



Week 25 is scheduled for study June 17-23, 2024. Jesus made our redemption possible, but the final redemption of a soul comes through personal choices made by me and by you.

Day 1

Alma 8 - My efforts to share the gospel of Jesus Christ require patience.

Sharing the gospel can be a confusing experience. We are naturally concerned for the welfare of others, so we want to share the gospel with them. Sharing the gospel comes in two parts. There is the part where I share the message with someone who needs to hear it then there is the part where I am honoring covenants I have personally made by doing the sharing. I am not held responsible for the choices of those with whom I share the gospel, but I am held responsible for whether or not I do the sharing. I will explain these comments by referring back to the reading assignment for this week.

Alma went to Ammonihah and did his level best to convince the people that repentance was in their best interest. They spit on him, called him names, and cast him out of their city. They wanted none of what he was "peddling." As Alma headed toward the city of Gideon, assuming he would never set foot in Ammonihah again, an angel appeared and commanded him to go back. What was the first thing the angel said to him? The angel's message is found in Alma 8:15.

15 Blessed art thou, Alma; therefore, lift up thy head and rejoice, for thou hast great cause to rejoice; for thou hast been faithful in keeping the commandments of God from the time which thou receivedst thy first message from him. Behold, I am he that delivered it unto you.

As sad as Alma was over the rejection of his message by the inhabitants of the city of Ammonihah, the Angel was pointing out to him that the important thing is that he had been faithful and obedient in keeping the commandments of God. That obedience was what was saving his soul. Therefore, because he had proven his obedience and diligence to God and His work, Alma's soul was saved.

Funny thing about agency. We can preach all day long, but it is up to each person to choose. We are not saved by the choices someone else makes in life, but by the choices we make. This is the message of the angel to Alma. Alma was faithful, therefore he had personal cause to rejoice. His soul would have rejoiced more had others also chosen to repent and be obedient, but what was most important to Alma was that Alma was faithful and repentant. So while God was going to curse and destroy the people of Ammonihah, Alma had cause to rejoice. Why? Because of his own choices. Alma being grateful for his own salvation doesn't lessen his sorrow over the disobedience and rejection of the people, but the angel's message showed him that their choices didn't have anything to do with his personal salvation and exaltation that was to come.

The manual suggests we make a meme or poster "that can inspire you (and others) to keep trying." This is mine.



Day 2

Alma 9:14-23 - God's blessings come with great responsibility.

I was reading in a book about the Second Coming recently. The author pointed out that it is common for Christians to focus on all the negatives about the event rather than all the positives. After all, God will pour out His Spirit upon the whole world to bless His Saints with ways to perform His work. He has promised to protect His people and to give them great spiritual blessings that haven't been available to any generation of the past since the days of Adam. That's pretty special!

Along with all these blessings come the included responsibilities to preach His gospel to the nations of the earth, to represent Christ in our personal conduct everywhere we are, and at all times. Great privileges and great responsibilities always go together. It would be foolish of the Lord to give His people great blessings, but require nothing in return for those blessings. Most of us would become entitled brats.

Alma is reminding the people of Ammonihah that the Nephite people as a whole owe a lot to the Lord for He has blessed them above all the nations of the earth. He reiterates the Lord's words that if, after all they have been blessed with, the Nephites fall into transgressions and embrace evil, God would rather see them wiped off the face of the earth than to continue on in their sinful ways. The Lamanites have an excuse for their behavior - the traditions of their forefathers. But the Nephites have no excuse. When they embrace evil it is because they have rejected God and His ways deliberately. They simply know too much to be excused for that kind of behavior.

We find ourselves in the same condition as the Nephites. God has given us so much, has blessed us with so much that to forsake His commandments and embrace the ways of the world will bring down upon us the judgments of God.

Day 3

Alma 11-12 - God's plan is a plan of redemption.

Here is a thought that finally materialized for me just within the last 24 hours. Have you noticed that people in the Book of Mormon become so angry with the prophets

because they come to the people and tell them they need to repent and turn to God, obey His words, and keep His commandments? The people are offended that someone, anyone, has the temerity (excessive boldness or rashness) to tell them they must do something commanded of them by some unknown person or face consequences defined and laid out by someone they don't even remember knowing. Satan's whole premise is that we should be able to do whatever we want without consequences. Taking that one drink won't hurt us. Smoking that one joint won't addict us. This lie won't even be noticed, but it will save my hide in this moment. I'll just eat one more of those, because they taste so good. The list is endless. We discount the consequences of our actions, because we don't want to think about the penalties we will have to pay in the end. We often just can't see that far ahead.

Sometimes we don't believe there will be any penalties to be paid for our choices, and sometimes we just prefer not to think about possible future penalties here and now. We can deal with whatever happens later. While we are in the middle of enjoying our freedom to be and do whatever we want, some person comes along and tells us that God says that what we are doing is wrong. We will have to answer to Him for our behavior, our attitudes, and our intent. Who gives Him the right to tell me what I have to do? This is largely how the world feels and thinks, and it is becoming more pronounced by the day.

What the world is missing is that there is an actual person who created everything in the universe. He also created us. Everything is done according to His rules and laws. We have no say in those laws, for they existed long before we received our bodies. There is a stated purpose in Him sending us to earth. We are here to prove ourselves to Him, that we will be obedient and learn to trust Him and love Him as He loves us. He has so many plans for elevating us above and beyond anything we can currently imagine. But His ability to do all that He hopes for us depends on our cooperation in the plan He presented to us and we agreed to before coming here. We knew there would be laws and consequences for all of our behavior, and knowing what we knew then, we agreed willingly and gleefully for the opportunity to come to earth and prove ourselves. We knew then what the purpose was behind this whole process called redemption and exaltation.

Now we are on earth. Our memories of the past life are gone. We must learn to live by faith, which was one of the major tests for why we came here. Some of us believe God's

servants who tell us of His plan for our salvation, while others just choose to ignore that plan, and still others rebel and fight against it tooth and nail. Satan is here to derail us and turn us against our loving Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. If he can destroy our willingness to accept their ruling authority, and better yet, if he can get us to set ourselves up as the ruling authority in the universe then there is little chance we will ever fulfill the Father's wishes to have us return home and receive the exaltation for which all of this mortal experience was created to achieve in the first place.

We were not there when Adam and Eve fell from grace. Only they have that memory, but they are long since dead and their memories and writings have all but been lost in the mists of time. We are expected to trust and have faith that their fall from grace created the conditions that required us to be redeemed from that fall. Only a Redeemer could elevate us back into a state of grace that only Adam and Eve ever experienced first hand. We must have faith in the cause of the fall, and faith in the process of our redemption. There is that word faith again.

All that Jesus came for was to give us hope in our future by erasing the penalties of our past. Because of Adam and Eve's fall from grace death entered the world, carnality became everyone's default state of being, and we were cut off from God's presence forever. But Christ's sacrifice and resurrection corrected all that. The covenants he gives us, the priesthood power shared with us from God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost who teaches us of eternal things, these are all meant to save us from the condition the whole world has been born into. But it can't do its intended saving if we refuse to put our faith in Christ and in the process he has outlined for our salvation. We must be willing to believe, repent, obey, and live according to his laws if we want the blessings he has promised us, those same blessings we were so happy about before being born into mortality.

Day 4

Alma 12:8-18 - If I do not harden my heart, I can receive more of the word of God.

"Some people may wonder why Heavenly Father doesn't make everything known to us." We need to consider and remember that what we know we are held responsible for knowing. When we know a thing, if we don't live accordingly, we are punished for not

living what we knew to be right. (Refer to the commentary on Day 2 that talks about consequences.) God loves us too much to burden us with knowledge we may not even want to learn. So the rule is, if we want to know more we must live up to what we already know then He will give us more. But if we choose to be free of that knowledge then He will remove our understanding of those truths over time, so we aren't held liable any longer for having known something we weren't willing to live by. This method is a mercy to us from a loving Father.

Does God want us to come to know and understand all things? Of course He does. He wants us to become exalted and live the same kind of life He lives. But He won't violate the laws of agency He has given to us. We are in control of how much we are given in the end. The more willing we are to live what we know, the more He is willing to give us. The less willing we are to live what we have learned the less He allows us to have. He really isn't interested in punishing His children, which is what He will have to do if He gives us knowledge we aren't willing to live by. He wants us to be happy. If knowing almost nothing of Him is what we choose then He is willing to live by our choice. This is why we are told in the scriptures that we are free to choose eternal life or eternal death. On the surface we would all say, "Who in their right mind would choose death?" But when we reject the knowledge of God offered us that is just what we are choosing, spiritual death, permanent separation from God's presence.

Personal Study

Encourage participation

There are few things in learning more deadly to a student than having to sit through a lecture that feels like it has nothing to do with you and your life. It is very difficult to be excited about something like that. But if you are asked meaningful questions, and have time to ponder your answer before needing to give it, if you can talk about how the subject bores you (and why it bores you) or how it interests you, you are far more likely to become engaged in the topic, even a boring one. We all enjoy sharing our personal views on a subject, especially when the teacher treats our view of the subject with respect.

If you are leading a class or having a private chat about a gospel topic, consider exploring the ways in which your students or your companions feel about a subject. Do

they see things the same way you do? You might be surprised at how people think about something you consider to be a basic tenant of our religion. Some people who you think are well versed may have gaping holes in their understanding, or they have been taught to see a subject in a way that is very foreign to what you were taught or have come to understand.

The blessing of being able to discuss the gospel with others is in the process of learning how everyone sees the individual principles and doctrines of salvation. These differences of opinion and understanding is why it is so important that we have the scriptures handy to refer to. Can we back up our views with scriptures and talks from the leaders of the Church? What do the prophets teach about the subject you are discussing?

Spending time to talk and explore doctrine will slow down what you can cover in a class, but everyone will leave far more edified from a good discussion than they will from a speedy lecture about which they have no input.

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