting assurance that in the latter days the house of Israel will be gathered again. Write the following references on the board, and assign each student to read one of the passages. Make sure each passage is read. Ask students to look for what individuals need to learn and do in order to be gathered with the house of Israel.

2 Nephi 25:15–17

3 Nephi 5:24–26

3 Nephi 20:13, 29–31

3 Nephi 30:2

- What are some of the things individuals need to learn and do in order to be gathered with the house of Israel? (Several truths might be identified by students, including the following: **The Lord gathers members of the house of Israel when they believe in Him, repent, and come unto Him.**)

To help students better understand this truth, you may want to read the following statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"Why was Israel scattered? The answer is clear; it is plain; of it there is no doubt. Our Israelite forebears were scattered because they rejected the gospel, defiled the priesthood, forsook the church, and departed from the kingdom. ...

"What, then, is involved in the gathering of Israel? The gathering of Israel consists in believing and accepting and living in harmony with all that the Lord once offered his ancient chosen people. ... It consists of believing the gospel, joining the Church, and coming into the kingdom. ... It may also consist of assembling to an appointed place or land of worship" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 515).

- According to Elder McConkie, what must a person do to be gathered with the house of Israel?

Invite students to ponder how they themselves have been gathered into the house of Israel as they have believed in the Savior, repented, and come unto Him.

1 Nephi 15:12–16; 22:8–12

In the last days, members of the Church will bring the gospel to the families of the earth

Remind students that Lehi used the metaphor of an olive tree to teach his family about the scattering and gathering of Israel (see 1 Nephi 10:12–14). Laman and Lemuel told Nephi that they could not understand the meaning of their father's teachings (see 1 Nephi 15:7).

Ask a few students to take turns reading 1 Nephi 15:12–16 aloud. Invite the class to look for what we can learn from Nephi's explanation of the house of Israel.

- How does the metaphor of the olive tree help us understand the scattering and gathering of Israel?
- According to verse 13, who will take the fulness of the gospel to the remnant of Lehi's seed? (Gentiles who have received the fulness of the gospel.)

Explain to students that in the Book of Mormon, the word *Gentiles* usually refers to those who are not from the tribe of Judah or from the land of Judah. The Book of Mormon contains prophecies that in the last days some of these Gentiles will receive the fulness of the gospel (see 1 Nephi 15:13) and become members of Christ's Church. Book of Mormon prophets teach that these Gentiles will have the responsibility to bring the gospel to all the earth.

To help students understand this definition of the word *Gentiles*, display and read the following explanation from Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

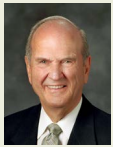


"We have heretofore identified the Jews as both [those who live in] the kingdom of Judah and as their lineal descendants. ... And we have said, within this usage of terms, that all other people are Gentiles, including the lost and scattered remnants of the kingdom of Israel. ... Thus Joseph Smith, of the tribe of Ephraim, ... was the Gentile by whose hand the Book of Mormon came forth, and the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ... are the Gentiles who carry salvation to the Lamanites and to the Jews" (*The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 233).

Ask several students to take turns reading from 1 Nephi 22:8–12 while the class identifies those people who will be blessed and nourished by the Gentiles (members of the Church) in the last days. As students read, it may be helpful to explain that the phrase “make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations” in verses 10–11 refers to the Lord showing His power throughout the world.

- Who will be blessed and nourished by the Gentiles in the last days? (Lehi’s posterity, all the house of Israel, and “all the kindreds of the earth.”)
- According to verses 9–11, how will the Lord bless the “kindreds” (families) of the earth in the last days? (Help students identify the following truth: **In the last days, the Lord will work through members of His Church to bless the families of the earth with His gospel and covenants.**)

Display the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“Ours is the responsibility to help fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. Ours is the seed foreordained and prepared to bless all people of the world. ... After some 4,000 years of anticipation and preparation, this is the appointed day when the gospel is to be taken to the kindreds of the earth. This is the time of the promised gathering of Israel. And we get to participate! Isn’t that exciting? The Lord is counting on us and our sons—and He is profoundly grateful for our daughters—who worthily serve as missionaries in this great time of the gathering of Israel” (“Covenants,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 88).

- How do you think those who are gathered (converts) feel about those who gather them (those who have shared the gospel with them)?
- What are some ways in which we can participate in God’s work by sharing the gospel with the families of the earth?

3 Nephi 16:4–5; 21:1–7

The role of the Book of Mormon in the gathering of Israel

Invite students to silently read 3 Nephi 21:1–7 and look for the sign that signals the beginning of the latter-day gathering of Israel.

- The Savior spoke of “these things which I declare unto you” (verse 2). Where would His words to the Nephites be recorded? (In the Book of Mormon.)
- What is the sign that signals the beginning of the latter-day gathering of Israel? (Students should identify the following truth: **The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign that God is fulfilling His covenant to gather Israel in the latter days.**)

Ask a student to read 3 Nephi 16:4–5 aloud, and invite the class to look for the effects of the Book of Mormon and the gospel message in the last days.

- How does the Book of Mormon help bring about the gathering of God’s people in the latter days? (One of the truths that might be identified by students is the following: **The Book of Mormon helps bring people to the knowledge of the Redeemer so that they can be gathered to Him.**)

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson. Ask students to listen for the role of the Book of Mormon in the gathering of Israel.



"The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign to the entire world that the Lord has commenced to gather Israel and fulfill covenants He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We not only teach this doctrine, but we participate in it. We do so as we help to gather the elect of the Lord on both sides of the veil.

"The Book of Mormon is central to this work. It declares the doctrine of the gathering. It causes people to learn about Jesus Christ, to believe His gospel, and to join His Church. In fact, if there were no Book of Mormon, the promised gathering of Israel would not occur" ("The Gathering of Scattered Israel," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 80).

Ask students to share any experiences they have had with seeing the Book of Mormon help other people learn about Jesus Christ and be gathered to His Church.

Challenge students to help in the process of gathering Israel by sharing the Book of Mormon with someone who is not of our faith.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 15:12–16; 22:3–5, 8–12; 2 Nephi 25:15–17; 3 Nephi 5:24–26; 16:4–5; 20:13, 29–31; 21:1–7; 30:2.
- Russell M. Nelson, "The Gathering of Scattered Israel," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 79–82.

All Are Alike unto God

24

Introduction

To protect themselves after the death of Lehi, Nephi and other righteous members of Lehi's family were directed by the Lord to separate from Laman and Lemuel and their followers. Thereafter, contentions and wars often defined the relationship between the

Nephites and Lamanites. This lesson discusses how the gospel of Jesus Christ transcends religious, ethnic, cultural, and other differences to unite God's children.

Background Reading

- Dallin H. Oaks, "All Men Everywhere," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 77–80.
- Howard W. Hunter, "The Gospel—A Global Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 18–19.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 26:23–28, 33; Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:11, 20

All of God's children are invited to come unto Him

Ask students to consider some of the religious, ethnic, or cultural groups in the world and think about the attitudes that some people in such groups have toward members of other groups.

Remind students that following Lehi's death, his posterity separated into two groups: Nephites and Lamanites (see 2 Nephi 5:1–7). Soon after this separation, the two groups began contending and warring with each other (see 2 Nephi 5:34). The experiences of these two groups illustrate that when people do not know and follow God's commandments, they often emphasize the differences between themselves and others, leading to separation from others and feelings of hatred toward them. Point out that in contrast, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want all people to feel love for one another and be unified.

Invite several students to take turns reading 2 Nephi 26:23–28, 33 aloud. Ask the class to watch for how Nephi used the words *none*, *any*, and *all*. Consider encouraging students to mark these words in their scriptures.

- What key doctrine do we learn from these verses? (Though they may use different words, students should identify the following doctrine: **Jesus Christ loves all people and invites all to come unto Him and partake of His salvation.** You may wish to write this doctrine on the board. You might also encourage students to cross-reference 2 Nephi 26:33 with Alma 5:33–34 and Alma 19:36.)

Give students a few minutes to silently read Jacob 7:24 and Enos 1:11, 20, looking for the Nephites' desires for the Lamanites during the time of the prophets Jacob and Enos.

- What false traditions prevented the Lamanites from accepting the invitation to come unto Jesus Christ?
- Knowing that the Lamanites often felt hatred toward the Nephites, what attitudes or false traditions would many Nephites likely need to overcome in order to share the gospel with them?

Invite a student to read the following statement by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"The Book of Mormon promises that all who receive and act upon the Lord's invitation to 'repent and believe in his Son' become 'the covenant people of the Lord' (2 Nephi 30:2). This is a potent reminder that neither riches nor lineage nor any other privileges of birth should cause us to believe that we are 'better one than another' (Alma 5:54; see also Jacob 3:9). Indeed, the Book of Mormon commands, 'Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another' (Mosiah 23:7)" ("All Men Everywhere," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 79).

Invite students to take a moment and ponder their attitude toward individuals who come from a different background than they do. Encourage them to follow the example of the Savior by striving to love all of God's children, including those whose ethnicity, culture, or religion is different from theirs.

Mosiah 28:1–3; Helaman 6:1–8

Gaining a desire to share the gospel with all of God's children

Remind students that the Book of Mormon records notable experiences that the Nephites had while preaching the gospel to the Lamanites. Remind students of the remarkable conversion of the sons of Mosiah (see Mosiah 27), and then ask a student to read Mosiah 28:1–3 aloud. Ask the class to look for reasons why the sons of Mosiah desired to preach the gospel to the Lamanites.

- Of the reasons you discovered, which ones are particularly meaningful to you as you think about sharing the gospel with others?
- Which word in verse 1 expresses how the sons of Mosiah viewed the Lamanites?
- How is our desire to share the gospel affected when we view those of other religions, races, or ethnic groups as our brothers and sisters? (As students respond, help them identify the following principle: **When we see others as our brothers and sisters, our desire to share the gospel with them increases.**)

Invite a student to read the following statement by President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) aloud:



"All men and women have not only a physical lineage leading back to Adam and Eve, their first earthly parents, but also a spiritual heritage leading back to God the Eternal Father. Thus, all persons on earth are literally brothers and sisters in the family of God.

"It is in understanding and accepting this universal fatherhood of God that all human beings can best appreciate God's concern for them and their relationship to each other.

This is a message of life and love that strikes squarely against all stifling traditions based on race, language, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background, for we are all of the same spiritual descent" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* [2015], 123–24).

- What thoughts do you have when you hear these words from President Hunter?

Give students a few minutes to read Helaman 6:1–8. Point out that the circumstances described in these verses occurred about 50 years after the sons of Mosiah served their missions to the Lamanites. Ask students to think about what the relationship between

the Nephites and Lamanites was at the time of those missions and look for how the relationship had changed in 50 years.

- What had changed in the relationship between the Nephites and Lamanites? Why had the relationship changed?
- What can we learn about sharing the gospel from the attitude of the sons of Mosiah and from the results of their missions?

Alma 27:1–2, 20–24; 53:10–11, 13–17; 4 Nephi 1:1–3, 11–13, 15–18

The gospel of Jesus Christ transcends the differences between people

Invite students to ponder the following question and then share their thoughts:

- Why do you think that individuals from so many varied backgrounds can meet together in a spirit of peace and love in the Church? What is it that unites Church members?

Divide the class in half. Invite one half to study Alma 27:1–2, 20–24 and look for what the Nephites did to help the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. Invite the other half to study Alma 53:10–11, 13–17 and look for what the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi (the people of Ammon) did for the Nephites. After sufficient time, ask students to share what they found.

- What do you think caused these two groups to feel such love and concern for one another? (As part of this discussion, help students identify the following principle: **As people embrace the teachings of Jesus Christ, they become unified with one another.**)

Explain that a wonderful illustration of this principle is recorded in 4 Nephi. Ask a student to read 4 Nephi 1:1–2 aloud. Emphasize that after the Savior’s visit to the Americas, all the Nephites and Lamanites repented, were baptized, received the Holy Ghost, and were converted unto the Lord. Assign students to search 4 Nephi 1:3, 11–13, 15–18, looking for the blessings the people experienced when everyone was converted to the gospel.

- What words or phrases describe the people at that time?
- Why does living the gospel of Jesus Christ result in these blessings?

Invite a student to read 4 Nephi 1:17 aloud.

- What do you think it means to have no “manner of -ites”? (The people no longer distinguished themselves from each other with titles such as Nephites or Lamanites. They overcame any differences that existed between them and lived in unity and peace.)
- How have you seen the gospel diminish differences between people of different backgrounds?

To deepen students’ understanding of how living the gospel unites people of different backgrounds, share the following statement by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“Your Heavenly Father assigned you to be born into a specific lineage from which you received your inheritance of race, culture, and traditions. That lineage can provide a rich heritage and great reasons to rejoice. Yet you have the responsibility to determine if

there is any part of that heritage that must be discarded because it works against the Lord's plan of happiness. ...

"I testify that you will remove barriers to happiness and find greater peace as you make your first allegiance your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ, and His teachings the foundation of your life. Where family or national traditions or customs conflict with the teachings of God, set them aside. Where traditions and customs are in harmony with His teachings, they should be cherished and followed to preserve your culture and heritage" ("Removing Barriers to Happiness," *Ensign*, May 1998, 86–87).

- Why do you think that differences between people of different backgrounds diminish when these people make the gospel of Jesus Christ their first allegiance?
- How has being a member of the Church helped you feel unified with Church members who have backgrounds different from yours?

Conclude by testifying that the Book of Mormon contains real examples of how people from different backgrounds lived the gospel of Jesus Christ and overcame their differences. The Atonement and the gospel of Jesus Christ transcend differences in race, ethnicity, culture, age, and gender to unite God's children.

Encourage students to consider how the gospel of Jesus Christ can help them overcome any false traditions or ideas learned from family members or friends, or resolve any differences they might have with someone they know. Encourage them to seek ways to become more united with members of their local congregation.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 26:23–28, 33; Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:11, 20; Mosiah 28:1–3; Alma 27:1–2, 20–24; 53:10–11, 13–17; Helaman 6:1–8; 4 Nephi 1:1–3, 11–13, 15–18.
- Dallin H. Oaks, "All Men Everywhere," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 77–80.

Living Righteously in a Day of Wickedness

25

Introduction

The Book of Mormon records the destruction of individuals and societies that embraced wickedness and allowed secret combinations to exist. At the same time, the Book of Mormon also

teaches that we can live righteously despite living in a wicked environment. In this lesson, students will learn what they can do to remain righteous in today's world.

Background Reading

- Quentin L. Cook, "Reaping the Rewards of Righteousness," *Ensign*, July 2015, 33–39.
- Dennis B. Neuenschwander, "One among the Crowd," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 101–3.

Suggestions for Teaching

Alma 37:21–22, 25–27; Helaman 6:20–26, 37–40; Ether 8:18–26

Secret combinations can destroy freedoms and societies

Write the phrase *enemy territory* on the board and ask students what it means.

Display the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and invite a student to read it aloud:



"You young people are being raised in enemy territory. We know from the scriptures that there was a war in heaven and that Lucifer rebelled and, with his followers, 'was cast out into the earth' [Revelation 12:9]. He is determined to disrupt our Heavenly Father's plan and seeks to control the minds and actions of all" ("Counsel to Youth," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 16).

- In what ways is living at this time like being in enemy territory?

Explain that this lesson will examine the Book of Mormon's description of the wicked environment in which some righteous individuals lived. Invite students to look for principles and doctrines that they can apply as they study the examples of individuals who remained faithful despite being surrounded by wickedness.

Remind students that Moroni witnessed the destruction of the entire Nephite civilization. He described the wickedness that led to both the Nephites' and the Jaredites' destruction. Invite a student to read Ether 8:18 and 21 aloud while the class identifies the cause of this destruction. Invite students to share what they discover.

Write the following scripture references and questions on the board:

Alma 37:21–22, 25–27

Helaman 6:20–26

Ether 8:18–26

What are secret combinations?

What are their goals and purposes?

How do they ensure their continued existence?

Ask students to read one of the passages on the board and look for answers to the questions listed. Tell students that the passage they choose might not answer all three of these questions, but they should find what they can. After sufficient time, discuss the questions on the board as a class. Then discuss the following:

- From what you read, what are the consequences of allowing secret combinations to exist and flourish? (Students should identify the following principle: **Secret combinations can destroy freedoms, governments, and societies.**)
- What do you think are some examples of secret combinations in our day?

To help address this question, display the following statements by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994). Ask a student to read them aloud.



"Among today's secret combinations are gangs, drug cartels, and organized crime families. The secret combinations of our day function much like the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon times. ... Among their purposes are to 'murder, and plunder, and steal, and commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness' [Helaman 6:23]" (M. Russell Ballard, "Standing for Truth and Right," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 38).



"I testify that wickedness is rapidly expanding in every segment of our society. (See D&C 1:14–16; 84:49–53.) It is more highly organized, more cleverly disguised, and more powerfully promoted than ever before. Secret combinations lusting for power, gain, and glory are flourishing. ... (See Ether 8:18–25.)" (Ezra Taft Benson, "I Testify," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 87).

- Why do you think Book of Mormon prophets included information about secret combinations in their record?

Invite a student to read Helaman 6:20, 37–40 aloud. Have the class follow along, looking for contrasts between the Lamanites and the Nephites. (*Note:* Comparing and contrasting is a scripture study skill that you might emphasize in this lesson [see *Gospel Teaching and Learning: A Handbook for Teachers and Leaders in Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (2012), 22].)

- What can we learn from these verses about how to eliminate wickedness and secret combinations?

Alma 62:41; 4 Nephi 1:42; Mormon 1:13–17, 19; 2:8, 14–15, 18–19; 3:2–3, 12, 22; Moroni 9:6, 22, 25–26

Remaining righteous while surrounded by wickedness

Tell students that the prophet Mormon was born into the environment of increasing wickedness brought on by these secret combinations. Ask students to study the following passages and look for and mark descriptions of Mormon's environment: Mormon 1:13–14, 16–17, 19; 2:8, 14–15, 18. Invite students to report on what they found, and then ask:

- What concerns would you have about living in such an environment?

Invite a student to read Mormon 1:15 and 2:19 aloud.

- What can we learn from Mormon's example during this wicked time? (As students respond, write this truth on the board: **We can live righteously even when we are surrounded by wickedness.**)

Give students time to read Mormon 3:2–3, 12, 22 to see what else they can learn about how Mormon was able to live righteously in a time of wickedness. After students share what they learned about Mormon, ask the following questions:

- Who else in the Book of Mormon is an example of living righteously while surrounded by wickedness? (Answers might include Ether, Moroni, Abish, and the people who believed that Christ would be born, as recorded in 3 Nephi 1.)
- What challenges do we face as we strive to live righteously in a wicked world?

Remind students that Mormon's son, Moroni, lived during this same time of widespread wickedness. Before his death, Mormon wrote a letter to Moroni that is recorded in Moroni 9. Ask a student to read Moroni 9:6, 22, 25–26. Invite the class to consider how Mormon's counsel in these verses could help us to live righteously in a wicked world.

- What can we learn from these verses that will help us live righteously in today's world? (Help students to understand the following principle: **If we have faith in Christ and in His Atonement, then we will have the strength to live righteously despite being surrounded by wickedness.**)
- What examples have you seen of someone living righteously in the midst of today's wickedness?
- How has focusing on Jesus Christ and His Atonement helped you to rise above wicked or difficult conditions?

Share the following statement by Sister Virginia U. Jensen, former counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, to help students consider what else they might do to stand firm in faith and righteousness:



"To maintain a firm stance for ourselves and help others stand firm, the message of the restored gospel must be firmly planted in our hearts and taught in our homes. ... Teach your loved ones how to draw upon the powers of heaven through fasting and prayer. Teach them that keeping the Sabbath day holy will insulate them from the world. Teach them to be obedient. Teach them to seek God's approval, not man's. Teach them that the only route back to our heavenly home is by loving and following the Savior and by making and keeping sacred covenants and commandments. The truths of the gospel and knowledge of the plan of salvation are weapons your family members can use for victory over Satan's evil forces" ("Stand Firm," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 94).

- What has given you determination and strength to be obedient to the Lord in an increasingly wicked world?

Explain that during the long war between the Nephites and Lamanites recorded in the book of Alma, individuals had to stand against forces of evil in order to preserve their lives. Invite students to study Alma 62:41 and look for the contrasting ways in which individuals responded to adversity and wickedness. Invite students to share what they discovered that could help them live righteously in a wicked world.

Ask a student to read aloud the following statement by President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency concerning this passage:



"In an increasingly unjust world, to survive and even to find happiness and joy, no matter what comes, we must make our stand unequivocally with the Lord. We need to try to be faithful every hour of every day so that our foundation of trust in the Lord will never be shaken. ...

"It's not so much what happens to us but how we deal with what happens to us. That reminds me of a passage from Alma. After a long war 'many had become hardened,' while 'many were softened because of their afflictions' [Alma 62:41]. The same circumstances produced opposite responses. ... Each of us needs to have our own storehouse of faith to help us rise above the troubles that are part of this mortal probation" ("Where Do I Make My Stand?" *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 18, 20).

Ask students to take a few minutes to write responses to the following question:

- What commitments have you made to stand "unequivocally with the Lord"?

Then encourage students to ponder the following questions:

- What promptings have you received from the Spirit concerning how you can be more committed to the Lord?
- What can you do to help your family members be more committed to the Lord?

Testify that as we persevere in faith, the Lord will bless us and help us live righteously in the midst of wickedness.

Student Readings

- Alma 37:21–22, 25–27; 62:41; Helaman 6:20–26, 37–40; 4 Nephi 1:42; Mormon 1:13–17, 19; 2:8, 14–15, 18–19; 3:2–3, 12, 22; Ether 8:18–26; Moroni 9:6, 22, 25–26.
- Quentin L. Cook, "Reaping the Rewards of Righteousness," *Ensign*, July 2015, 33–39.

After the Trial of Faith

26

Introduction

In this lesson, students will learn from the Book of Mormon that having faith in Jesus Christ makes it possible for God to work

miracles in our behalf. Exercising faith can also prepare us to receive spiritual witnesses of truth.

Background Reading

- Robert D. Hales, “Seeking to Know God, Our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 29–32.
- David A. Bednar, “Ask in Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 94–97.
- Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 13–14.

Suggestions for Teaching

2 Nephi 27:23; 3 Nephi 17:5–9, 20–24; Mormon 9:9, 18–20

Faith precedes miracles

Ask students to name a few scriptural examples of God working miracles in behalf of His children according to their faith in Him. (Examples may include Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead, Moses parting the Red Sea, and Christ touching the stones to light the Jaredite barges.)

- What might you say to a person who does not believe that God continues to work miracles today?

Invite one student to read 2 Nephi 27:23 aloud and another student to read Mormon 9:9, 18–20 aloud. Ask the class to look for why miracles still occur today.

- According to these verses, why can we be confident that miracles happen in today’s world? (Students should identify the following doctrine: **Because God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, He continues to work miracles according to the faith of His children.**)
- Why do you think the Lord requires us to have faith before He works miracles?

To illustrate the scriptural connection between faith and miracles, invite a few students to take turns reading from 3 Nephi 17:5–9 aloud. Ask the class to look for what the resurrected Christ identified as being sufficient before He performed miracles for the people.

- According to verse 8, what was it that allowed the Savior to heal the sick and afflicted?

Invite a student to read 3 Nephi 17:20–24 aloud.

- What other sacred events did the people experience because of their faith?
- How can Christ’s willingness to provide these miracles increase our faith that He can exercise power to help us with our needs?

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Sister Sydney S. Reynolds, former counselor in the Primary general presidency:



"Just as important as ... 'mighty miracles' are the smaller 'private miracles' that teach each of us to have faith in the Lord. These come as we recognize and heed the promptings of the Spirit in our lives. ...

"I believe that all of us can bear witness to these small miracles. We know children who pray for help to find a lost item and find it. We know of young people who gather the courage to stand as a witness of God and feel His sustaining hand. We know friends who pay their tithing with the last of their money and then, through a miracle, find themselves able to pay their tuition or their rent or somehow obtain food for their family. We can share experiences of prayers answered and priesthood blessings that gave courage, brought comfort, or restored health. These daily miracles acquaint us with the hand of the Lord in our lives" ("A God of Miracles," *Ensign*, May 2001, 12).

Ask students to consider times when they or someone they know experienced God's miracles in their lives. If not too sacred or personal, invite students to share experiences they have had that have confirmed to them that God is still a God of miracles.

Ether 3:6–13, 17–20; 4:13–15; 12:6–7, 12, 19, 31

Faith prepares us to receive spiritual witnesses

Invite students to think of a gospel truth about which they would like to receive a spiritual witness or a stronger testimony. Explain that some people choose not to believe or live according to a gospel principle until they see evidence that it is true.

Invite students to read Ether 12:6 silently, looking for what this verse teaches about the process of receiving a spiritual witness.

- What principle can we learn from Ether 12:6 about receiving a spiritual witness? (Students should identify the following principle: **Before we can receive a spiritual witness, we must first exercise faith in Jesus Christ.**)
- What do you think the phrase "trial of your faith" means?

Explain that having a trial of faith does not always mean experiencing hardship. Display and ask a student to read aloud the following statements about Moroni's counsel in Ether 12:6 by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sister Bonnie L. Oscarson, Young Women general president:



"You can learn to use faith more effectively by applying this principle taught by Moroni: '... ye receive no witness until after the *trial of your faith*' [Ether 12:6; emphasis added]. Thus, every time you *try your faith*, that is, act in worthiness on an impression, you will receive the confirming evidence of the Spirit" (Richard G. Scott, "The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 76).



"In our world where instant gratification is the expectation, we are often guilty of expecting the reward without having to work for it. I believe Moroni is telling us that we must do the work first and exercise faith by living the gospel, and then we will receive the witness that it is true. True conversion occurs as you continue to act upon the doctrines you know are true and keep the commandments, day after day, month after month" (Bonnie L. Oscarson, "Be Ye Converted," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 77).

- How is the approach to receiving a witness of truth described by Elder Scott and Sister Oscarson different from the approach of those who want evidence before they will believe or act?

- When and how have you found this principle to be true?

Invite a few students to take turns reading from Ether 12:7, 12, 19, and 31 aloud.

Encourage the class to note the phrases “after they had faith” and “until after their faith” in these verses (you may also want to suggest that students mark these phrases in their scriptures).

- According to these verses, what blessings did the Lord provide to these people after they exercised faith? What types of spiritual witnesses of truth have you received as a result of your faith?

Testify that much like miracles, spiritual witnesses do not come until after we exercise faith. To emphasize this point, consider sharing the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that ‘leap of faith,’ as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two” (“The Quest for Spiritual Knowledge,” *New Era*, Jan. 2007, 6).

Invite a student to describe the challenges that the brother of Jared faced as he built the barges that were to carry his family to the promised land and summarize what he did to solve the challenges (see Ether 2:16–25; 3:1–5).

- How did the brother of Jared exercise faith in Jesus Christ?

Ask several students to take turns reading from Ether 3:6–13, 17–20 aloud.

- How did the Lord bless the brother of Jared for his faith?

Ask a student to read the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles aloud. Invite the class to look for characteristics of the brother of Jared’s faith:



“Exacting faith, mountain-moving faith, faith like that of the brother of Jared, *precedes* the miracle and the knowledge. He had to believe *before* God spoke. He had to act *before* the ability to complete that action was apparent. He had to commit to the complete experience in advance of even the first segment of its realization. Faith is to agree unconditionally—and in advance—to whatever conditions God may require in both the near and distant future” (*Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997], 18–19).

- How would you summarize Elder Holland’s description of the brother of Jared’s faith?
- What are some examples of actions we can take to demonstrate our faith in the Lord?

Give students a moment to study Ether 4:13–15 and identify what Moroni said we should do to receive knowledge and manifestations from the Spirit.

- What do you think it means to “rend [the] veil of unbelief”? How is doing this related to the process of exercising faith? (It may be helpful to explain that *rend* means to tear or divide and *veil* refers to something that covers or conceals.)
- What did Moroni counsel us to do in order to “rend that veil of unbelief”?

Display the following statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44), and ask a student to read it aloud:



“God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know Him ... from the least to the greatest [see Jeremiah 31:34]” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 268).

- How does this statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith help you to understand your potential to receive revelation?

Challenge students to ponder what trials of faith they are currently facing, and invite them to consider what they can do to strengthen and exercise their faith. Share your testimony that God provides His faithful followers with continuing witnesses of the truth as they exercise faith.

Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 27:23; 3 Nephi 17:5–9, 20–24; Mormon 9:9, 18–20; Ether 3:6–13, 17–20; 4:13–15; 12:6–7, 12, 19, 31.
- David A. Bednar, “Ask in Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 94–97.
- Neil L. Andersen, “You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 13–14.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

27

Introduction

The attributes of faith, hope, and charity are necessary for all who wish to dwell in the presence of our Father in Heaven. These

attributes are gifts from God that come to those who seek after them by following the example of Jesus Christ.

Background Reading

- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 21–24.
- Richard G. Scott, “The Transforming Power of Faith and Character,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 43–46.

Suggestions for Teaching

Ether 12:28; Moroni 10:18–21

Faith, hope, and charity are essential for salvation

Ask students to quickly name attributes they think are important to acquire while in mortality. Then ask them to identify which of those attributes they think are most vital in order to inherit the kingdom of God.

Remind students that as Moroni was concluding his work on the golden plates, he wrote some final words of exhortation to those who would one day read the record. As part of his counsel he highlighted three attributes that are essential to our salvation. Invite a student to read Moroni 10:18–21 aloud, and ask the class to identify these three attributes.

- Why do you think the characteristics of faith, hope, and charity are so essential to our salvation?

To help students answer this question, invite a student to read Ether 12:28 aloud, and ask the class to identify the doctrine taught in this verse.

- What doctrine is recorded in this verse? (Students should identify the following:
Developing faith, hope, and charity brings us to Jesus Christ.)

Invite students to look for principles and doctrines throughout this lesson that can help them understand and develop these important attributes more fully.

Alma 32:26–29, 37–41; Moroni 7:21, 25–28, 33

Faith allows us to “lay hold upon every good thing”

Write *Increasing Our Faith in Jesus Christ* on the board.

Remind students that the prophet Alma used an analogy of a growing seed to teach the Zoramites how to develop faith in Jesus Christ. Invite a few students to take turns reading from Alma 32:26–29 aloud. Encourage students to identify phrases that describe what we can do to increase our faith.

Invite a few students to share a phrase they identified and explain what the phrase teaches about how we can increase our faith. As students identify phrases, you may wish to write them under the heading on the board. Phrases may include the

following: *awake and arouse your faculties; experiment upon my words; desire to believe; give place, that a seed [the word] may be planted in your heart.* If needed, help students understand that the word *faculties* refers to our ability to think and act.

- In verse 29, why do you think Alma taught that our faith would not yet be perfect after performing this experiment?
- What more do you think is needed to perfect our faith?

Invite a few students to take turns reading from Alma 32:37–41, and ask the class to look for what we must do to develop the faith necessary to obtain eternal life.

- What principle did Alma teach in these verses about how we can continue to strengthen our faith? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we diligently nourish God’s word in our hearts, our faith in Jesus Christ will grow.** Write this truth on the board.)
- What do you think it means to diligently nourish the word? What are some consistent actions we can take to nourish God’s word and help faith grow deep in our hearts?

To help students understand how they can nourish God’s word, display the following statement by President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, and invite a student to read it aloud as the class looks for keys to nourishing our faith:



“However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation. ...

“... We build the faith to pass the tests of obedience over time and through our daily choices. We can decide now to do quickly whatever God asks of us. And we can decide to be steady in the small tests of obedience which build the faith to carry us through the great tests, which will surely come” (“Spiritual Preparedness: Start Early and Be Steady,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 38, 40).

- What did President Eyring say we must do to strengthen or nourish our faith?
- Why do you think that steady and daily obedience to God’s word is so vital in building our faith and trust in Him?

Invite a few students to share how following the principles taught by Alma has affected their faith in Jesus Christ.

Tell students that the prophet Mormon testified of the eternal importance of faith in Jesus Christ. Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud from Mormon’s testimony in Moroni 7:21, 25–28, 33 as the class ponders what they can do to increase their faith in the Lord and “lay hold upon” the blessings Mormon identifies.

Ether 12:4, 8–9; Moroni 7:40–42

Hope is an anchor to the soul

Invite a student to read Ether 12:8–9 aloud and another to read Moroni 7:40–42 aloud. Ask students to identify the attribute that we can attain as we develop faith.

- According to these passages, what attribute comes because of our faith?

Read the following two statements, and ask students to identify the differences between them: (1) I hope it doesn’t rain today. (2) I have hope that if I repent, I will be forgiven through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

- How are these expressions of hope different? (The first is an uncertain wish for something beyond one's control, and the second is an expression of confidence that motivates action.)

To help students understand the scriptural meaning of hope, invite a student to read the following statement by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency:



"Hope is ... the abiding trust that the Lord will fulfill His promise to us. It is confidence that if we live according to God's laws and the words of His prophets now, we will receive desired blessings in the future. It is believing and expecting that our prayers will be answered. It is manifest in confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and patient perseverance" ("The Infinite Power of Hope," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 22).

Invite students to silently read Moroni 7:41 and look for what we will have hope for as we develop faith in Christ.

- What principle did Mormon teach concerning hope in the verse? (Students should identify the following: **As we develop faith in Jesus Christ, we obtain hope that through His Atonement we can be raised to eternal life.**)
- Why do you think faith in Jesus Christ and hope are so closely related?

Invite a student to read aloud Ether 12:4, and have the class look for how Moroni described hope.

- What does Mormon's use of an anchor teach us about hope? How could a person lacking faith be like a boat without an anchor?

Invite a few students to testify of the hope that has come into their lives because of faith in Jesus Christ.

Ether 12:33–34; Moroni 7:43–48

Charity is the pure love of Christ

Invite a student to read aloud Moroni 7:43–44, and ask students to identify what attribute Mormon declared we must develop once we have faith and hope.

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite a student to read it aloud:



"If we would truly seek to be more like our Savior and Master, then learning to love as He loves should be our highest goal. Mormon called charity 'the greatest of all' (Moro. 7:46)" ("Godly Characteristics of the Master," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 47).

To clarify why charity is such an important attribute to seek, invite a few students to take turns reading from Moroni 7:45–47 aloud. Point out that these verses help us understand charity by listing what charity is and what it is not.

- What words and phrases in these verses communicate the importance of charity?
- What thoughts or insights can you share about the characteristics of charity listed in verse 45?

Invite a student to read Moroni 7:48 aloud.

- What did Mormon counsel us to do as we seek the gift of charity? (Help students identify the following principle: **If we pray with energy of heart and follow Jesus Christ, we can be filled with charity.**)
- How does seeking for the gift of charity help us to become better followers of Jesus Christ?

Invite a student to read Ether 12:33–34 aloud while the class looks for the relationship between charity and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

- What is the relationship between charity and the Atonement?

Ask a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



"The greater definition of 'the pure love of Christ' ... is not what we as Christians try but largely fail to demonstrate toward others but rather what Christ totally succeeded in demonstrating toward us. *True* charity has been known only once. It is shown perfectly and purely in Christ's unfailing, ultimate, and atoning love for us. ... It is Christ's love for us that 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'

It is as demonstrated in Christ that 'charity never faileth.' It is that charity—his pure love for us—without which we would be nothing, hopeless, of all men and women most miserable. Truly, those found possessed of the blessings of his love at the last day—the Atonement, the Resurrection, eternal life, eternal promise—surely it shall be well with them" (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 336).

- How does Elder Holland help you to understand why "charity never faileth" and why it is the "greatest" of the spiritual gifts?
- What might you do to share with others the pure love of Jesus Christ that He has so freely imparted to you?

Ask students to review Moroni 7:45 and then set a goal to pray and work to more fully develop one characteristic of charity. Testify of the divine help you have received as you have worked to develop charity yourself.

Student Readings

- Alma 32:26–29, 37–41; Ether 12:4, 8–9, 28, 33–34; Moroni 7:21, 25–28, 33, 40–48; 10:18–21.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "The Infinite Power of Hope," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 21–24.
- Richard G. Scott, "The Transforming Power of Faith and Character," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 43–46.

Introduction

One of the central purposes of the Book of Mormon is to invite all people to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32). As we exercise faith and “lay hold upon every good thing,”

we can become the children of Christ (see Moroni 7:19). At the end of this lesson, students will have an opportunity to bear testimony of how the Book of Mormon has helped them come unto Christ.

Background Reading

- Jeffrey R. Holland, “Safety for the Soul,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 88–90.
- “A Christ-Centered Life,” chapter 24 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 297–306.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 6:4; Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 9:13–14; Moroni 10:30, 32–33

The Book of Mormon invites us to come unto Jesus Christ

Invite students to think about a time when they invited someone to read the Book of Mormon.

- Why did you invite this person to read the Book of Mormon?

Invite students to think about why they study the Book of Mormon. Explain that while there are many good reasons to read and study the Book of Mormon, the book itself contains a repeated message about one of its most important purposes.

Write the following scripture references on the board:

1 Nephi 6:4

Jacob 1:7

Omni 1:26

3 Nephi 9:13–14

Moroni 10:30

Invite students to read the passages silently, looking for a repeated theme found in the Book of Mormon. (You might encourage students to cross-reference these passages in their scriptures.)

- What is a repeated Book of Mormon theme found in these verses?
- What does it mean to “come unto Christ”?
- What do these verses teach us to do to come unto Christ? (Answers should include the following: “offer your whole souls as an offering unto him,” fast, pray, endure to the end, repent, be converted, and “lay hold upon every good gift.”)
- What does the phrase “offer your whole souls as an offering unto Him” mean to you?

To help students further understand what it means to come unto Christ, display and discuss the following statements by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy:



"When we are consistently praying morning and night, studying our scriptures daily, having weekly family home evening, and attending the temple regularly, we are actively responding to His invitation to 'come unto Him'" (Richard G. Scott, "Make the Exercise of Faith Your First Priority," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 94).



"I bear my witness that we can come unto Christ and be perfected in Him by our worthy participation in the sacred ordinances appointed by God and instituted from before the foundation of the world" (Dennis B. Neuenschwander, "Ordinances and Covenants," *Ensign*, Aug. 2001, 26).

Explain that the final chapter of the Book of Mormon records counsel from the prophet Moroni about how to come unto Christ. Invite a student to read Moroni 10:32–33 aloud while the class looks for how the words "if" and "then" are used. Ask class members to ponder what these "if-then" statements teach about how we are blessed by the grace of Christ. (*Note:* Looking for the "if-then" statements will help students identify principles taught in the scriptures.)

- What principle can we learn from these verses about how we are blessed by the grace of Christ as we come unto Him? (Students may use other words, but make sure they identify the following principle: **If we come unto Jesus Christ and deny ourselves of all ungodliness, then we can be perfected, sanctified, and made holy through His grace.** See also Alma 5:33–35.)

To deepen students' understanding of this principle, share the following statement by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy. Invite students to listen for how the Lord's grace can bless us.



"The Lord's grace, unlocked by the Atonement, can perfect our imperfections. 'By his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.' (Moroni 10:32.) While much of the perfection process involves a cleansing from the contamination of sin and bitterness, there is an additional, affirmative dimension through which we acquire a Christlike nature, becoming perfect even as the Father and Son are perfect. ...

"The Savior's victory can compensate not only for our sins but also for our inadequacies; not only for our deliberate mistakes but also for our sins committed in ignorance, our errors of judgment, and our unavoidable imperfections. Our ultimate aspiration is more than being forgiven of sin—we seek to become holy, endowed affirmatively with Christlike attributes, at one with him, like him. Divine grace is the only source that can finally fulfill that aspiration, after all we can do" (*The Broken Heart* [1989], 16, 20).

- According to Elder Hafen, in what ways can the Lord's grace bless us?

Invite students to think of a time when they felt that they were making efforts to come unto Jesus Christ. Ask them to respond to the following questions if their experiences are not too personal:

- At that time, what were you doing to come unto Christ?
- What blessings came into your life as you sought to come unto Jesus Christ?

Invite students to ponder what they can do to more fully come unto Christ so that they can become perfected and sanctified through His grace. Encourage them to follow any spiritual promptings they may receive.

Moroni 7:18–26

Lay hold upon every good thing in order to become children of Christ

Remind students that in Moroni 7, the prophet Moroni recorded a sermon that his father, Mormon, had given several years earlier. In this sermon, Mormon taught that we can know that something is inspired of God if it invites people to do good, to believe in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve God.

Invite a student to read Moroni 7:18–19 aloud. Ask the class to follow along, looking for what Mormon asks us to do.

- According to verse 19, what will happen to us if we use the Light of Christ to discern good from evil and then “lay hold upon every good thing”? (We will be children of Christ.)
- What does it mean to be the children of Christ? (Point out that we are spirit children of Heavenly Father and also children of our earthly parents. But, as President Joseph Fielding Smith [1876–1972] taught, Jesus Christ also “becomes our Father, in the sense in which this term is used in the scriptures, because he offers us life, eternal life, through the atonement which he made for us. [See Mosiah 5:7.] ... We become the children, sons and daughters of Jesus Christ, through our covenants of obedience to him” [*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 1:29].)

Ask students to read Moroni 7:20 silently and identify the question asked by Mormon. Then divide students into pairs and invite them to study Moroni 7:21–26, looking for what the Lord has given us to help us to “lay hold upon every good thing.” After sufficient time, ask students to share their thoughts, and write their thoughts on the board. Answers may include the ministering of angels (verse 22), prophets (verse 23), the scriptures (verse 25), exercising faith (verse 25), and prayer (verse 26).

- What do these verses teach us about the meaning of the phrase “lay hold upon every good thing”? (We are to seek after everything that is good, especially those things that lead to faith in Christ and salvation through His name.)
- What good things have come into your life because of one of the items listed on the board?

Ask students to select one good thing they could start doing, or become better at doing, in order to come unto Christ. Encourage them to set a goal to work toward laying hold of that good thing in their lives.

Moroni 10:3–5

Moroni’s promise

Hold up a copy of the Book of Mormon and ask students to ponder how the Book of Mormon has helped them come unto Christ. Explain that Moroni extended an invitation and promise to all those who read and study the Book of Mormon.

Invite a student to read Moroni 10:3–5 aloud.

- As recorded in verse 3, what did Moroni exhort us to do?

Invite students to ponder examples from the Book of Mormon and from their own lives that illustrate “how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men.” Ask several students to share their thoughts with the class.

- What principle can we learn from Moroni’s invitation and promise in these verses? **(When we ask God with real intent, having faith in Christ, if the Book of Mormon is true, we will receive a testimony of its truthfulness through the Holy Ghost.)**
- What does it mean to ask God “with real intent, having faith in Christ”? (It means that we have faith that God will answer our prayers and that we intend to act upon the answers He gives us.)
- How does studying and praying about the Book of Mormon in this manner help us come unto Christ?

Ask students to ponder experiences they have had with reading the Book of Mormon and praying to know of its truthfulness. Ask students if any of them would like to share their testimony of the Book of Mormon with the class, particularly how the Book of Mormon has helped them to come unto Christ. Encourage students to continue to apply Moroni’s words to gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon or to strengthen the testimony they already have.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 6:4; Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; 3 Nephi 9:13–14; Moroni 7:18–26; 10:3–5, 30, 32–33.
- “A Christ-Centered Life,” chapter 24 in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* (2014), 297–306.



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