

CHAPTER 37

Helaman 10–12

Introduction

Being completely trusted by God is a great honor. The *Lectures on Faith* teach that awareness of God's approval is necessary for one's faith: "An actual knowledge to any person, that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life" ([1985], 7).

Trust and approval come by obedience to all of God's commandments. Helaman chapters 10–12 highlight how important it is to heed the promptings of the Spirit. Only by doing so can we be sure we are living according to God's will. These chapters also highlight how important it is to want what God wants. The Lord knew Nephi would "not ask that which is contrary to [God's] will" (Helaman 10:5). As we prove faithful in the small things, the Lord will trust us with the greater things.

Commentary

Helaman 10:1–3. Pondering

• To ponder is to "meditate and think deeply, often upon the scriptures or other things of God. When combined with prayer, pondering . . . may bring revelation and understanding" (Guide to the Scriptures, "Ponder"). Nephi and other prophets received revelation while pondering. Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "All of us would benefit from time to ponder and meditate. In the quiet moments of personal introspection, the Spirit can teach us much" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 6).



• Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles suggested that a quiet place is conducive to pondering: "Find a retreat of peace and quiet where periodically you can ponder and let the Lord establish the direction of your life" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 8; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 9).

• Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared with us the benefits of pondering: "As you ponder and pray about doctrinal principles, the Holy Ghost will speak to your mind and your heart [see D&C 8:2]. From events portrayed in the scriptures, new insights will come and principles relevant to your situation will distill upon your heart" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 18).

Helaman 10:4–5. "Thou Shalt Not Ask That Which Is Contrary to My Will"

• Like Nephi, if we learn to ask "in the Spirit" (Helaman 10:17) and according to God's will, then "it is done even as" we ask (see D&C 46:30; 50:29–30). President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) of the First Presidency shared some necessary aspects of proper petitions:

"When we pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus for specific personal things, we should feel in the very depths of our souls that we are willing to subject our petitions to the will of our Father in heaven. . . .

"The time will come when we shall know the will of God before we ask. Then everything for which we pray will be 'expedient.' Everything for which we ask will be 'right.' That will be when as a result of righteous living, we shall so enjoy the companionship of the spirit that he will dictate what we ask" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1944, 55–56).

President Romney had an experience in which the Lord gave him a promise similar to Nephi's. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about it:

"In 1967 Sister Ida Romney suffered a serious stroke. The doctors told then-Elder Romney that the damage from the hemorrhage was severe. They offered to keep her alive by artificial means but did not recommend it. The family braced for the worst. Brother Romney confided to those closest to him that in spite of his anguished, personal yearning for Ida's restored health and continued companionship, above all he wanted 'the Lord's will to be done and to take what he needed to take without whimpering.'

“As the days wore on, Sister Romney became less responsive. She had, of course, been administered to, but Elder Romney was ‘reluctant to counsel the Lord about the matter.’ Because of his earlier unsuccessful experience of praying that he and Ida might have children, he knew that he could never ask in prayer for something that was not in harmony with the will of the Lord. He fasted that he might know how to show the Lord he had faith and would accept God’s will in their lives. He wanted to make sure he had done all he could do. But she continued to fail.

“One evening in a particularly depressed state, with Ida unable to speak or recognize him, Brother Romney went home and turned, as he always had, to the scriptures in an effort to commune with the Lord. He picked up the Book of Mormon and continued where he had left off the night before. He had been reading in Helaman about the prophet Nephi, who had been falsely accused and unfairly charged with sedition. Following a miraculous deliverance from his accusers, Nephi returned home pondering the things he had experienced. As he did so he heard a voice.

“Although Marion Romney had read that story many times before, it now struck him this night as a personal revelation. The words of the scripture so touched his heart that for the first time in weeks he felt he had tangible peace. It seemed as if the Lord were speaking directly to him. The scripture read: ‘Blessed art thou, . . . for those things which thou hast done; . . . thou hast not . . . sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments. And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.’ (Helaman 10:4–5.)

“There was the answer. He had sought only to know and obey the will of the Lord, and the Lord had spoken. He fell to his knees and poured out his heart, and as he concluded his prayer with the phrase ‘Thy will be done,’ he either felt or actually heard a voice that said, ‘It is not contrary to my will that Ida be healed.’

“Brother Romney rose to his feet quickly. It was past two o’clock in the morning, but he knew what he must do. Quickly he put on his tie and coat, then went out into the night to visit Ida in the hospital. He arrived



shortly before three o’clock. His wife’s condition was unchanged. She did not stir as he placed his hands upon her pale forehead. With undeviating faith, he invoked the power of the

priesthood in her behalf. He pronounced a simple blessing and then uttered the incredible promise that she would recover her health and her mental powers and would yet perform ‘a great mission’ upon the earth.

“Even though he did not doubt, Elder Romney was astonished to see Ida’s eyes open as he concluded the blessing. Somewhat stunned by all that had happened, he sat down on the edge of the bed only to hear his wife’s frail voice for the first time in months. She said, ‘For goodness’ sake, Marion, what are you doing here?’ He didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry. He said, ‘Ida, how are you?’ With that flash of humor so characteristic of both of them, she replied, ‘Compared to what, Marion? Compared to what?’

“Ida Romney began her recovery from that very moment, soon left her hospital bed, and lived to see her husband sustained as a member of the First Presidency of the Church, ‘a great mission upon the earth’ indeed. (F. Burton Howard, *Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], pp. 137–42.)” (Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven* [1989], 133–35).

HELAMAN 10:4–5

What characteristics do you find in these two verses that enabled Nephi to receive such blessings?

Helaman 10:7. The Sealing Power

- Nephi served with such diligence that the Lord bestowed upon him great power. He was given power over the people and the elements of the earth. He was also granted a sacred bestowal of the sealing power, the same power held by Elijah the prophet: “The power of Elijah is the sealing power of the priesthood by which things that are bound or loosed on earth are bound or loosed in heaven (D&C 128:8–18)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Elijah”).



- President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught about the sealing power given to various prophets:

“The Lord conferred authority on some of his chosen servants and gave them exceptional powers. . . . In this manner Elijah obtained the keys of power in the priesthood to raise the dead, heal the sick, close the heavens that it did not rain only by his word, and for more than three years there was no rain, and moreover he had the power to call down fire from heaven to destroy the enemies of the Church. . . .

“The Lord gave similar authority to Nephi, son of Helaman, who likewise had authority to close the heavens and perform other mighty works, simply by his faith and the commandment from the Lord [see Helaman 10:7]. This wonderful power has been bestowed on but a few of the servants of the Lord” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 4:95).

Helaman 10:13–15. “Notwithstanding That Great Miracle”

- The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “miracles are the fruits of faith” (*History of the Church*, 5:355). Some people seek faith through miracles; however, that is contrary to the order of heaven. Faith precedes the miracle—it does not follow it. Nephi’s miraculous identification of Seantum as the murderer of the chief judge came as a result of the prophet’s faith. Sadly, the majority of the people who witnessed this miracle were living without faith. The miracle failed to convert them because “faith cometh not by signs [or miracles], but signs follow those that believe” (D&C 63:9). The necessary change in their lives had to begin with “faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15–17). Unfortunately, these people who had witnessed a great miracle continued to harden their hearts, and instead of repenting, they persecuted Nephi.

Helaman 11:1–16. Prophets Pray for the People

- Nephi’s prayer on behalf of his people illustrates the concern of a prophet for the people. As well as representing God to the people, at times prophets also seek to intervene on behalf of their people. When plagued by poisonous serpents, the children of Israel went to Moses and pled, “pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people” (Numbers 21:7).

In the Americas, Nephi, the son of Lehi, wrote: “I pray continually for [my people] by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith” (2 Nephi 33:3).

- Our current prophets continue to pray for us. In the general conference following the tragic terrorist events on September 11, 2001, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) prayed:

“O God, our Eternal Father, . . . whose children we are, we look to Thee in faith in this dark and solemn time. Please, dear Father, bless us with faith. Bless us with love. Bless us with charity in our hearts. Bless us with a spirit of perseverance to root out the terrible evils that are in this world. Give protection and guidance to those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle. Bless them; preserve their lives; save

them from harm and evil. Hear the prayers of their loved ones for their safety. . . .

“O Father, look with mercy upon this, our own nation, and its friends in this time of need. Spare us and help us to walk with faith ever in Thee and ever in Thy Beloved Son, on whose mercy we count and to whom we look as our Savior and our Lord. Bless the cause of peace and bring it quickly to us again, we humbly plead with Thee, asking that Thou wilt forgive our arrogance, pass by our sins, be kind and gracious to us, and cause our hearts to turn with love toward Thee. We humbly pray in the name of Him who loves us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior, amen” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 112; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 90).

Helaman 11:4–5. The Lord Sometimes Uses Nature to Correct His Children

- President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained that “the Lord uses the weather sometimes to discipline his people for the violation of his laws” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 4; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 4; see also D&C 43:21–25).

Helaman 11:18–12:6. Cycles of Righteousness and Wickedness

- Several times in Book of Mormon history the people passed through a cycle of righteousness, prosperity, riches, pride, wickedness, destruction, humility, and righteousness again. For more information and a diagram depicting the pride cycle, refer to “The Cycle of Righteousness and Wickedness” in the appendix (p. 414).

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles lamented mankind’s failure to break out of negative cycles: “I guess one of the greatest mysteries of mortality is why mankind fails to learn from history” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1992, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 16). Surely the Lord has placed these obvious patterns of behavior in scripture for our benefit, to help us avoid the same problems in our own lives (see D&C 52:14–19).

Helaman 11:22–23. “Points of Doctrine”

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles indicated what comprised the true doctrine of Christ: “The true doctrine of Christ is that all men must come unto him, gain faith, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure in faith to the end in order to gain salvation. (2 Ne. 31:17–21; 3 Ne. 11:29–41; D.&C. 10:67; 68:25.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 204).

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, made this statement regarding the power of true doctrine:

“True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.

“The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. . . .

That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).



Helaman 11:21–38. Wickedness Returned

- The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the devil always sets up his kingdom at the very same time in opposition to God” (*History of the Church*, 6:364). Whenever the Savior’s Church is established or strengthened, the adversary seeks to create resistance in one form or another to battle the progress made by the Saints of God. We see an example of Satan’s opposition emerge in Helaman 11. The Gadianton robbers had been swept off the land. The righteous Nephite and Lamanite members of the Church had great peace (see Helaman 11:21). Only a few years passed, however, before Satan’s influence on the people led them to return to iniquity and allowed the Gadianton robbers to regain their power and influence.

Helaman 12:1–3. The Unsteadiness of Men

• Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explored some possible reasons for spiritual unsteadiness:

“Is it simply unintended forgetfulness? Or is it a failure of intellectual integrity by our refusing to review and to acknowledge past blessings? Or is it a lack of meekness which requires the repetition of such stern lessons, because we neglect the milder and gentler signs beckoning us to ‘remember Him’? . . .

“. . . We need the Spirit daily to help us remember daily. Otherwise memory lapses will occur when we are most vulnerable. It is not natural to the natural man to remember yesterday’s blessings gratefully, especially when today’s needs of the flesh press steadily upon him” (*Lord, Increase Our Faith* [1994], 101–2).

• President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency added this insight about why we might be unsteady: “Dependence upon God can fade quickly when prayers are answered. And when the trouble lessens, so do the prayers. The Book of Mormon repeats that sad story over and over again” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 15; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 15).

HELANMAN 12:1–9

From these verses, what role does remembering or not remembering play in helping us avoid the pride cycle?

Helaman 12:2. When God Prospers His People, They Forget Him

• President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) described the difficulty that can come with prosperity: “Ours then seems to be the toughest test of all for the evils are more subtle, more clever. It all seems less menacing and it is harder to detect. While every test of righteousness represents a struggle, this particular test seems like no test at all, no struggle and so could be the most deceiving of all tests. Do you know what peace and prosperity can do to a people—it can put them to sleep” (Larry E. Dahl, “Fit for the Kingdom,” in

Studies in Scripture, Volume Five: The Gospels, edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet [1986], 5:369).

• President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) compared the test of “luxury” with other tests of life: “We’re tested and we’re tried. Perhaps we don’t realize the severity of the tests we’re going through. In the early days of the Church, there were murders committed, there were mobbings. The Saints were driven out into the desert. They were starving, they were unclad, and they were cold. We’re the inheritors of what they gave to us. But what are we doing with it? Today we’re basking in the lap of luxury, the like of which we’ve never seen before in the history of the world. It would seem that probably this is the most severe test of any we’ve ever had in the history of this Church” (Dahl, “Fit for the Kingdom,” in *Studies in Scripture*, 5:369).

Helaman 12:4. “Set Their Hearts upon the Vain Things of the World!”

• Mormon emphasized the foolishness of those who set their hearts upon the vain or worthless, empty, and valueless things of the world. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles remarked: “The ‘vain things of [the] world’ include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence, and power. As to all of these, the scriptures remind us that ‘you cannot carry them with you’ (Alma 39:14). We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: ‘great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures’ (D&C 89:19)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 109; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 84).

Helaman 12:5–6. “Quick to Be Lifted Up in Pride”

• In his classic discourse on pride, President Ezra Taft Benson characterized the many facets of pride:

“Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of ‘my will and not thine be done.’ . . .

“The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

“. . . The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren't interested in changing their opinions to agree with God's. . . .

“Pride results in secret combinations which are built up to get power, gain, and glory of the world (see Helaman 7:5; Ether 8:9, 16, 22–23; Moses 5:31). This fruit of the sin of pride, namely secret combinations, brought down both the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations and has been and will yet be the cause of the fall of many nations (see Ether 8:18–25)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 4–5; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 4, 6).

- Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Seventy taught that pride leads to unrighteous comparisons and also may lead to our downfall:

“Pride causes us to become overly concerned, as we compare ourselves with others, about how intelligent we think we are, the brand of our jeans or other clothing—the ‘costly apparel’ we wear, to what organizations we belong, on which side of town we live, how much money we have, what our race or nationality is, what kind of car we drive, even to what church we belong, how much education we have been privileged to acquire, and on and on and on.

“In the scriptures there are many indications that pride has risen to destroy individuals, nations, and in some cases even the Church itself. . . . “It has been calculated that no fewer than thirty times throughout the Book of Mormon the cycles of prosperity and peace were destroyed, principally by the effects of human pride” (*One Step at a Time: Building a Better Marriage, Family, and You* [1996], 138–39). (See diagram “The Cycle of Righteousness and Wickedness” in the appendix, p. 414.)

Helaman 12:7–19. The Nothingness of Man

- President Joseph Fielding Smith helped us understand that the phrase “the nothingness of the children of men” (Helaman 12:7) is not a reflection of man's worth: “Now this prophet did not mean to say that the Lord has greater concern for and loves the dust of the earth more than he does his children. . . . The point he is making is that the dust of the earth is obedient. It moveth hither and thither at the command

of the Lord. All things are in harmony with his laws. Everything in the universe obeys the law given unto it, so far as I know, except man. Everywhere you look you find law and order, the elements obeying the law given to them, true to their calling. But man rebels, and in this thing man is less than the dust of the earth because he rejects the counsels of the Lord” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1929, 55).

Helaman 12:15. Knowledge of Astronomy

- Helaman 12:14–15 shows that Mormon had a basic understanding of the physical laws of the universe: “Reference is here made to the biblical account that shows Joshua commanding the sun and the moon to stand still so that his army might complete their rout of the Amorites (Joshua 10:12–14). Here a corrective note is added to that account, which supposed the sun to rotate around a stationery earth. (See also Isaiah 38:7–8; 2 Kings 20:8–11.) These verses provide a subtle but certain assurance that the prophet-editor Mormon, like many of the ancient spiritual leaders, was anything but primitive in his understanding concerning God, man, and the universe” (Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [1987–91], 3:397).



Helaman 12:23–24. Repentance Leads Us to Christ's Grace

- Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expounded on the power of God's grace:

“In the Bible Dictionary we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote a strengthening or enabling power:

“The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ.

“ . . . It is likewise 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’ (p. 697).

“Thus, the enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement helps us to see and to do and to become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our limited mortal capacity. I testify and witness that the enabling power of the Savior’s Atonement is real” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 79; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 76–77; see also D&C 93:20, 27–28).

- Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy discussed the personal nature of the Savior’s grace:

“The grace of the Lord through the Atonement can both cleanse us of sin and assist us in perfecting ourselves through our trials, sicknesses, and even character defects. . . . Christ can repair our flaws and failings that otherwise are not repairable (see Genesis 18:14; Mark 9:23–24).

“That great truth ought to fill us all with hope, as long as we are quick to remember that the effect of grace in our lives is conditioned upon repenting of our sins. . . .

“A repentant heart and good works are the very conditions required to have grace restored to us. When someone pleads fervently in prayer for an answer, the answer may be more conditioned on repentance of personal sins than on any other factor (see D&C 101:7–8; Mosiah 11:23–24).

“To obtain grace, one does not have to be perfect, but he does have to be trying to keep the commandments the best that he can. Then the Lord will allow him to receive that power” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 99–100; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 80–81).

Points to Ponder

- What steps are you taking to avoid the pride cycle in your life?
- Where have you seen the power of the priesthood operate in your life?
- What can you do to reach a point in your prayers where you do not ask anything that is contrary to the Lord’s will?

Suggested Assignments

- Share in a family home evening what you have learned from Helaman 12–14 about how and why the Lord chastens His children.
- Write in your journal how you deal with the pride cycle in your life.