

2 Nephi 3–5

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The path of unhappiness is paved with great expectations.

Last handout: Love begins with attraction, appreciation, and affection. Within the 1st year or so, we become used to our spouses and there is less attraction, appreciation, and affection. When preferences become expectations or rules, we are on the path of unhappiness. We find fault with our spouses when they do not meet our expectations. Disappointment, depreciation, and disaffection are common. My efforts to get my spouse to do my will lead to resentment, resistance, rebellion, retaliation, and revenge. This leads to an emotional or legal divorce.

1. Finding Fault with God

God is all loving, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

An ex-minister found fault with God and the garden story. God is unwise for not guarding the tree, unjust for cursing Adam's innocent descendents, vindictive for making child-bearing painful, and not omniscient because he asks where Adam was.

"Laman and Lemuel ... did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them" (1 Ne 2:12).

2. Agency: ability or authority to act

Free agency: aware of two or more choices and able to act.

The phrase, "free agency," is not in the scriptures.

Moral agency (D&C 101:78): aware of good and evil choices

How did God give agency in the Garden of Eden (Moses 7:32)?

1. Agency: Body (a) desires of flesh and (b) able to eat
2. Free agency: Many choices for food "freely eat of every tree"
War in heaven was not so we could have hamburgers our way!
3. Moral agency:
 - a. (Moses 6:56) Know good from evil
 - b. (Moses 3:17) Gave commandment; free to choose for self
 - c. (2 Ne 2:15) "It must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter."
 - d. (D&C 29:39; 2 Ne 2:16) Tempted/enticed by Satan
 - e. Fruit within reach (unguarded)→possible; Left them alone

Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments

ye shall prosper in the land;

and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments

ye shall be cut off from my presence. (2 Ne 4:4)

Some assume this means bad things should only happen to bad people. Like Laman, we can use our agency to find fault with God or others when bad things happen (e.g., divorce, bad investment).

3. Finding Fault with Self

There are no mistakes, only learning opportunities.

When a young man was injured in an accident, his girlfriend blamed herself because it would not have happened if he had not been coming to see her.

When some missionaries were seriously injured, their mission president blamed himself for not being worthy enough to have received a revelation to prevent it. He must be bad because bad things only happen to bad people. He felt he was bad for feeling attracted to people other than his wife. Since God had punished him for these bad feelings, he acted on them, committed adultery, and was excommunicated.

When children go astray or get injured, some parents blame themselves for not being better parents, worthy enough to receive spiritual warnings, or wise enough to follow them.

Some counselors encourage fathers of gay sons to blame self. As travel agents for guilt trips, they are not helpful or hopeful.

In New Testament times, repentance meant to change and to return to God by making and keeping covenants. After the apostles were taken away, repentance came to mean penance or self-punishment. Converts from Catholic or protestant traditions often believe or teach similar ideas. Instead of using the "confess and forsake" criteria for repentance (D&C 58:43), one bishop said a member had not sorrowed enough (penance) to return to full fellowship.

4. Learn wisdom ("soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends." SOED) revelation

Good judgment comes from experience, and Experience comes from bad judgment.

We are on earth to learn by experience to discern good from evil.

Would my stories be on the Laman or Nephi channel?

When Nephi had a problem (Laban, build ship), he watched "God prepared a way for others" movies. After reaching the promised land, he replayed "God prepared a way for me" movie

Why is it never too late to have a happy childhood?

Because we can reinterpret it today like Nephi instead Laman.

5. Psalm of Nephi (2 Ne 4:15–35)

¹⁶ Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.

¹⁷ Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am!

Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

In Hebrew scripture, parallelism was used to repeat the same idea in different words (heart sorroweth=soul grieveth; flesh=iniquities). I have formatted Nephi's psalm to show parallel and repeated ideas.

¹⁸ I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me. ¹⁹ And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins;

Nephi is watching a "guilt trip" program. IF he continues watching this channel, how will he feel and act?

My wife used to hate going to church on Mother's Day. When one said mothers are wonderful, she replayed guilt-trip movies of her being a bad mom or wife and of feeling so frustrated with disobedient kids that she wanted to leave home.

When I am replaying old guilt trip movies, I can continue to be unhappy or I can change my viewing or doing.

Notice how Nephi switches to a "tender mercy" program.

nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

²⁰ My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

²¹ He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh.

"touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh" (1 Ne 17:48) the Spirit, joy

²² He hath *confounded mine enemies*, [who? Laman & Lemuel] unto the causing of them to quake before me.
²³ Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, and he hath given me *knowledge by visions* in the night-time. ²⁴ And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and *angels* came down and *ministered unto me*.
²⁵ And upon the wings of his *Spirit* hath my body been carried away upon *exceedingly high mountains*. And mine eyes have *beheld great things*, yea, even too great for man; therefore I was bidden that I should not write them.
²⁶ O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men [PM=me] in so much mercy,

The Printer's Manuscript [PM] of the Book of Mormon has "visited me" instead of visited "men." The typesetter changed it to "men."

^A **why** should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow,
^B and my flesh waste away, and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?
^{C a 27} And **why** should I yield to sin, because of my flesh?
^b Yea, **why** should I give way to temptations, that the evil one have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul?
^c **Why** am I angry because of mine enemy?
^{C a 28} Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin.
^b Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul.
^{c 29} Do not anger again because of mine enemies.
^B Do not slacken my strength because of mine afflictions.
^{A 30} **Rejoice**, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say: O Lord, **I will praise thee** forever; yea, **my soul will rejoice in thee**, my God, and the rock of my salvation.
³¹ O Lord, *wilt thou* redeem my soul?
Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies?
Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?
³² *May the gates of hell be shut* continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!
O Lord, *wilt thou* not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!
³³ O Lord, *wilt thou* encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness!
O Lord, *wilt thou* make a way for mine **escape** before mine enemies! *Wilt thou* make my path straight before me! *Wilt thou* not place a **stumbling block** in my way—but that thou wouldst **clear** my way before me, and **hedge not** up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.
³⁴ O Lord, I have trusted in *thee*, and I will trust in *thee* forever. I will not put my trust in the *arm of flesh*; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the *arm of flesh*. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh *flesh his arm*.
³⁵ Yea, I know that *God will give* liberally to him that asketh.
Yea, my *God will give* me, if I ask not amiss; **James 1:5-6; 4:3** therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, *my God, the rock* of my righteousness.
Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, *my rock* and mine everlasting *God*. Amen.

"... the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin, and like the

ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment." (TPJS, 51).

6. Types (Like unto)

Jesus shall be *like unto* Moses. All "who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people." (1 Ne 22:20–21; Dt 18:15)

Moses	Jesus Christ
Both sent by God to deliver Israel from bondage.	
Both born under foreign rulers who tried to kill them after birth.	
Both spent early years in Egypt.	
Both saw and talked with God face to face.	
Both gave people bread from heaven and performed miracles.	
Both fasted 40 days and nights.	
Each was transfigured on a mountain and his face shone.	
Each was a prophet, priest, mediator, and judge of Israel.	
A shepherd in Midian	The Good Shepherd
Brazen serpent lifted up to heal	Christ lifted up on cross to save
Law of Moses	Sermon on the Mount
Twelve princes of Israel	Twelve apostles
Appointed 70 rulers over Israel	Appointed 70 disciples to teach

Joseph, son of Jacob: A choice seer shall the Lord raise up unto the fruit of my loins. "He shall do a work ... which shall be of great worth ..., even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the *covenants* which I have made with thy *fathers*. ..., "and he shall be great like unto Moses." His name shall be Joseph like his father. (2 Ne 3:6–7, 9, 15) Joseph Smith is "*like unto Moses*"

Moses	Joseph Smith
Prophet and Seer who saw and spoke with Jehovah	
Lawgiver with divine inspiration	
Opposition from friends and enemies	
Deliver from physical bondage	Deliver from spiritual bondage
Physical gathering of Israel	Spiritual gathering of Israel
Satan tried to kill baby Moses	Satan tried to destroy Joseph
Fought political forces	Fought religious forces
Law of Moses (covenant, priesthood, temple ordinances)	Restored higher law (covenants, priesthood, temple ordinances)
Aaron assisted Moses	Oliver assisted Joseph (D&C 8:6)

¹⁸ And the Lord said unto me also: I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins; and I will make for him a spokesman. And I, behold, I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins; and the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it. (2 Ne 3:18)

I knew some people who believed the Lord was speaking here to Lehi not Joseph of Egypt (see 3:22; JST Gen 50:30 in appendix). They assumed this prophecy would be filled by a modern Samuel the Lamanite, not Joseph Smith.

"Jews Await a Latter-day Joseph and David: 'According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph.' (EJ Jr.) When the Chief Rabbi ... was appointed in Palestine in the 1920's, he was asked if the Jews could now build the Temple. ... His response was that the priestly rights were gone and referred to the great 12th century rabbi Moses Maimonides, who said, in effect, 'We are waiting for a Messiah Ben-*Joseph*, to him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore Temple worship.'" (Rona 7)

Final Judgment shall be like the plagues of Egypt

Plagues* of Egypt	John's Destruction of Wicked
Waters of Egypt turned to blood. (Ex. 7:20)	Rivers and fountains of waters ... became blood. (Rev. 16:4)
Frogs covered the land of Egypt. (Ex. 8:6)	Three unclean spirits like frogs come out of dragon's mouth. (Rev 16:13)
Plagues of lice and flies. (Ex. 8:17, 24)	God will send forth flies and maggots. (DC 29:8)
All cattle of Egypt died. (Ex. 9:6)	Desolation upon cattle and sheep. (Joel 1:15-20)
Plague of boils upon man and beast. (Ex. 9:10)	Grievous sore upon men which had the mark of the beast. (Rev. 16:2)
Plague of hail and fire (Ex 9:23)	Men scorched with fire and a plague of hailstones. (Rev 16:8,21)
Locusts covered face of the whole earth. (Ex. 10:14-5)	There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth. (Rev 9:3-10)
Thick darkness in land for three days. (Ex 10:22)	Sun became black as sackcloth. (Rev 6:12)
Firstborn males are killed. (Ex. 12:29-30)	Third part of men are killed by fire, smoke, and brimstone. (Rev 9:18)
Pharaoh's army destroyed by water. (Ex. 14:28)	Saint's enemies destroyed by fire. (1 Ne. 22:17)

* OED *plague*: affliction, calamity, evil

7. Covenants as Contained in the Scriptures

Lehi: The Lord covenanted that this land of promise which is "choice above all other lands" will be an inheritance for my children. If they keep his commandments, it shall be a land of liberty and they shall be blessed and prosper. If not, the land will be cursed and they shall be scattered, smitten and ruled by others. (2 Ne 1:5-9, 11)

Abraham received the gospel and was ordained to the higher priesthood (D&C 84:14; Abr 2:11), and he entered into celestial marriage, which is the covenant of exaltation (D&C 131:1-4; 132:19, 29). Abraham received a promise that all of the blessings of these covenants would be offered to his mortal posterity (D&C 132:29-31; Abr 2:6-11)." (Guide to the Scriptures; BD)

Covenants have 6 basic parts: Author, Blessings, Curses, Duty, Enter and Remember. It is helpful to look for the ABCDER parts of covenants including sacrament and temple covenants.

Covenant helps us "understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness." (D&C 93:19)

Abrahamic Covenant

Author: (who we worship) Abraham saw and talked with the LORD who said, "For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning." (Abr 2:7-8)

Blessings: "I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven [*posterity*], and will give unto thy seed all these countries [*land of Palestine*]; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen 26:4-5; Gen 15, 17) "This right [*priesthood*] shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee" (Abr 2:11).

Protection: "I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee" (JST, Gen 17:12). "My hand shall be over thee" (Abr 2:8).

Curses: "the uncircumcised man ... shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Gen 17:14)

Duty: (how we worship) "Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Gen 17:9). "And thou shall observe to keep all my covenants wherein I covenanted with thy fathers; and thou shall keep the commandments which I have given thee with mine own mouth" (JST, Gen 17:12). Thy seed "shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations" (Abr 2:9) "and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood) ... shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal." (Abr 2:11)

Note how the duties relate to the three missions of church

Enter: Baptism: "As many as receive this Gospel ... shall be accounted thy seed" (Abr 2:10; Gal 3:26-29). "The effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham" (TPJS 150).

Circumcision: "he that is eight days old shall be circumcised" (Gen 17:12) "that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old" (JST, Gen 17:11). **Priesthood:** "Whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods ..., and the magnifying their calling, ... become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the *seed of Abraham*, and the church and kingdom, and the *elect of God*." (D&C 84:33-34)

Remember: Sign or token: Circumcision "shall be a token of the covenant" (Gen 17:11). **New name:** "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham" (Gen 17:5) which means "father of a multitude." **Written record** of covenant for Abraham's posterity to read. **Renew Covenant:** The LORD renewed this covenant with Isaac and Jacob/Israel (Gen 26, 28). The LORD through Elias restored the "dispensation of the gospel of Abraham" to Joseph Smith (D&C 110:12).

Those who are called and chosen or "the elect of God" are servants on the cruise ship of life, not guests

Mosaic Covenant	
Author: Moses saw and talked with the LORD; Moses saw earth and inhabitants; LORD revealed to Moses the creation of heaven and earth, fall of Adam, Adamic covenant (obedience, sacrifice, baptism, Holy Ghost), atonement of Christ (Moses 1–6)	
Blessings: prosper in goods, children, cattle, crops; lender nation; peace in the land; no war or evil beasts in land; LORD will fight your battles and walk among you. (Lev 26:4–12; Dt 28:1–14)	
Curses: Famine, drought; plagues, disease, pestilence; killed by wild beasts; anarchy, lawlessness; wives violated; children enslaved; many killed by sword (war); bondage; plundered and pillaged; birds eat unburied bodies; debtor nation; eat children; enemies destroy cities and property; taken captive to other nations; scattered among all people. (Lev 26:14–39; Dt 28:15–68)	
Duty: Love the LORD with heart, might, mind, strength; Love neighbor; 10 commandments; 613 commandments; “keep the judgments, ... statutes, and the commandments of the LORD ... according to the law of Moses” (2 Ne 5:10)	
Enter: Sacrifices; Moses read “book of the covenant” to people who said they would obey the words of the LORD. (Ex 24)	
Remember: Signs or tokens: ark of the covenant with tablets inside; Written record of covenant; Renewal rituals: daily temple sacrifices; Sabbath day; public reading of the Law (Torah); public renewal of covenant; Reminders: <i>Shema</i> : “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” “And these words ... shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” and talk of them when you sit, walk, lie down, and rise up. “And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and ... as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Dt 6:4–9. Put fringes (<i>tzitzit</i>) on the corners of garments (<i>tallit</i>) to remember commandments and do them. Num 15:37	

8. Dispensations

“A gospel dispensation is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the keys of the holy priesthood” (GS). Some dispensations are new beginnings.

Dispensation	Covenant	Closing Judgment
<i>Adam</i>	E: <i>Sacrifice, baptism</i> D: Multiply, replenish, obey B: Messiah promised	Flood
<i>Noah</i>	Renewed Adamic covenant R: <i>Rainbow</i>	Fire destroyed Sodom
<i>Abraham</i>	E/R: <i>Circumcision</i> D: Sacrifice, obey B: Posterity, land, priesthood	Captivity/bondage in Egypt. No prophet for hundreds of years
<i>Moses</i>	E: <i>temple sacrifices</i> D: <i>10 commandments, ...</i> R: garments, door, Sabbath <i>Ark of the Covenant</i>	Temple destroyed, captivity, Jews scattered, no prophet for hundreds of years
<i>Christ, Apostles</i>	E: Baptism, Holy Ghost D: <i>Sermon on the Mount.</i> R: <i>Sacrament</i>	Death of apostles; no prophet for hundreds of years; scattering
<i>Joseph Smith</i> fulness of times	E: Baptism, Holy Ghost D: baptism/ <i>temple</i> covenants R: sacrament, scriptures, pray	Final judgment
<i>Christ millennium</i>	New and everlasting covenant renewed	End of 1000 years

9. Covenant Cycle

Blessings peace, prosper, deliver		
Remember: obey, keep, return, repent	↗ Covenants Commandments ↘	Forget: forsake, fall away, disobey, break
Curses cut off from LORD, famine, pestilence, war, captivity		↳ God sends prophets to warn people to repent or be cut off

Marriage covenant is used as a metaphor in the scriptures. Husbands are encouraged to love wives as Christ loves church. Husband has the duty to cherish, provide for and protect wife.

Spouses covenant to be faithful to each other. We covenant to love God and have no other God's before him.

Husbands are jealous when wife is unfaithful with other man. God is a jealous when covenant people worship other gods. Worshiping other gods is like adultery. If spouse refuses to keep covenant, they are divorced or cut off.

10. Why didn't God let Laman go back to Jerusalem?

For 8 years as they traveled from Jerusalem to Bountiful, Laman and his followers often wanted to return to Jerusalem. Why didn't God let him? It would have made life more pleasant in the ship and in the promised land! However, they had an important role in the promised land.

After Lehi died, Laman and Lemuel planned to slay Nephi because they did not want him to rule over them. After the Lord warned him, Nephi fled with Zoram, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, his sisters, and their families. This fulfilled the words spoken to Nephi: “Inasmuch as [the Lamanites] will not hearken unto thy words they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And ... they were cut off from his presence. And he had caused the cursing to come upon them. ... For ... they had hardened their hearts against him. ... Thus saith the Lord ... they shall be loathsome unto thy people, save they shall repent. ... They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me; and inasmuch as they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them ... unto destruction.” (2 Ne 5:20–25)

Remember in Hebrew includes appropriate action like keeping covenants and obeying commandments.

Hearken = hear and obey

What was the role of Lamanites? Stir up to remembrance.

Stir to a remembrance of what: (a) of their duty (Mos 1:17; Al 4:19), (b) of the oath (Mos 6:3), (c) of the Lord (Hel 11:4,34) How does this relate to the sacrament prayers?

Who are our Lamanites that stir us up to remembrance?

²⁴ If ... they rebel against me, they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance. (1 Ne 2:24)

11. Temple like the temple of Solomon

“I, Nephi, did *build a temple* ... after the manner of the *temple of Solomon* ... And ... I, Nephi, did *consecrate Jacob and Joseph*, that they should be *priests and teachers*.” (2 Ne 5:16,26)

“**Jews Hold on to Temple Customs:** Interpreted as a personal shield or protector, Jews wear garments with four markings, the knotted strings, on each corner of the *Tallith*. One of the fascinating things in Judaism is the repetitive keeping of other customs even long after their meanings have faded. For example, when visiting the Western (Wailing) Wall, you will see reminders of ancient temple worship. Men are on one side, women on the other. Head covering is used and robes (*Talith*) are placed on one

shoulder and then another while certain words are recited. There is a sash (or 'girdle') tied with the bow on one side. Levites wear aprons. Some Jews still remove their shoes when approaching the Wall. Small pieces of paper are placed between the cracks of the old temple wall stones with names written on them, names of people who require special prayers and blessings. There is a minimum of ten who form a prayer circle (Minyan) so that prayers, readings of the scriptures and instructions can be done. Someone is always at hand to assist the person reading or reciting to use correct intonations and to follow proper clothing and recitation procedures.

“Nail in a Sure Place”: Some practices have ceased, even though they were still in use just a hundred years ago. One of those is reflected in the thousands of old nails protruding slightly out of the cracks in the wall. An old Rabbi described them as the 'sure nails' pounded into the wall to fasten their sins so that people could leave their burdens and get on with life.” (Rona 7)

White may mean 'wholeness' or 'completeness.' "Garments used by religious Jews are often pure white. 'In Ashkenazi tradition **it is not just** the bride **who** wears white **on her wedding day**. The groom, too, stands under the canopy wearing his white *kittel*, or robe, **over his wedding finery. The day of their marriage is a solemn one for the bride and groom.** They pray that their past sins will be forgiven and they can start their life together afresh. The white **of their** clothing symbolizes the purity and the forgiveness of sin for which they are hoping. For this reason a similar garment is used to clothe the dead for burial. The *kittel* therefore also serves to remind the wearer of how brief life is, and of the necessity for atonement.' (*EJ Jr.*)” (Rona OT #39 online)

12. Agency and the War in Heaven

In the preexistence, Satan said “I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost.” When his plan was rejected, Satan “rebelled against [God] and “sought to destroy the agency of man.” Satan and his followers were cast down. (Moses 4:1–3)

Why did God allow Satan tempt Adam, Eve, and us?

Life would certainly be easier without him! However, we would not have moral agency (D&C 29:39). Satan, Lamanites, and our modern Lamanites are here to help us be Christlike.

13. Jewish Counselor and the War in Heaven

Many parents of teenagers can relate to the following story.

One day a woman called ... for some counseling. Their problem was a rebellious teenager and an escalating power struggle between her and her parents that was getting out of hand. ... [This] is a common ... issue for family therapists. ...

I suggested that they [go my Jewish colleague who was closer]. After only a couple of weeks, I got a call from my friend. “Carl, I need some help. ... If they don't [loosen up the parental iron fist], this kid is about to run away from home or attempt suicide or do something else drastic. But ...every time I suggest ... loosening up, they patiently explain to me that I just don't understand their religious obligation, as Mormon parents, to keep this kid in line. Frankly, I don't know how to deal with this.” ...

“Here's what you do. First, tell them ... you have developed a real curiosity about the Mormon religion. ... Then ... [ask about the] 'war in heaven' ...”

A few days later he called. “Carl, ... You wouldn't believe the response. Even the rebellious teenage kid promised to give me a copy of some book ... with the family picture in the front. Then I said ... What was this war in heaven? Well, the mom ... launched into some story about a council in heaven and two

plans and she gets about three minutes into it and she stops cold in her tracks and gives me a funny look and says, ‘All right, Doctor, you've made your point: From that moment on they were like putty in my hands. It was like magic. Carl, what is this war in heaven?’”

Of course, there was no magic. This good LDS woman simply had the unnerving experience of explaining Satan's plan to an “investigator” and, in the midst of her explanation, recognizing it as substantially her own version of responsible Mormon parenting as she had outlined it to him the week before. She understood the gospel principle fully; she just had been blinded to its applicability to her everyday challenges as a parent.

(Carlfred Broderick, *My Parents Married on a Dare*, 87–89)

There is a way that *seemeth right* unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of *death*. (Prov 16:25; 14:12)

The methods used by the parents of the teenage girl seemed right but were destroying the relationship and driving her away.

Like these well-intentioned parents, I used compulsory means to be sure my first teenager would “choose the right.” There would be no empty seats at our eternal family table! After several years of frustration, bad feelings, and rebellion, I read a story like this one. As I read, the Spirit helped me realize how I was implementing Satan's plan in my family. My efforts to compel him to come unto Christ were actually driving him away from us, the Church, and Christ. After much soul searching and help from the spirit, I learned how to respect my son's agency to choose for himself. I also learned to use the Lord's methods of persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, love unfeigned, and kindness (D&C 121:41–42).

“Satan does not need to overpower us in order to win the war. He only needs to get us to adopt his way of fighting it.” (Warner)

It took time and practice to change my natural man habits of thinking and doing. When someone did not do what I thought was right, I said to myself: “I voted for agency.” I imagined Christlike responses to hearing about possible mistakes, crimes, or sins committed by one of my teenagers. When I slip up, I imagine what I wish I would have done and ask “what can I do now” to improve things.

Laman and Nephi help us understand the two ways of viewing and responding when bad things happen. We have the moral agency to choose which way to respond and to develop the habits of thinking and doing.

Conclusion

One day I was playing second base in a little league baseball game. The bases were loaded and we only needed one more out to win the game. The ball was popped up but I lost it in the lights. When it landed 10 feet behind me, I picked it up and threw it toward second base to get the runner out. It was a bad throw and the ball went all the way to the fence allowing all four runs to score. I blamed myself as did my teammates. My dad tried to console me, but I knew it was my fault! That was the only game our team lost all year. I frequently replayed and relived that bad throw in my mind. Five years later, I was playing second base in a softball game. Bases were loaded and we needed only one more out. The ball was popped up, I lost it in the lights, picked up the ball, and threw it to the fence again!

Repeatedly watching mental replays of my mistakes on the “why-did-I-do-that” channel had helped me practice mentally to repeat the mistake in a similar situation. It would have been better if I had spent that time imagining a good throw on the “what-I-want-to-do-instead” channel and then physically practicing making that throw on the field.

Good judgment comes from experience,
But experience comes from bad judgment.

When replaying a “wretched man” guilt trip program, a “why me” program, or “my grievances” program, we can change our viewing by switching channels like Nephi, or we can change our doing by trying something else instead of repeating what does not work.

Serenity Prayer

[May] God grant [us]

the *serenity* to accept the things [we] cannot change;
courage to change the things [we] can;
and *wisdom* to know the difference.

Quotes

Jeffrey R. Holland: I love what Elder Orson F. Whitney once said: “The spirit of the gospel is optimistic; it trusts in God and looks on the bright side of things. The opposite or pessimistic spirit drags men down and away from God, looks on the dark side, murmurs, complains, and is slow to yield obedience.”⁶ We should honor the Savior’s declaration to “be of good cheer.”⁷ (Indeed, it seems to me we may be more guilty of breaking that commandment than almost any other!) Speak hopefully. Speak encouragingly, including about yourself. Try not to complain and moan incessantly. As someone once said, “Even in the golden age of civilization someone undoubtedly grumbled that everything looked too yellow.”

I have often thought that Nephi’s being bound with cords and beaten by rods must have been more tolerable to him than listening to Laman and Lemuel’s constant murmuring.⁸ Surely he must have said at least once, “Hit me one more time. I can still hear you.” Yes, life has its problems, and yes, there are negative things to face, but please accept one of Elder Holland’s maxims for living—no misfortune is so bad that whining about it won’t make it worse. (*Ensign*, May 2007)

Serenity Prayer

God grant me

- the *serenity* to accept the things I cannot change;
- *courage* to change the things I can;
- and *wisdom* to know the difference.

NOTE: The yellow shading shows what is NOT on the handout that I use in class. The handout makes it possible to share information while only briefly referring to it in class. The handout and any other supplements for the lesson are at www.sviewp.com.

Sources:

- BMRC = Dennis L. Largey, *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*.
- TBM = Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols.
- OM = Original Manuscript
- PM = Printer’s Manuscript
- Warner = C. Terry Warner, *Honest, Simple, Solid, True*, BYU Devotional 1-16-96 (reworded somewhat for time and space)

BAJA model

- Baja = www.achoiceiland.com

MESOAMERICAN model

- Sorenson = John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*.
- *Reexploring* = John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, <http://mi.byu.edu>
- Poulsen = bomgeography.poulsenll.org/bomdirections.html

Hebraisms

- Par-Heb = Donald W. Parry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities,” <http://mi.byu.edu>
- Tved-Heb = John Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” chapter 8 in *Rediscovering*; <http://mi.byu.edu>

Other sources

- BD = *Bible Dictionary* (in English LDS Scriptures).
- GS = *Guide to the Scriptures* (in electronic LDS Scriptures)
- I-BofM = New Testament Institute manual, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus & his Apostles*, institute.lds.org
- KJV King James Version of the Bible.
- NIV = New International Version of the Bible
- *TPJS* = *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*
- *SOED* = Shorter Oxford English Dictionary
- *OED* = Oxford English Dictionary
- BDB = *Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
- Bauer = Walter Bauer, *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- EJ = *Encyclopedia Judaica*
- Rona = Daniel Rona, www.israelrevealed.com/comp-sup-r.htm.
- MM = Meridian Magazine, Gospel Doctrine, www.ldsmag.com
- beardall2000.com/gospdoct.shtml; www.gospeldoctrine.com