

## Engaging Gospel Doctrine (**Episodes 200.1 and 200.2**)

### LESSON 26: ALMA 23-29

#### “Converted unto the Lord”

200<sup>th</sup> episode!!

As soon as I looked at the chapters I thought of:

The importance of celebrating ourselves and others (Alma 26)

God speaking to all nations... (Alma 29) such a vital principle.

Two minute take-home

- Retaining conversion through change of context (burying our weapons of war) (Once we overcome a particular problem and adopt a new way of being, we need to make sure our context supports our determination to live differently (a too easy example would be to imagine you were an alcoholic, so stay away from alcohol... but what about when our sins are pride, or anger, or laziness? What do we stay away from then? But focusing on \*context\* is very powerful)
- Burying our weapons and questions of pacifism. Jains vs. Sikhs. Most of us won't have to kill people in our lives [though those in the military and law enforcement are possible/unfortunate exceptions], but we all \*do\* need to decide how to approach conflict in our relationships and lives. (When do we engage and fight, and when do we let go? When do we intervene? It is challenging but important to ask ourselves when fighting will be productive, and how we can do it in a loving, healthy way. Yes, that is possible to fight in a loving, healthy way. My friend Randy Paul coined the term “heart to heart combat” which I love.
- Humility, repentance, conversion. Humility, repentance, conversion: As humans, we are unavoidably limited. We have blind spots. Even strengthening one area can make us blind in another. I think god intended us to need to rely on each other, to require us to practice listening to others and incorporating their perspective, making course corrections. It is only together that we can see.
- Celebrating ourselves and each other
- Seeking joy

- God at work among all nations (29:8 has MARVELOUS implications! the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word)

Return to the Reading

Conclusion (emphasis on the many paths to conversion)

Goal	Class members should better appreciate the principles of genuine repentance and how to maintain transformation of character, as well as appreciate how God works throughout history to redeem humanity.
Manual Goal	To encourage class members to strengthen their conversion and increase their desire to help others become converted.
EGD Goal	I still like my goal from four years ago...
Hook	Poignant, intense lesson full of emotion, high and lows, the death of tens of thousands, but also stories of resolute rebirth. Missionaries love these chapters for good reason, but we are going to go deeper
Overview	(note how many direct quotes we have!) 23: Origin of Anti-Nephi-Lehis 24:1-6: narrator sets stage for the battle 24:7-16: Anti-Nephi-Lehi addresses his people 24:17-25:17: Conversion through pacifism 26: Ammon boasts 27-28: Anti-Nephi-Lehis established in Jershon, tremendous battle (Are 28:8-14 narrated by Alma? Present tense indicates yes) 29: Alma's longing lament
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three main points and several other gems. Main ones are 1) "sore repentance" and committed conversion, 2) martyrdom, 3) God's actions among different peoples</li> <li>• <u>Conversion process:</u></li> <li>• Verse 6-7 extremely strong oath, examine personal examination (bring up Mosiah 3:19 and the idea of "stranger" more than "enemy", same word in Greek at least relating to ancient near eastern hospitality practices</li> <li>• Chapter 24: Do a close reading of Anti-Nephi-Lehi's speech (and Mormon's closing summary), some beautiful and powerful points good for personal application</li> <li>• Sore repentance vs. easy repentance, easy forgiveness vs. hard forgiveness (fully condemn those who hurt you and THEN forgive rather</li> </ul>

than brushing it aside)

- Verse 24:18 is especially powerful... you cannot surrender to a vacuum; you must surrender your destructive or unhealthy habits to constructive and healthy habits.
- Martyrdom (bring up Geoff's point about it being more about pacifism)

Go through the story carefully, and then point toward the discussion. Will ask the question, what are the problematic aspects of martyrdom? What is worth dying for? What about people in other traditions?

Tertullian, Passion of Perpetua and Felicity (2.1)

"After a few days there prevailed a report that we should be heard. And then my father came to me from the city, worn out with anxiety. He came up to me, that he might cast me down, saying, 'Have pity my daughter, on my grey hairs. Have pity on your father, if I am worthy to be called a father by you. If with these hands I have brought you up to this flower of your age, if I have preferred you to all your brothers, do not deliver me up to the scorn of men. Have regard to your brothers, have regard to your mother and your aunt, have regard to your son, who will not be able to live after you.

Lay aside your courage, and do not bring us all to destruction; for none of us will speak in freedom if you should suffer anything.' These things said my father in his affection, kissing my hands, and throwing himself at my feet; and with tears he called me not Daughter, but Lady. And I grieved over the grey hairs of my father, that he alone of all my family would not rejoice over my passion. And I comforted him, saying, 'On that scaffold whatever God wills shall happen. For know that we are not placed in our own power, but in that of God.' And he departed from me in sorrow.

- At the same time, there is some very powerful personal application here. See 26:25-26 for contrast. Take the high road, meet anger and violence with love. Jesus' message. Of course, we also need to protect ourselves, which brings us back to the discussion of martyrdom. When would God prefer we die for them rather than live?
- Salvation History
- Definition: How God acts within history to redeem humanity.
- In our chapters:
- 26:37 "God is mindful of every people"
- Alma 29:1-9 (Close reading)
- 1978 First Presidency Message, "God Loveth His Children"

**The First Presidency** (Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, Marion G. Romney)

Based upon ancient and modern revelation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gladly teaches and declares the Christian doctrine that all men and women are brothers and sisters, not only by blood relationship from common mortal progenitors but as literal spirit children of an Eternal Father.

The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.

The Hebrew prophets prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who should provide salvation for all mankind who believe in the gospel.

Consistent with these truths, we believe that God has given and will give to all peoples sufficient knowledge to help them on their way to eternal salvation, either in this life or in the life to come.

We also declare that the gospel of Jesus Christ, restored to His Church in our day, provides the only way to a mortal life of happiness and a fulness of joy forever. For those who have not received this gospel, the opportunity will come to them in the life hereafter if not in this life.

Our message therefore is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father. (“God’s Love for All Mankind,” *First Presidency Statement*, Feb. 15, 1978)

Other Gems:

- The benefits of death of thousands (26-27). Key theological point: God turning what happens to good rather than everything happening according to God’s will
- 25:15-15: A lesson that can be drawn from these verses parallels Jesus’ message while he was alive: Don’t confuse the outward expressions of religion with the inward states religion exists to facilitate.
- Chapter 26: The role of boasting and pride. Experience life fully, delight in excellence—as long as you don’t need to put others down to appreciate yourself. Enjoy excellence independent of source. We may be “nothing of ourselves, but we are god’s and gods.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27:16-19: Meditations on joy. Think about how much Mormon would have enjoyed this considering how hard his lifetime was.</li> </ul>
Other Comments/ Discussion Starters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-Nephi-Lehis: See this very interesting BCC article (<a href="http://bycommonconsent.com/2008/11/02/anti-nephi-lehi-tradition-sin-guilt-and-reconciliation/#more-4306">http://bycommonconsent.com/2008/11/02/anti-nephi-lehi-tradition-sin-guilt-and-reconciliation/#more-4306</a>), the original post and comments (particularly one by Kevin Barney) make two interesting suggestions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Anti-Nephi-Lehi” could mean not “image of” as Nibley suggested on the type/antitype parallel (of course, antitype is what is symbolized, not the symbol). So there are types of Christ, and Christ himself would be the antitype), but literally anti as it is used elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (anti-Christ). This name was a penitent brand as it were of this people acknowledging that they were against Nephi and Lehi and all they stood for</li> <li>2. Barney’s thought is it could be a variation of the Hebrew “Anshe” Nephi-Lehi which would mean “people of Nephi and Lehi”, taking on a new identity. Interesting reflections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23:18: bring up the “curse of God” idea</li> <li>• 25:6: family of origin issues, overcoming them (Cf. Elder Scott’s Conference talk on culture)</li> <li>• 27:10. Great faith, but also problematic? What about taking solutions to the Lord?</li> <li>• 28 : As Hardy notes, “Jershon” explicitly said to be a land of their inheritance does relate to the Hebrew root “yarash” (yod resh shin)</li> <li>• 27:27, exemplary character</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Concluding Points	In a sense, these chapters touch on the value and nature of life. Hope we can bury our weapons, replace our unhealthy behaviors with good, and see God’s hand in our lives and become God’s hand in others’

Research

Personal Reading	
Hardy’s Reader’s Edition	
Other Sources	