

LESSON 12

Our Need for Spiritual Rebirth

Introduction

From the Book of Mormon we learn that “the natural man is an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). In this lesson, students are instructed that through repenting and exercising faith in

Jesus Christ, we can overcome the natural man, be “born again,” and experience a mighty change of heart. This change is necessary to enter the kingdom of God.

Background Reading

- David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47.
- D. Todd Christofferson, “Born Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 76–79.

Suggestions for Teaching

Mosiah 3:19; 16:2–5; Alma 41:10–11

Putting off the natural man

On the board, write the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), quoted from “To ‘the Rising Generation,’” *New Era*, June 1986, 5:

“You cannot do wrong and feel right. It is impossible!” (President Ezra Taft Benson)

- Why is it impossible to be happy when making wrong choices?

Ask a student to read Alma 41:10–11 aloud while the class looks for the consequences of wickedness. (Emphasize the following truth: **Wickedness never was happiness.**)

- What are some deceptions that Satan uses to convince us that breaking the commandments leads to happiness?
- According to verse 11, what does it mean to be in a “state of nature”? (To be “in a carnal state,” “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,” and “without God in the world.”)
- How does Alma 41:10–11 help explain why sinfulness cannot lead to happiness? (It is contrary to the nature of God, and the “nature of God” is the “nature of happiness.”)

Remind students that we have all inherited the effects of the Fall of Adam. Ask a student to read Mosiah 16:2–5 aloud while the class identifies words and phrases describing humankind’s fallen state.

- What words and phrases did Abinadi use to describe humankind’s fallen state?
- What is the significance of the word “persists” in verse 5? (*Note:* Identifying key words is an important scripture study skill that you may choose to emphasize here.)
- What makes it possible for us to be redeemed from our sinful and fallen state?

Ask students to silently read Mosiah 3:19 and identify how we can overcome our fallen state.

- What does it mean to “yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit”?
- What must we do to “[put] off the natural man”? (Students should identify the following principle: **As we follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit and draw upon the power of the Atonement, we can put off the natural man.**)

Invite students to consider evidence they have seen that the Savior is able to change us into better people than we could ever become on our own. Ask a few students to share their insights.

Invite students to silently answer the following questions:

- What can you do to more fully “[yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit”?
- Which attributes of a child listed in Mosiah 3:19 do you most need to develop?

Mosiah 5:1–5, 7–8; 27:24–26

Being born again

Ask students to list names of people in the Book of Mormon who experienced a change in their nature because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Remind students that Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah were, for a time, among the unbelievers in Zarahemla who persecuted Church members (see Mosiah 27:8). Following the visit of an angel, Alma was left without strength and was unable to speak. After three days, Alma’s strength was restored and he testified of a miraculous change that had taken place within him (see Mosiah 27:11–24).

Ask a student to read Mosiah 27:24–26 aloud while the class looks for how Alma described this miraculous change.

- What words and phrases in these verses help define what it means to be born again?
- How does verse 26 help explain why we need to be born again? (Make sure students understand this truth: **Only by becoming new creatures in Christ can we inherit the kingdom of God.**)

To help students understand what happens as we are spiritually reborn, ask a student to read Mosiah 5:1–5, 8 aloud. Ask the class to look for words or phrases indicating that King Benjamin’s people had experienced a spiritual rebirth.

- What evidence did you find that King Benjamin’s people had experienced a spiritual change? (Answers should include the following: they had no more disposition to do evil, they desired to do good continually, their minds were

enlightened, and they were filled with joy and willing to make covenants with the Lord.)

- According to verses 2 and 4, what is required in order to receive a “mighty change of heart”? (Students should identify this principle: **As we exercise faith in Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, we can experience a mighty change of heart.**)

Display the following statement by Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Ask a student to read it aloud as the class looks for how Elder Bednar describes the mighty change of heart.



“Please note that the conversion described in [Mosiah 5] is mighty, not minor—a spiritual rebirth and fundamental change of what we feel and desire, what we think and do, and what we are. Indeed, the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ entails a fundamental and permanent change in our very nature made possible through our reliance upon ‘the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah’ (2 Nephi 2:8)” (“Ye Must Be Born Again,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2007, 20).

- What stood out to you in Elder Bednar’s description of the mighty change of heart?

Invite students to discuss what we might do in order to continue to experience a mighty change of heart.

Ask students to read Mosiah 5:7 silently and look for how our relationship to Jesus Christ changes as we are born again.

- In what way do we become the children of Jesus Christ?

Invite students to think about the significance of becoming “the children of Christ,” and invite them to share how this should motivate us as we seek to become born again.

Alma 5:14, 26–27; Ether 12:27

Spiritual rebirth requires time and effort

Invite a student to read aloud the following statement by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles while the class listens for how he describes the process of receiving a change of heart:



“You may ask, Why doesn’t this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin’s people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical. For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.

“At the same time, let us not justify ourselves in a casual effort. Let us not be content to retain some disposition to do evil. Let us worthily partake of the sacrament each week and continue to draw upon the Holy Spirit to root out the last vestiges of impurity within us. I testify that as you

continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy" ("Born Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 78).

- According to Elder Christofferson, why is being born again more of a process than an event?
- How does the process of spiritual rebirth help us become holy like Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ? (Help students identify this truth: **Through the grace of Jesus Christ, we can be forgiven and receive help to continue on the path of spiritual rebirth.**)

To help students better understand the meaning of *grace*, consider sharing this statement from the Bible Dictionary:

"It is ... through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts" (Bible Dictionary, "Grace").

Invite students to read Alma 5:14, 26–27 silently and look for what Alma taught those who had already begun the process of spiritual rebirth and experienced a change of heart. Invite students to ponder how they would answer Alma's questions.

- According to verse 27, what must we do after we receive a change of heart? (We must continue to walk blameless before God, be humble, and seek forgiveness of our sins.)
- Why do you think Alma taught that humility is such an important part of maintaining our change of heart?

Tell students that the Lord taught Ether why the power of humility is so important as we seek to have a change of heart. Remind students that scriptural principles often use the words *if* and *then*, and then invite them to review Ether 12:27 silently, looking for "if-then" principles. Discuss the following principles as students identify them: **If we come unto Jesus Christ, then He will show us our weakness. If we are humble and have faith in the Lord, then He will make weak things become strong unto us.**

- Why do you think it is important for us to recognize our weakness?
- What do you think is meant by the phrase "my grace is sufficient for all ... that humble themselves before me"?

Display the following statement by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy, and invite a student to read it aloud:



"If you have problems in your life, don't assume there is something wrong with you. Struggling with those problems is at the very core of life's purpose. As we draw close to God, He will show us our weaknesses and through them make us wiser, stronger. If you're seeing more of your weaknesses, that just might mean you're moving nearer to God, not farther away" ("The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 97).

- What might we do to avoid getting discouraged when we recognize our weaknesses?

Share your testimony that the grace of Jesus Christ will help us to overcome our weaknesses as we seek to be spiritually reborn.

Student Readings

- Mosiah 3:19; 5:1–5, 7–8; 16:2–5; 27:24–26; Alma 5:14, 26–27; 41:10–11; Ether 12:27.
- David A. Bednar, "The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality," *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 40–47.