Scheduled for study Mar 16-22, 2020. The allegory of the olive trees is probably either one of your favorite chapters in all the Book of Mormon or you dread it like you dread Isaiah chapters. This chapter is all about God's love and concern for His children, and how much He is willing to do to help us come home.

Day 1

Jacob 5-6 - What is an allegory?

Reading the scriptures invites revelation. So as you read Jacob 5-7, seek guidance from the Spirit to help you and your family. What messages does the Lord have for you?

The best kind of questions are those considered to be open ended. There is no one exact right answer. There are usually multiple possibilities, all of which may answer the question in one form or another. An allegory is like an open-ended question in that it doesn't usually have one and only one right answer to its meaning. That is what makes it valuable as a teaching tool. This allows learning to take place, because as you discuss the story with others, you can see multiple points of view and additional possible interpretations. This can be distressing for some, but liberating for others. That is the nature of an allegory.

As an example, the manual specifically states the Lord of the vineyard is Christ. I had always assumed the Lord of the vineyard to be our Father, since He is the head of the family and we are His children. I viewed the allegory as an example of how involved He really is in everything that happens in mortality, and a demonstration of why He takes

direct responsibility for everything that happens among the nations of the earth. In the allegory the servant acts in an intercessory role. When the Lord wants to burn the whole thing down the servant steps in and pleads for the vineyard and asks for another chance to save the fruit.

The allegory with the Father as the Lord and the Savior as the servant works. But it also works with the Savior as the Lord and the prophets as the intercessory servants. Don't our prophets stand between us and our Savior pleading our case as his representatives to all the earth? So does it really matter which way we think of the story? Either way works, and being able to see it from both perspectives demonstrates just how united the Father and the Son are in what they do to help bring all of God's children back home.

Another part of the story that can be seen in a couple of ways is the fruit. If the fruit only refers to which kind of people are being referenced then, as the manual points out, the good fruit from the tame tree represents the covenant people, while the wild fruit represents gentile nations. But what if good fruit represents God's covenant people when they are obedient and the wild fruit represents Israel when it is in a state of apostasy? A case can be made for both views. In fact, when it comes to some parts of the story both interpretations could be used simultaneously.

It is important to remember that, like a parable, any story that says one thing, but represents hidden truths, can be stretched too far. At some point every allegory or parable will break down if we try to make it represent more than it was intended to talk about. The wise will learn to see when the story its being stretched too thin by errant interpretations and is coming apart at the seams.

Day 2

Jacob 5; 6:3-5 - Jesus Christ is the Lord of the vineyard.

Reading the scriptures invites revelation. So as you read Jacob 5-7, seek guidance from the Spirit to help you and your family. What messages does the Lord have for you?

As you consider the verses the manual suggests from Jacob 4 and Jacob 6, think about how they relate to the allegory or story of the Lord's olive vineyard. I have included a

link to the article I wrote on grafting in the allegory the last time we studied the Book of Mormon. This link also includes a quick demonstration of grafting that is under 2 minutes long. As I watched the wrapping and protection process, it occurred to me that this is how gently and carefully we should be treating those who come into the gospel or come back to the gospel. They are very vulnerable for a while, and we need to be very supportive until they gain enough strength to spiritually care for themselves.

BoM Lesson 13 – Allegory of the Olive Trees

I am writing this lesson help specifically for those who are not familiar with what grafting is and how it works. This allegory, or story that teaches a lesson, is much easier to understand once you comprehend what happens when ...
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Day 3

Jacob 5:61-75 - God invites me to help Him gather His children.

Reading the scriptures invites revelation. So as you read Jacob 5-7, seek guidance from the Spirit to help you and your family. What messages does the Lord have for you?

Jacob 5 mentions one of the greatest responsibilities we have as members of the Church. It is a responsibility uniquely ours, possessed by no other generation from the beginning of time. As you read the story of the Lord and His servant, notice that no one else is working in the vineyard with them. It isn't until the last time the Lord goes down into the vineyard that He calls other servants to come and help gather in the harvest. These other servants mentioned are the members of the Lord's Church in the last day - Us!

We have been reserved to come to earth at this period of time to help the Lord gather His people back into the covenant fold. And we are, indeed, few in number, especially when compared to the number of people on the earth today. What a privilege it is to

have been withheld to come in a day when we can directly participate in the great work of salvation for all the nations of the earth, on both sides of the veil. We get to see the process of the restoration unfold before us as the Lord prepares for the great day of judgment when all that cannot be gathered in will be burned with fire.

This is not the generations of our ancestors. Ancient Israel was told to avoid contact with outsiders, and to keep to themselves. Their focus was on perpetuating and growing the family into a great nation. Today we are no longer isolationists, huddling together and avoiding all others. Now is the time when the Lord is sending us out of our homes and out into our communities to listen to the Spirit in our efforts to find those whom the Lord has prepared for the gospel message. Our missionaries are in most of the nations of the earth, and we are commanded to open our mouths, get online, and to speak up about the gospel of Christ to anyone who will listen.

I can't emphasize enough the sacredness of this privilege and the weightiness of this responsibility to help the Lord bring in His children. To help us carry it out the Lord has given us power and authority in the priesthood that is unparalleled in any other generation of time. We have greater temple blessings to help us with our work than any other recorded generation in the history of the world. We are indeed a generation of priests, blessed with great spiritual power, because we have the gift of the Holy Ghost to teach us what the Lord would have us do.

Day 4

Jacob 7:1-23 - I can stand strong when others challenge my faith.

Reading the scriptures invites revelation. So as you read Jacob 5-7, seek guidance from the Spirit to help you and your family. What messages does the Lord have for you?

A red herring is an expression used to describe a deliberate misdirect, to throw someone off the scent of that which they seek, and to send them in another direction. Satan is a master at throwing us red herrings to distract us from what is most important, and intellectuals bent on destroying someone's faith use red herrings frequently to prevent us from exercising our faith to stay strong in the gospel.

The use of distracting statements to destroy our faith is easy enough to do. In the Book of Mormon Sherem used logic and reason to try to extract "proof" from Jacob. This is something intellectuals do all the time. Since faith is based on evidence that cannot be seen or currently proven, because faith is based on spiritual knowledge that has been revealed to us by the Spirit, we can't have the same kind of conversation about spiritual things you can have about something with physical properties, like that of a crime scene, or something that would happen in a courtroom.

This inability to provide proof to the unbeliever of spiritual things is what damages the faith of so many people. They temporarily forget that they didn't get their testimony of something through physical proof, so when someone demands logic and a demonstration of power, we sometimes panic, because we cannot provide it. When Jacob was presented with those very arguments, he recognized they were just red herrings, statements to throw him off track and distract him from what was really important. He saw through the distractions Sherem provided, and stuck to bearing his testimony. You can't argue with what someone knows to be true. All you can do is testify of what you know, and let the Spirit do the rest. This is why Jacob could not be shaken in his faith. No amount of flowery words or brilliant logic could change what Jacob already knew from his own dealings with the Spirit.

Scripture Study and Family Home Evening

Jacob 6:4-7 - Cleaving

Cleave is an interesting word. Depending on how it is used it can either mean to cut through, to separate, to split, or it can mean to stick together, to remain faithful. Weird, huh? This means we have to think about which definition we are needing when we hear someone say something about cleaving. In the allegory we are studying how the scions, the little branch tips being grafted into another tree, need to cleave to the new mother tree. And likewise, the mother tree must successfully cleave to the new branch. This means there can be no air between the scion and the tree, there must be a complete bonding take place so the new branch is treated and responds just like a native branch would respond.

Think back on how the Lord has treated His people, Israel. He performed miracles for them in Egypt, and fed and lead them for 40 years through the wilderness, providing shade in the day, and water when they were thirsty. He was cleaving unto them. But

Israel kept rejecting Him. They kept trying to cleave their relationship with God so they could worship other Gods. Yet time and time again the Lord worked tirelessly to bring them close to Him and bind Himself to them through covenant relationships.

Today this is how we can bind ourselves to God. He has given us covenants that puts us into a special position of closeness with Him. Because we have made covenants with Him through His priesthood power, we have been given the gift of the Holy Ghost. We have a member of the Godhead to guide us, teach us, testify to us of truth, and to help us understand spiritual things that cannot be understood in any other way.

Is it difficult for us to cleave unto God as He has cleaved unto us? Either of us can sever or cleave asunder our relationship, but it is never God who does it. Once He has promised to serve and bless us, only we can sever those ties. To keep those ties we must obey the commandments, take the sacrament each week, and remember Christ every day of our lives so we can have the Spirit with us to teach us and guide us in becoming more like Christ.

Here is a PDF of this week's study material.
Print it out for greater convenience in your studies.

BoM Week 12

(Jacob 5-7)