

LESSON 2

Heeding the Words of Prophets

Introduction

God calls prophets to bear witness of Jesus Christ, to declare repentance, and to invite all to come unto the Savior. The Book of Mormon teaches that those who heed these

prophets are blessed, while those who oppose them experience regret and sorrow.

Background Reading

- Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 74–77.
- Claudio R. M. Costa, “Obedience to the Prophets,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 11–13.
- Carol F. McConkie, “Live according to the Words of the Prophets,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 77–79.
- “Our Need for Living Prophets,” chapter 1 in *Teachings of the Living Prophets Student Manual* (Church Educational System manual, 2010), 4–13.

Suggestions for Teaching

1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18; Mosiah 11:20–25; 13:33–35

The role of prophets

Ask the class:

- How does our belief in a living prophet distinguish The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from other faiths?
- Why are living prophets as necessary today as they were in other periods of earth’s history?

Invite several students to take turns reading aloud from 1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18 while the class follows along, looking for how the Lord called and prepared Lehi to be a prophet.

- What did Lehi experience that prepared him to be a prophet? (He received a witness of Jesus Christ, and he foresaw the destruction of the wicked and the mercy granted to those who come unto God.)
- Why did the people of Jerusalem need prophets like Lehi? (As students respond, make sure they identify this truth: **God calls prophets and reveals His will through them.**)

Invite a student to read the following statement by President John Taylor (1808–87):



“We require a living tree—a living fountain—living intelligence, proceeding from the living priesthood in heaven, through the living priesthood on the earth. . . . And from the time that Adam first received a communication from God, to the time that John, on the Isle of Patmos, received his communication, or Joseph Smith had the heavens opened to him, it always required new revelations, adapted to the peculiar circumstances in which the churches or individuals were placed.

“Adam’s revelation did not instruct Noah to build his ark; nor did Noah’s revelation tell Lot to forsake Sodom; nor did either of these speak of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. These all had revelations for themselves, and so had Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, and Joseph. And so must we” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* [2001], 158).

- Why is it important to know that the Lord continues today to reveal His will through living prophets?
- How could studying the role of prophets in the Book of Mormon help us in our day?

Write the following references on the board:

Mosiah 11:20–25

Mosiah 13:33–35

Explain that while prophets communicate many messages specific to their times, there are messages that all prophets deliver. Invite students to identify two such messages as they silently read the passages on the board. Ask students to mark in their scriptures the central message delivered by the prophet Abinadi in each passage. (*Note:* Scripture marking is a scripture study skill you might consider teaching throughout the course.)

Ask students to share what they identified, and summarize their findings by emphasizing this doctrine: **All prophets of God declare repentance and testify of Jesus Christ.**

Consider inviting students to take a few minutes to locate an example of a Book of Mormon prophet declaring repentance or testifying of Jesus Christ. (Examples of declaring repentance include Isaiah in 2 Nephi 16:9–11; Jacob in Jacob 2–3; Abinadi in Mosiah 11–12; Samuel in Helaman 13–16; and Mormon in Mormon 3. Examples of teaching about Jesus Christ include Nephi in 1 Nephi 19 and in 2 Nephi 25; Alma in Alma 7; and Mormon in Mormon 7.) Invite students to share their examples with the class.

- Why do you think prophets consistently declare repentance and testify of Jesus Christ?
- How does hearkening to these messages help us attain salvation?

Helaman 13:24–33; 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11

Rejecting God’s prophets leads to regret

Display the following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), and invite a student to read it aloud:



“When the prophet points out the sins of the world, the worldly either want to close the mouth of the prophet, or else act as if the prophet didn’t exist, rather than repent of their sins. Popularity is never a test of truth. . . . As we come closer to the Lord’s second coming you can expect that as the people of the world become more wicked, the prophet will be less popular with them” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 152).

- Why do you think some people fail to heed the words of a prophet?

Invite the class to silently search the prophet Samuel’s words in Helaman 13:24–29, looking for reasons why individuals reject prophetic warnings. You might again encourage students to mark what they identify.

- According to Samuel, why did the Nephites reject God’s prophets?
- Although we are not guilty of abusing or slaying the prophets, how can these verses serve as a warning to us today?

Ask a student to read Helaman 13:30–33 aloud while the class looks for the consequences that Samuel the Lamanite prophesied would come to those who rejected the prophets’ words. Then invite the class to read the fulfillment of this prophecy in 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11.

- What truth can we summarize from these verses? (Students should identify the following principle: **If we reject the words of the Lord’s prophets, we will experience regret and sorrow.** [See also 3 Nephi 28:34.]

Invite a student to read the following statements by President Ezra Taft Benson:



“If we want to know how well we stand with the Lord then let us ask ourselves how well we stand with His mortal captain—how close do our lives harmonize with the Lord’s anointed—the living Prophet—President of the Church, and with the Quorum of the First Presidency” (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 150).

“How we respond to the words of a living prophet when he tells us what we need to know, but would rather not hear, is a test of our faithfulness” (*Teachings: Ezra Taft Benson*, 152).

- How do President Benson’s statements help motivate you to be more diligent in following the counsel of the living prophet?
- What prophetic messages do you consider to be among the most important for Latter-day Saints today?

Mosiah 15:10–13; 3 Nephi 10:12; 12:1–2; Ether 7:23–27

Following God's prophets brings blessings

Tell students that the prophet Abinadi taught King Noah and his wicked priests about the importance of giving heed to the words of the prophets. Ask a student to read Mosiah 15:10–13 while the class considers how to summarize the verses as a statement of principle.

- How would you express Abinadi's words as a statement of principle? (Students could summarize this passage as follows: **Those who hearken to the words of the prophets, believe in Jesus Christ's redeeming power, and repent of their sins are heirs of the kingdom of God.**)

Ask students to think of and share examples from the Book of Mormon of faithful individuals and groups who were blessed by heeding the words of prophets. Some examples might include the following: Lehi's family escaped destruction by following the counsel to flee Jerusalem (2 Nephi 1:4); Alma the Elder hearkened to the words of Abinadi and was able to teach many people (Mosiah 17:1–4; 18:1–3); Captain Moroni's army learned where to go to defend themselves against the Lamanite army by seeking Alma's counsel (Alma 43:23–24).

Write the following scripture references on the board (do not include the bold principles):

3 Nephi 10:12 (Safety comes from following the prophets of God.)

3 Nephi 12:1–2 (Prophets teach us how to receive remission of our sins.)

Ether 7:23–27 (As we follow the counsel of prophets and remember the Lord, He will bless us according to our needs.)

Assign students to read one of the passages on the board and summarize what they read as a statement of principle. As students share their statements, consider writing the suggested statements of principle next to each reference.

To help students understand that additional blessings come from following the prophet, display the following statement by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"It is no small thing, my brothers and sisters, to have a prophet of God in our midst. Great and wonderful are the blessings that come into our lives as we listen to the word of the Lord given to us through him. . . . When we hear the counsel of the Lord expressed through the words of the President of the Church, our response should be positive and prompt. History has shown that there is safety, peace, prosperity, and happiness in responding to prophetic counsel" ("His Word Ye Shall Receive," *Ensign*, May 2001, 65).

- When have you been blessed by responding positively and promptly to prophetic counsel?

- As you look forward to the future, why do you think it will be important to have prophets on the earth?

Challenge students to ponder whether their own actions reflect their desire to faithfully follow the Lord's prophets. Ask them to consider what they might need to change in their lives in order to more fully enjoy the blessings promised to the faithful.

Student Readings

- 1 Nephi 1:4–15, 18; Mosiah 11:20–25; 13:33–35; 15:10–13; Helaman 13:24–33; 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:10–11; 10:12; 12:1–2; Ether 7:23–27.
- Russell M. Nelson, "Sustaining the Prophets," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 74–77.