

Class Member Reading: Alma 5-7

Alma 5

1 Now it came to pass that Alma began to deliver the word of God unto the people, first in the land of Zarahemla, and from thence throughout all the land.

2 And these are the words which he spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, according to his own record, saying:

3 I, Alma, having been consecrated by my father, Alma, to be a high priest over the church of God, he having **power and authority from God** to do these things, behold, I say unto you that he began to establish a church in the land which was in the borders of Nephi; yea, the land which was called the land of Mormon; yea, and he did baptize his brethren in the waters of Mormon. I still find it interesting that “power and authority” is emphasized more in reference to Alma than any other point (aside from 3 Nephi).

4 And behold, I say unto you, they were delivered out of the hands of the people of king Noah, by the mercy and power of God. As I said, I think that this framing of the bondage represents a radical change from the way he perceived it earlier. I think this bondage played a central role in his desire to destroy the Church.

5 And behold, after that, **they** were brought into bondage by the hands of the Lamanites in the wilderness; yea, I say unto you, **they** were in captivity, and again the Lord did deliver them out of bondage by the power of his word; and **we** were brought into this land, and here we began to establish the church of God throughout this land also. This verse provides a key chronology clue. Is Alma distancing himself from the bondage? It seems those years were formative for Alma, but why wouldn't he be included in the “deliver them”? Also interesting he says “we began” to establish the Church when he was at the time trying to destroy it...

6 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you **sufficiently retained in remembrance** the captivity of your fathers? Yea, and have you **sufficiently retained in remembrance** his mercy and long-suffering towards them? And moreover, have ye **sufficiently retained in remembrance** that he has delivered their souls from hell? Alma is going to rapid fire questions in this chapter.

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7 Behold, he **changed their hearts**; yea, he **awakened them out of a deep sleep**, and they **awoke unto God**. Behold, they were in the midst of **darkness**; nevertheless, their **souls were illuminated** by the light of the everlasting word; yea, they were encircled about by the bands of death, and the chains of hell, and an everlasting destruction did await them.

8 And now I ask of you, my brethren, were they destroyed? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, they were not.

9 And again I ask, were the **bands of death broken**, and the **chains of hell** which encircled them about, were they **loosed**? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their **souls did expand**, and they did **sing redeeming love**. And I say unto you that they are saved. [Beautiful, evocative imagery in this chapter.](#)

10 And now I ask of you on what conditions are they saved? Yea, what grounds had they to hope for salvation? What is the cause of their being loosed from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell? [Notice Alma’s rhetorical strategy.. he engages in an imaginary dialog with his audience, thus drawing them in to his argument.](#)

11 Behold, I can tell you—did not my father Alma believe in the words which were delivered by the mouth of Abinadi? And was he not a holy prophet? Did he not speak the words of God, and my father Alma believe them?

12 And according to his **faith** there was a **mighty change** wrought in his heart. Behold I say unto you that this is all true.

13 And behold, he preached the word unto your fathers, and a **mighty change** was also wrought in their hearts, and they **humbled themselves** and put their **trust** in the true and living God. And behold, they were **faithful** until the end; therefore they were **saved**. [Look at key words: Change of heart. Humble. Trust. Faithful. Saved.](#)

14 And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye **spiritually been born of God**? Have ye **received his image in your countenances**? Have ye experienced this **mighty change in your hearts**? [This is a key verse, describing the experience of being “born of God”. When we are “born of God”, our hearts are powerfully changed and our demeanor, our “countenance” reflects the love and caring and awareness and nature of God.](#)

15 Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you **look forward with an eye of faith**, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? [I find this wording very](#)

helpful—“look forward with an eye of faith.” Faith is what motivates us to put hope into action. If we can see our desired outcome with an “eye of faith”, we can experience greater motivation to put consistent effort toward that outcome.

16 I say unto you, **can you imagine to yourselves** that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? Alma understands psychology!! By imagining future situations, especially situations where we will be held accountable for our actions, we access a better part of ourselves.

17 Or **do ye imagine to yourselves** that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say—Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth—and that he will save you? Our actions need to be defensible to all those involved. Imagining defending our actions to God can be powerful and productive, and that is what Alma is pushing the people to do here.

18 Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a **remembrance of all your guilt**, yea, a **perfect remembrance of all your wickedness**, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? **This* is the anguish of hell. A perfect remembrance and regret for our actions.*

19 I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a **pure heart and clean hands**? I say unto you, can you look up, having **the image of God engraven upon your countenances**? *This wording is stronger than “received” the image of God.*

20 I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have **yielded yourselves** to become subjects to the devil?

21 I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white; yea, his garments must be **purified** until they are **cleansed** from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins.

22 And now I ask of you, my brethren, **how will any of you feel**, if ye shall stand before the bar of God, having your garments stained with blood and all manner of filthiness? Behold, what will these things testify against you? *What an evocative image. I have sometimes wondered what it would be like if our sins stained our garments, literally.*

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23 Behold will they not testify that ye are murderers, yea, and also that ye are guilty of all manner of wickedness? [The garments are testifying here...](#)

24 Behold, my brethren, do ye suppose that such an one can have a place to sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and also all the holy prophets, whose garments are cleansed and are spotless, pure and white? [Now he is tapping into esteem/status of those who are respected and the human need for comparison.](#)

25 I say unto you, Nay; except ye make our Creator a liar from the beginning, or suppose that he is a liar from the beginning, ye cannot suppose that such can have place in the kingdom of heaven; but they shall be cast out for they are the children of the kingdom of the devil.

26 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, **can ye feel so now?** [Another rhetorical strategy: Alma has asked his audience to project themselves into the future, and now he asks them to remind themselves of where they were in the past, and then asks them if they can access that past part of themselves, bring it into the present.](#)

27 Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? **Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time,** within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently **humble?** That your garments have been **cleansed** and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins? [Another great question! If you died right now, what would you regret? What would you regret not having done? What would you regret not having said? What kinds of things do you want to be said at your funeral? What do you want to be remembered for? Relatedly, if you came to a sure knowledge that your existence ended at death, would you live your life differently?](#)

28 Behold, are ye **stripped of pride?** I say unto you, if ye are not ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold ye must prepare quickly; for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand, and such an one hath not eternal life. [More evocative wording \(also makes me think of the dragon scene from Voyage of the Dawn Treader\)](#)

29 Behold, I say, is there one among you who is not **stripped of envy?** I say unto you that such an one is not prepared; and I would that he should **prepare quickly**, for the **hour is close at hand**, and he **knoweth not when the time shall come**; for such an one is not found guiltless. [We don't know when we will die, so we should be ready for it](#)

every day. Pride and envy are both comparative, zero sum propositions: in order for you to have worth, pride and envy say, others need to be less.

30 And again I say unto you, is there one among you that doth make a **mock** of his brother, or that heapeth upon him **persecutions**? We have to repent of tearing others down.

31 Wo unto such an one, for he is not prepared, and the time is at hand that he must repent or he cannot be saved!

32 Yea, even wo unto all ye workers of iniquity; repent, repent, for the Lord God hath spoken it!

33 Behold, he sendeth an **invitation** unto all men, for the **arms of mercy are extended** towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. **God invites, not coerces.**

34 Yea, he saith: **Come unto me** and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely;

35 Yea, **come unto me** and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire—

36 For behold, the time is at hand that whosoever **bringeth forth not good fruit**, or whosoever **doeth not the works of righteousness**, the same have cause to wail and mourn. **Another great principle: We are judged by our actions. Our deeds prove our religion.**

37 O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are **puffed up** in the vain things of the world, ye that have **professed** to have known the ways of righteousness nevertheless have gone **astray**, as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice! **Pride and hypocrisy.**

38 Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and **in his own name he doth call you**, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd. **This is interesting—Christ radiates himself, and to the degree we mirror Christ, we will feel that call and respond. I think that similarly, we all radiate our natures and attract those who resonate.**

39 And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye? Behold, I say unto you, that the devil is your shepherd, and ye are of his fold; and now, who can deny this? Behold, I say unto you, whosoever denieth this is a liar and a child of the devil. **Harsh. And mutton’s on the menu.**

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40 For I say unto you that **whatsoever is good cometh from God**, and **whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil**. I like how practical this approach is. If you applied it to say, the Old Testament God, it wouldn't shake out so well... this is an answer to the classical “Euthyphro's Dilemma”: "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" In other words, is good bigger than God? Mormonism answers with an emphatic yes. I love it.

41 Therefore, if a man **bringeth forth good works** he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever **bringeth forth evil works**, the same becometh a child of the devil, for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him. [Again, a clear and testable guideline.](#)

42 And whosoever doeth this must receive his wages of him; therefore, for his wages he receiveth death, as to things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works. [Virtuous and vicious cycles.... We become more or less sensitive to our conscience and the feelings of others depending on our choices.](#)

43 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should hear me, for I speak in the **energy of my soul**; for behold, I have spoken unto you **plainly** that ye cannot err, or have spoken according to the commandments of God.

44 For I am **called to speak after this manner**, according to the **holy order of God**, which is in Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come.

45 And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that **I know of these things myself**? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? [It is vital that we speak from our own personal conviction and experience.](#)

46 Behold, I say unto you they are **made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God**. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.

47 And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God.

48 I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true; and I say unto you, that I know that Jesus

Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of **grace**, and **mercy**, and **truth**. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who **steadfastly believeth** on his name.

49 And now I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must **repent and be born again**.

50 Yea, thus saith the Spirit: **Repent**, all ye ends of the earth, for the **kingdom of heaven is soon at hand**; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the Spirit saith: Behold the glory of the King of all the earth; and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men.

51 And also the Spirit saith unto me, yea, crieth unto me with a mighty voice, saying: Go forth and say unto this people—Repent, for except ye repent ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of heaven.

52 And again I say unto you, the Spirit saith: Behold, the ax is laid at the root of the tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire, yea, a fire which cannot be consumed, even an unquenchable fire. Behold, and remember, the Holy One hath spoken it. [Interesting that Alma is preaching this intense, apocalyptic urgency over 80 years before Jesus.](#)

53 And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you, **can ye withstand these sayings**; yea, can ye lay aside these things, and **trample the Holy One under your feet**; yea, can ye be **puffed up in the pride of your hearts**; yea, will ye still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches? [Trample the Holy One under your feet. Wow.](#)

54 Yea, will ye persist in **supposing that ye are better one than another**; yea, will ye persist in the **persecution** of your brethren, who humble themselves and do walk after the holy order of God, wherewith they have been brought into this church, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they do bring forth works which are meet for repentance—

55 Yea, and will you persist in **turning your backs upon the poor, and the needy, and in withholding your substance from them**? [Very clear what sins Alma is](#)

condemning: getting caught up in wealth and status instead of caring for those in need.

56 And finally, all ye that will persist in your wickedness, I say unto you that these are they who shall be hewn down and cast into the fire except they speedily repent.

57 And now I say unto you, all you that are desirous to follow the voice of the good shepherd, **come ye out from the wicked**, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things; and behold, their names shall be blotted out, that the names of the wicked shall not be numbered among the names of the righteous, that the word of God may be fulfilled, which saith: The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people;

58 For the names of the righteous shall be written in the **book of life**, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand. And now, my brethren, what have ye to say against this? I say unto you, if ye speak against it, it matters not, for the word of God must be fulfilled.

59 For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him.

60 And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed.

61 And now I, Alma, do command you in the language of him who hath commanded me, that ye observe to do the words which I have spoken unto you.

62 I speak by way of command unto you that belong to the church; and unto those who do not belong to the church I speak by way of **invitation**, saying: Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life.
Wow. Rhetorically powerful and hard hitting sermon.

Alma 6

1 And now it came to pass that after Alma had made an end of speaking unto the people of the church, which was established in the city of Zarahemla, he ordained **priests and elders**, by **laying on his hands** according to the **order of God**, to **preside** and **watch over** the church.

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2 And it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church who repented of their sins were baptized unto repentance, and were received into the church.

3 And it also came to pass that whosoever did belong to the church that did not repent of their wickedness and humble themselves before God—I mean those who were lifted up in the pride of their hearts—the same were **rejected**, and their names were blotted out, that their names were not numbered among those of the righteous.

4 And thus they began to establish the order of the church in the city of Zarahemla. [Good summary... it is important to note that the righteous and wicked do not always line up with Church membership. “Putting the Church in order” represents an attempt to more closely align those groups.](#)

5 Now I would that ye should understand that the **word of God was liberal unto all**, that none were deprived of the privilege of assembling themselves together to hear the word of God.

6 Nevertheless the children of God were commanded that they should gather themselves together oft, and **join in fasting and mighty prayer in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God.** [This can also backfire...](#)

7 And now it came to pass that when Alma had made these regulations he departed from them, yea, from the church which was in the city of Zarahemla, and went over upon the east of the river Sidon, into the valley of Gideon, there having been a city built, which was called the city of Gideon, which was in the valley that was called Gideon, being called after the man who was slain by the hand of Nehor with the sword.

8 And Alma went and began to declare the word of God unto the church which was established in the valley of Gideon, according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins, and the holy order by which he was called. And thus it is written. Amen.

Alma 7

1 Behold my beloved brethren, seeing that I have been permitted to come unto you, therefore I attempt to address you in my language; yea, by my own mouth, seeing that it is the first time that I have spoken unto you by the words of my mouth, I having

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been wholly confined to the judgment-seat, having had much business that I could not come unto you.

2 And even I could not have come now at this time were it not that the judgment-seat hath been given to another, to reign in my stead; and the Lord in much mercy hath granted that I should come unto you.

3 And behold, I have come having great hopes and much desire that I should find that ye had humbled yourselves before God, and that ye had continued in the supplicating of his grace, that I should find that ye were blameless before him, that I should find that ye were not in the awful dilemma that our brethren were in at Zarahemla.

4 But blessed be the name of God, that he hath given me to know, yea, hath given unto me the exceedingly great joy of knowing that they are established again in the way of his righteousness.

5 And I trust, according to the Spirit of God which is in me, that I shall also have joy over you; nevertheless I do not desire that my joy over you should come by the cause of so much afflictions and sorrow which I have had for the brethren at Zarahemla, for behold, **my joy cometh over them after wading through much affliction and sorrow.** [Zarahemla was the capital city.](#)

6 But behold, I trust that ye are not in a state of so much **unbelief** as were your brethren; I trust that ye are not lifted up in the **pride** of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have not set your hearts upon **riches** and the **vain things of the world**; yea, I trust that you do not worship idols, but that ye do worship the true and the living God, and that ye look forward for the remission of your sins, with an everlasting faith, which is to come.

7 For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people.

8 Behold, I do not say that he will come among us at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle; for behold, the Spirit hath not said unto me that this should be the case. Now as to this thing I do not know; but this much I do know, that the Lord God hath power to do all things which are according to his word. [Alma speaks with similar precision, noting what is known and not known, what he has asked and discovered, on the topic of life after death in Alma 40.](#)

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9 But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying—Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth.

10 And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God. Mary was born in Nazareth, about 90 miles north of Jerusalem... “overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost” raises interesting theological questions.

11 And he shall go forth, **suffering pains** and **afflictions** and **temptations** of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith **he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people**. What struck me deeply upon this reading this reading is that the Atonement actually *increases* the total pain experienced. Hear me out. Jesus experiencing all our suffering does not take away our suffering—we feel it too. We feel the impact of every trauma and mistake. The power of the Atonement is that we don’t feel alone, and can tap into its power and heal more efficiently from those traumas and suffering. It doesn’t take away the suffering, but provides a way forward. Paradoxically, that way forward comes from increase of suffering, having someone else suffer with us. This theological insight has powerful personal application: Sometimes the best thing we can do is to sit with someone, even suffer with them (which happens to be the etymology of both empathy and compassion). Let their hurt hurt us, and by sharing it, we make it more bearable. We can thus be little Saviors to each other. It is a paradox that increasing the pain makes the pain more bearable.

12 And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, **that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh**, that he may **know according to the flesh** how to succor his people **according to their infirmities**. Note the emphasis on “according to the flesh.” This is VITAL. As the next verse emphasizes, Christ had to and we must “know according to the flesh”. Mercy, knowledge, our ability to succor those in need.... For those to be effective, they *must* be experienced. We crave knowing we are not alone, but we long most for a specific type of company—the company of someone who knows what we have experienced, so they can be with us more fully.

Not just an observer, but someone who can share with us what we are going through. Someone invested and experienced.

13 Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. This is one of my favorite verses in all scripture, and it touches upon one of the most important, profound principles of life: the staggering, game changing difference between theoretical and experiential knowing. This experiential, transformative knowing... this is what it is all about, what life is all about. What makes it all worth it. I am so grateful for the challenges I have gone through, even though they felt like dying... I love and am grateful for the person I am, and it has been those hardest, most challenging, most painful moments that have most contributed. Or perhaps most memorably contributed... On this topic I think about the difference between C. S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed*. The former is Lewis' exploration of the idea of pain, quite intellectual. The latter is the wrenching cry of grief, visceral, immediate, and questioning, in the wake of the death of his wife Joy. *The Problem of Pain* tries to map out the answers. *Grief Observed* challenges, "Don't talk to me about the consolation of religion, or I shall suspect you do not understand."

14 Now I say unto you that ye must **repent**, and be **born again**; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

15 Yea, I say unto you come and **fear not**, and **lay aside every sin**, which **easily doth beset you**, which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism. *As limited humans, sin indeed does "easily beset" us!*

16 And whosoever doeth this, and keepeth the commandments of God from thenceforth, the same will remember that I say unto him, yea, he will remember that I have said unto him, he shall have eternal life, according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which testifieth in me.

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17 And now my beloved brethren, do you believe these things? Behold, I say unto you, yea, **I know that ye believe them**; and the way that I know that ye believe them is by the manifestation of the Spirit which is in me. And now because your faith is strong concerning that, yea, concerning the things which I have spoken, great is my joy. [This can be a gift of discernment, but we need to be really careful assuming we know what other people believe or feel.](#)

18 For as I said unto you from the beginning, that I had much desire that ye were not in the state of dilemma like your brethren, even so I have found that my desires have been gratified.

19 For **I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness**; I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God; yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight.

20 I perceive that it has been made known unto you, by the testimony of his word, that he cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, or from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round. [I will take Alma at his word that he can perceive all this \(I myself read people unusually well\), but we can also note that saying things like this can function as manipulation. “I know you know I am right. Just admit it.”](#)

21 And he doth not dwell in unholy temples; neither can filthiness or anything which is unclean be received into the kingdom of God; therefore I say unto you the time shall come, yea, and it shall be at the last day, that he who is filthy shall remain in his filthiness.

22 And now my beloved brethren, I have said these things unto you that I might **awaken you to a sense of your duty to God**, that ye may walk blameless before him, that ye may walk after the holy order of God, after which ye have been received. I believe in this—it is very important that we be “awakened to a sense of our duty”, since we naturally seek ease. We usually want to be comfortable more than we want to work to achieve our potential.

23 And now I would that ye should be **humble**, and be **submissive** and **gentle**; **easy to be entreated**; full of **patience** and **long-suffering**; being **temperate** in all things; being **diligent** in keeping the commandments of God at all times; **asking** for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always **returning**

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thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive. Important traits to ponder and apply.

24 And see that ye have **faith, hope, and charity**, and then ye will always **abound in good works**.

25 And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out.

26 And now my beloved brethren, I have spoken these words unto you according to the Spirit which testifieth in me; and **my soul doth exceedingly rejoice**, because of the exceeding diligence and heed which ye have given unto my word.

27 And now, may the peace of God rest upon you, and upon your houses and lands, and upon your flocks and herds, and all that you possess, your women and your children, according to your faith and good works, from this time forth and forever. And thus I have spoken. Amen.

Additional Reading: “Beware of Pride” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1989, 4–7; see also Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 3–7).

“Beware of Pride”

<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1989/04/beware-of-pride?lang=eng>

I am not going to annotate this talk, but it is one that I very much appreciate. My biggest takeaway from President Benson was that pride is by its nature **competitive**. A zero-sum game. That pride claims in order for us to be good and special and worth something, others must be bad and lesser. Pride puts down others in order to gain status.

I characterize humility as follows and try to live according to these principles:

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- 1) Own and celebrate what is, how you are, and don't claim to be any more or less than is accurate.
- 2) Celebrate others as much as yourself. Adopt a philosophy of abundance rather than scarcity and competitiveness (Benson's competitive point).
- 3) Always remain open to correction.

My beloved brethren and sisters, I rejoice to be with you in another glorious general conference of the Church. How grateful I am for the love, prayers, and service of the devoted members of the Church throughout the world.

May I commend you faithful Saints who are striving to flood the earth and your lives with the Book of Mormon. Not only must we move forward in a monumental manner more copies of the Book of Mormon, but we must move boldly forward into our own lives and throughout the earth more of its marvelous messages.

This sacred volume was written for us—for our day. Its scriptures are to be likened unto ourselves. (See [1 Ne. 19:23](#).)

The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that the Book of Mormon is the “record of a fallen people.” ([D&C 20:9](#).) Why did they fall? This is one of the major messages of the Book of Mormon. Mormon gives the answer in the closing chapters of the book in these words: “Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction.” ([Moro. 8:27](#).) And then, lest we miss that momentous Book of Mormon message from that fallen people, the Lord

warns us in the Doctrine and Covenants, “Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old.” ([D&C 38:39](#).)

I earnestly seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I strive to bring forth light on this Book of Mormon message—the sin of pride. This message has been weighing heavily on my soul for some time. I know the Lord wants this message delivered now.

In the premortal council, it was pride that felled Lucifer, “a son of the morning.” ([2 Ne. 24:12–15](#); see also [D&C 76:25–27](#); [Moses 4:3](#).) At the end of this world, when God cleanses the earth by fire, the proud will be burned as stubble and the meek shall inherit the earth. (See [3 Ne. 12:5](#), [3 Ne. 25:1](#); [D&C 29:9](#); [JS—H 1:37](#); [Mal. 4:1](#).)

Three times in the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord uses the phrase “beware of pride,” including a warning to the second elder of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, and to Emma Smith, the wife of the Prophet. ([D&C 23:1](#); see also [D&C 25:14](#); [D&C 38:39](#).)

Pride is a very misunderstood sin, and many are sinning in ignorance. (See [Mosiah 3:11](#); [3 Ne. 6:18](#).) In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride—it is always considered a sin. Therefore, no matter how the world uses the term, we must understand how God uses the term so we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby. (See [2 Ne. 4:15](#); [Mosiah 1:3–7](#); [Alma 5:61](#).)

Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing.

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means “hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.” It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us.

Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of “my will and not thine be done.” As Paul said, they “seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” ([Philip. 2:21.](#))

Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled. (See [Alma 38:12](#); [3 Ne. 12:30.](#))

The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. (See [Hel. 12:6.](#)) They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.

Another major portion of this very prevalent sin of pride is enmity toward our fellowmen. We are tempted daily to elevate ourselves above others and diminish them. (See [Hel. 6:17](#); [D&C 58:41.](#))

The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others. In the words of C. S. Lewis: “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. . . . It is the comparison that makes

you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone.” (*Mere Christianity*, New York: Macmillan, 1952, pp. 109–10.)

In the pre-earthly council, Lucifer placed his proposal in competition with the Father’s plan as advocated by Jesus Christ. (See [Moses 4:1–3](#).) He wished to be honored above all others. (See [2 Ne. 24:13](#).) In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God. (See [D&C 29:36](#); [D&C 76:28](#).)

The scriptures abound with evidences of the severe consequences of the sin of pride to individuals, groups, cities, and nations. “Pride goeth before destruction.” ([Prov. 16:18](#).) It destroyed the Nephite nation and the city of Sodom. (See [Moro. 8:27](#); [Ezek. 16:49–50](#).)

It was through pride that Christ was crucified. The Pharisees were wroth because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, which was a threat to their position, and so they plotted His death. (See [John 11:53](#).)

Saul became an enemy to David through pride. He was jealous because the crowds of Israelite women were singing that “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” ([1 Sam. 18:6–8](#).)

The proud stand more in fear of men’s judgment than of God’s judgment. (See [D&C 3:6–7](#); [D&C 30:1–2](#); [D&C 60:2](#).) “What will men think of me?” weighs heavier than “What will God think of me?”

King Noah was about to free the prophet Abinadi, but an appeal to his pride by his wicked priests sent Abinadi to the flames. (See [Mosiah 17:11–12](#).) Herod sorrowed at the request of his wife to behead John the Baptist. But his prideful

desire to look good to “them which sat with him at meat” caused him to kill John. ([Matt. 14:9](#); see also [Mark 6:26](#).)

Fear of men’s judgment manifests itself in competition for men’s approval. The proud love “the praise of men more than the praise of God.” ([John 12:42–43](#).) Our motives for the things we do are where the sin is manifest. Jesus said He did “always those things” that pleased God. ([John 8:29](#).) Would we not do well to have the pleasing of God as our motive rather than to try to elevate ourselves above our brother and outdo another?

Some prideful people are not so concerned as to whether their wages meet their needs as they are that their wages are more than someone else’s. Their reward is being a cut above the rest. This is the enmity of pride.

When pride has a hold on our hearts, we lose our independence of the world and deliver our freedoms to the bondage of men’s judgment. The world shouts louder than the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The reasoning of men overrides the revelations of God, and the proud let go of the iron rod. (See [1 Ne. 8:19–28](#); [1 Ne. 11:25](#); [1 Ne. 15:23–24](#).)

Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us. (See [2 Ne. 9:42](#).) There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up. It is manifest in so many ways, such as faultfinding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous.

Disobedience is essentially a prideful power struggle against someone in authority over us. It can be a parent, a priesthood leader, a teacher, or ultimately God. A proud person hates the fact that someone is above him. He thinks this lowers his position.

Selfishness is one of the more common faces of pride. “How everything affects me” is the center of all that matters—self-conceit, self-pity, worldly self-fulfillment, self-gratification, and self-seeking.

Pride results in secret combinations which are built up to get power, gain, and glory of the world. (See [Hel. 7:5](#); [Ether 8:9, 16, 22–23](#); [Moses 5:31](#).) This fruit of the sin of pride, namely secret combinations, brought down both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations and has been and will yet be the cause of the fall of many nations. (See [Ether 8:18–25](#).)

Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride.

Contention in our families drives the Spirit of the Lord away. It also drives many of our family members away. Contention ranges from a hostile spoken word to worldwide conflicts. The scriptures tell us that “only by pride cometh contention.” ([Prov. 13:10](#); see also [Prov. 28:25](#).)

The scriptures testify that the proud are easily offended and hold grudges. (See [1 Ne. 16:1–3](#).) They withhold forgiveness to keep another in their debt and to justify their injured feelings.

The proud do not receive counsel or correction easily. (See [Prov. 15:10](#); [Amos 5:10](#).) Defensiveness is used by them to justify and rationalize their frailties and failures. (See [Matt. 3:9](#); [John 6:30–59](#).)

The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success. They feel worthwhile as individuals if the numbers beneath them in achievement, talent, beauty, or intellect are large enough. Pride is ugly. It says, “If you succeed, I am a failure.”

If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men’s, we will have self-esteem.

Pride is a damning sin in the true sense of that word. It limits or stops progression. (See [Alma 12:10–11](#).) The proud are not easily taught. (See [1 Ne. 15:3, 7–11](#).) They won’t change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong.

Pride adversely affects all our relationships—our relationship with God and His servants, between husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee, teacher and student, and all mankind. Our degree of pride determines how we treat our God and our brothers and sisters. Christ wants to lift us to where He is. Do we desire to do the same for others?

Pride fades our feelings of sonship to God and brotherhood to man. It separates and divides us by “ranks,” according to our “riches” and our “chances for learning.” ([3 Ne. 6:12](#).) Unity is impossible for a proud people, and unless we are one we are not the Lord’s. (See [Mosiah 18:21](#); [D&C 38:27](#); [D&C 105:2–4](#); [Moses 7:18](#).)

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Think of what pride has cost us in the past and what it is now costing us in our own lives, our families, and the Church.

Think of the repentance that could take place with lives changed, marriages preserved, and homes strengthened, if pride did not keep us from confessing our sins and forsaking them. (See [D&C 58:43](#).)

Think of the many who are less active members of the Church because they were offended and their pride will not allow them to forgive or fully sup at the Lord’s table.

Think of the tens of thousands of additional young men and couples who could be on missions except for the pride that keeps them from yielding their hearts unto God. (See [Alma 10:6](#); [Hel. 3:34–35](#).)

Think how temple work would increase if the time spent in this godly service were more important than the many prideful pursuits that compete for our time.

Pride affects all of us at various times and in various degrees. Now you can see why the building in Lehi’s dream that represents the pride of the world was large and spacious and great was the multitude that did enter into it. (See [1 Ne. 8:26, 33](#); [1 Ne. 11:35–36](#).)

Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. Yes, pride *is* the universal sin, the great vice.

The antidote for pride is humility—meekness, submissiveness. (See [Alma 7:23](#).) It is the broken heart and contrite spirit. (See [3 Ne. 9:20](#); [3 Ne. 12:19](#); [D&C 20:37](#); [D&C 59:8](#); [Ps. 34:18](#); [Isa. 57:15](#); [Isa. 66:2](#).) As Rudyard Kipling put it so well:

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*The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.*

God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Alma said, “Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble.” ([Alma 32:16](#).)

Let us choose to be humble.

We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are. (See [D&C 38:24](#); [D&C 81:5](#); [D&C 84:106](#).)

We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement. (See [Jacob 4:10](#); [Hel. 15:3](#); [D&C 63:55](#); [D&C 101:4–5](#); [D&C 108:1](#); [D&C 124:61, 84](#); [D&C 136:31](#); [Prov. 9:8](#).)

We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us. (See [3 Ne. 13:11, 14](#); [D&C 64:10](#).)

We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service. (See [Mosiah 2:16–17](#).)

We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others. (See [Alma 4:19](#); [Alma 31:5](#); [Alma 48:20](#).)

We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently.

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We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God. (See [D&C 58:43](#); [Mosiah 27:25–26](#); [Alma 5:7–14, 49](#).)

We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives. (See [3 Ne. 11:11](#); [3 Ne. 13:33](#); [Moro. 10:32](#).)

Let us choose to be humble. We can do it. I know we can.

My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites. (See [4 Ne. 1:24–25](#).)

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: Pride *is* the great stumbling block to Zion.

We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering pride. (See [Alma 6:2–4](#); [Matt. 23:25–26](#).)

We must yield “to the enticings of the Holy Spirit,” put off the prideful “natural man,” become “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,” and become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble.” ([Mosiah 3:19](#); see also [Alma 13:28](#).)

That we may do so and go on to fulfill our divine destiny is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Scripture Chain: [N/A](#)
