

370.2: May 24; Breakdowns and Breakthroughs (Come Follow Me Book of Mormon Week 19)

Mosiah 25-28

Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.

We can act rather than react. And even when we have acted poorly, we can change our stories. It is never too late.

Covid Check in Lesson

- The experiences of Alma the Elder vs. Alma the younger
- The prison of our perceptions (Gospel is so individual, we are each going through our own unique experiences, even if we are in the same place doing the same thing. Life is so sacredly unique)
- Conversion/paradigm shift/metanoia
- We can't always decide our circumstances, but we can decide our responses
- Can't change the past. But you can change your stories about the past
- To save your life by losing it (specifically losing attachment to your life as it is now. One of the very most important lessons in life)
- Conclusion

Covid Check in

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10156911517672130&set=a.10150239861297130&type=3&theater>

(Facebook post from an ICU doctor that I found balanced and helpful)

I rarely post anything and don't always want to talk about this, but I thought to post my thoughts on questions that have come up recently. I work as an intensivist (ICU doctor) and pulmonologist (lung doctor). Sorry for being wordy!

1. Should I wear a mask? It's too bad that this has become politicized. Most of my day in the hospital is spent wearing a regular mask even when seeing many of the COVID positive patients. We only wear the heavy-duty stuff during aerosolizing procedures. Regular masks are designed to block respiratory droplets that can carry virus. (So when that guy sneezes or coughs in the aisle next to you...) Are they 100% effective? No! But they are also not 0% effective. I choose to wear a mask in public. If we can (of our own free will and choice) prevent the transmission of the virus by 40,60, 80% (or whatever it may be) by wearing a mask in public, that can be a huge help. This can help the reopenings to be more successful and safe (which everyone actually wants). Don't do it for yourself. You are doing it for your grandma, frail neighbor with chronic illness, cousin getting chemotherapy, or a father of 4 who might end up dying in ICU. The world war 2 generation banded together in an impressive show of unity

toward a good cause (including responding when the government asked). It took major sacrifices. I think we can do the same (and still preserve our freedom).

2. What else will help to prevent spreading the virus? The virus is transmitted mostly through respiratory droplets, occasionally through aerosolization, and when someone touches a contaminated surface and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. Wash your hands especially after going out into public. Use hand sanitizer. Stop touching your face so much. Keep your workspace clean. Wait for the pandemic to finish before testing your immune system.

3. Do you think we should be reopening? We were going to have to reopen at some point. I completely understand that there are serious consequences (mental, physical, economic, medical) to not reopening, so I agree it must happen with caution. If we all choose to take precautions in public, these openings stand a better chance of being successful and staying open. We need to use common sense, open systematically, and protect the vulnerable. There are likely to be more COVID hospitalizations and deaths as this happens, unfortunately, but we can lower the curve by enacting these practices.

4. Do you trust the CDC and Fauci? I do trust Dr. Fauci. He has put in years of service for our country and I think he has good intentions for the nation. I do not believe him to be part of a conspiracy. I trust the CDC and think that overall they have provided good guidance though they have not been perfect. Take a look at their website if you haven't.

5. What is it like to work with coronavirus patients? I'm glad this is mostly a mild viral illness for those who get it. However, I get to see all the bad cases. And they are bad, my friends. They are not all old, frail, or have a chronic illness. I have seen patients in the 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and above in the ICU with this. Most end up on ventilators and they stay on ventilators often for weeks. I put someone on a ventilator almost every day last week. It's not hard to see how a hospital could run out of rooms or vents but luckily we are not there yet (here in Utah). I have seen grown men cry trying to decide whether to die alone in the ICU or try to get by on a ventilator. I have seen patients appear to get better then suddenly die. I have seen patients sitting for weeks on ventilators without getting better and get a tracheostomy. It started off slow but we are now seeing more each week. These patients take A LOT of physical and mental labor. This is not like the flu, I guarantee it. We are doing our best for them. Yes there are many who have or will recover and lead normal lives. Death is not the only outcome to think about. There will be many who survive severe illness and will never be the same. It can lead to chronic lung disease, disability, need for oxygen, or the need to live in a care facility for the rest of one's life. We are expecting more and will continue to work hard for them.

6. Do any treatments work? I have used hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin, convalescent plasma, tocilizumab, vitamin C, zinc. My general sense from using these is that none are "the cure". I have not seen any consistent effectiveness with any of these, though we continue to try them. Hopefully more quality studies will shed light on this. We don't have remdesivir yet and though there may be some improved outcomes with it, it is also not the cure.

7. Would you get the vaccine? Yes! My family and I would gladly get a safe effective vaccine. Smallpox killed nearly 1/2 billion people before a vaccine, and now it's gone. I've seen patients on chronic ventilators and crippled from polio before the vaccine was available. Many of us would not have existed on earth without vaccines because our parents or grandparents would have died before making us. I agree that vaccines have rare risks and adverse effects, but the

benefits of vaccines almost always outweigh the small risk. Getting a vaccine will boost herd immunity quickly and allow everyone to go back to school, church, work, etc.

Stay safe my friends! Be kind. Take precautions. Open with caution. Protect those at high risk. Support each other. Unite the political divide. Be understanding of differences and look for common ground. Let's get through this.

Lesson

- The experiences of Alma the Elder vs. Alma the younger (time with Isaac)

As I discussed in my reissued lesson, I think it is vital that we go deeper than the inspiring "their burdens were made light" narrative (which is indeed inspiring and true, but not the same for everyone)

24:8: And now it came to pass that Amulon began to exercise authority over Alma and his brethren, and began to persecute him, and cause that his children should persecute their children.

24:14-15: 14 And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions.

15 And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord.

(This was Alma the Elder's experience, but I don't think it was Alma the Younger's)

Alma 5:

- The prison of our perceptions (Gospel is so individual, we are each going through our own unique experiences, even if we are in the same place doing the same thing. Life is so sacredly unique)

Predictive Brain:

"A sense of uncertainty about the future generates a strong [threat or 'alert' response](#) in your limbic system. Your brain detects something is wrong, and your ability to focus on other issues diminishes. Your brain doesn't like uncertainty - it's like a type of pain, something to be avoided. Certainty on the other hand feels rewarding, and we tend to steer toward it, even when it might be better for us to remain uncertain." (and as soon as we resolve uncertainty, even if we are wrong, we feel a sense of reward/accomplishment) We are addicted to the illusion of certainty and need to train ourselves to embrace/deal with uncertainty and complexity

Dan Ariely and "Cognitive illusions", power of priming (the way we are presented with information overwhelmingly impacts our response)

The only way to overcome the hallucination we live in is to live in a constant state of humble repentance. In other words, live the gospel.

- Conversion/paradigm shift/metanoia

Alma the Younger and Paul both experienced a radical shift in the way they interpreted and even perceived the world.

Alma's group: There were a LOT of them! "Not half so numerous"? (26:5) This is one of many interesting indications that there was more diversity and conflict among the Nephites than Mormon's account as we have it lets on.

(Note that Alma struggling with the welfare of others is what leads to his own assurance of salvation. Conversion/sanctification is a balance of us improving our relationship with god and gaining experiential knowledge of God's promises, and then using our converted souls to serve others, which then increases our own conversation. Virtuous cycle.

Repentance, forgiveness, and boundary maintenance:

Repentance: Vital process for us all, continually updating

Forgiveness: is for OURSELVES even more than the person or people who hurt us. Forgiveness heals our soul

Boundary maintenance: is for the community's health (excommunication and discipline)

Admonish and were admonished, like challenge and be challenged by :)

(Review Mosiah 27)

Then as the pattern goes, as soon as Alma and the sons of Mosiah are converted, they want to dedicate their lives to doing good and serving others

- We can't always decide our circumstances, but we can decide our responses

This might be the very most important lesson of life. This is why we quote Victor Frankl so much and find inspiration from those who have been through the hardest experiences.

(This is tricky, because our brain will work as hard as possible to convince you you don't have power, because accepting responsibility is scary and challenging. It's hard work. But the most rewarding work there is)

Victor Frankl:

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

- Can't change the past. But you can change your stories about the past

One of my biggest lessons from hospice and prison is that we will literally die before admitting we are wrong. Our stories about ourselves are our idols that we defend most passionately. This is why the antidote is to have a "broken heart and contrite spirit" and "being like a child", having an open mind, accepting correction, moving through life humbly.

"The story I am telling myself is" has become one of my most powerful tools

Note that Alma did this radically.

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.

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?

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.

Alma's hardest experience becomes his most important pivotal experience. In my experience this is the norm, because our most difficult experiences provide the most powerful fuel. The challenge is knowing how to convert challenge and trauma into growth. This also teaches us it is never too late. Even if our reaction is not what it should have been, we can learn from it, update, and change our stories around it.

- To save your life by losing it (specifically losing attachment to your life as it is now. One of the very most important lessons in life)

Mark 8:35-37: Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life on account of me and the gospel will save it. What will it profit a person to gain the whole world but lose his life? Or what will a person give in exchange for his life?

Need nothing. Savor everything. I literally feel that even life and survival are optional (not in a morbid way, just realistic), which has been powerfully freeing.

- Conclusion

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-brain-work/200910/hunger-certainty>