

CHAPTER 33

Alma 43–51

Introduction

Contention, dissension, and war placed the survival of the Nephite nation in jeopardy. The Lamanites, however, were not the only source of conflict. Dissenting Nephites eager for power led to many serious problems. The Nephites overcame their enemies by exercising faith in Jesus Christ and following His prophets as well as other righteous military leaders.

Contrast the motives and intentions of Captain Moroni with those of Amalickiah. The prophet Mormon wrote of Captain Moroni, “If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men” (Alma 48:17). Like Moroni, you too can remain “firm in the faith of Christ” (Alma 48:13) even in difficult and trying circumstances.

Commentary

Alma 43:2–3. “The Wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites”

- At this point in the book of Alma, chapters 43–62, Mormon alerted the reader that he would “return to an account of the wars” (Alma 43:3). Some people wonder why the Book of Mormon contains so much about war. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) stated that “from the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

Since Mormon saw our day and knew we would live in a time of “wars and rumors of wars” (D&C 45:26; see also Revelation 9), he included how to live righteously during these times. Many Latter-day Saints have been and will be involved in military conflicts. Look for the gospel principles Mormon included in these war chapters. Mormon revealed the tremendous suffering caused by conflict and also explained why war may be necessary in the defense of life and liberty. Both Mormon and modern prophets have described circumstances when war is justified (see commentary for Alma 43:45–47 on p. 250 and for Alma 51:13 on p. 255).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) related the heavenly sorrow that accompanies such events, even when wars are justified: “I think our Father in Heaven must have wept as He has looked down upon His children through the centuries as they have squandered their divine birthright in ruthlessly destroying one another” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 82; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 79). The Nephites and Captain Moroni showed the proper attitude toward war and bloodshed (see commentary for Alma 43:54; 44:1–2; 48:11, 22–23 on p. 251).

- At the time of World War II, the First Presidency issued the following statement, clarifying the Church’s position on war:



“Members must give allegiance to their sovereign and render it loyal service when called thereto. [This includes military service.] But the Church, itself, as such, has no responsibility for these policies, as to which it has no means of doing more than urging its members

fully to render that loyalty to their country and to free institutions which the loftiest patriotism calls for.

“. . . There is an obligation running from every citizen or subject to the state. This obligation is voiced in that Article of Faith which declares:

“We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.’ . . .

“Obedient to these principles, the members of the Church have always felt under obligation to come to the defense of their country when a call to arms was made. . . .

“Thus the Church is and must be against war. . . . It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes; these should and could be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiation and adjustment.

“But the Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. . . .

“ . . . When, therefore, constitutional law, obedient to these principles, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. If, harkening to that call, and obeying those in command over them, they shall take the lives of those who fight against them, that will not make of them murderers” (Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., and David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, 92–94; also cited in Boyd K. Packer, Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 34–35).

Alma 43:4–8. Nephite Dissenters Appointed Chief Captains over Lamanite Armies

- The Zoramites once belonged to the Nephite nation. Due to pride, however, “the Zoramites became Lamanites” (Alma 43:4). Before their defection, Nephite leaders rightly feared that the Zoramites might enter into an alliance with the Lamanites, thus placing the Nephite nation at risk (see Alma 31:4). In order to prevent this mass defection, Alma led a mission to reclaim the Zoramites, many of whom had already abandoned the true faith. Even though some of the Zoramites were restored to the faith, the majority were angry and “began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up” in preparation for war (Alma 35:10–11). Lamanite war leaders appointed the more bloodthirsty Zoramites and Amalekites as chief captains in an effort to gain an advantage over the Nephites.

“The Zoramites . . . invited the Lamanite hordes to move in and occupy their country as the first major move against the Nephites (Alma 43:5). At their head came the Lamanite commander-in-chief, the Amalekite Zerahemnah. The Amalekites were Nephite dissenters of an earlier day, and like most dissenters were more bitter against the Nephites and ‘of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites were’ (Alma 43:6). Zerahemnah had seen to it that all the key commands in the army had gone to Amalekites like himself or to equally ferocious Zoramites (Alma 43:6)” (Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. [1988], 296).

Alma 43:13–14. Outnumbered and Compelled to Stand against Their Enemy

- The number of Nephite dissenters who became Lamanites was almost as large as the number of Nephites who remained true (see Alma 43:14). This large number, combined with the Lamanite armies, placed the Nephites at a serious numerical disadvantage (see Alma 43:51; see also Mosiah 25:3; Alma 2:27, 35). Relying on their faith, however, the Nephites trusted that God would strengthen them during their battles against overwhelming odds, just as He had done for Gideon’s army (see Judges 7–9), Elisha (see 2 Kings 6:15–23), King Benjamin (see Words of Mormon 1:14), and Alma (see Alma 2:27–35).

Alma 43:15–54. Captain Moroni Used Faith and Strategy to Defend the Nephites

- During his service as chief captain, Moroni relied on his strengths and the Lord’s power to defend the Nephites. Alma 43 is an example of how Captain Moroni blended his good judgment with his obedience to God’s counsel. He prepared each soldier with improved military armor (see vv. 19–21), and he sought the prophet’s advice before entering battle (see vv. 23–24).

“The Lamanite campaign was directed by Amalekite and Zoramite officers, whose knowledge of Nephite military secrets and methods would have given them an enormous advantage over any commander but Moroni. Right at the outset his foresight had robbed them of their first and logical objective—the buffer land of Jershon (Alma 43:22). He had taken up his main defensive position there, but when the messengers returned from consulting the prophet he learned that the Lamanites were planning a surprise by directing their push against the more inaccessible but weaker land of Manti, where they would not be expected (Alma 43:24). Immediately Moroni moved his main army into Manti and put the people there in a state of preparedness (Alma 43:25–26).

“Informed of every Lamanite move by his spies and scouts, Moroni was able to lay a trap for the enemy, catching them off-guard as they were fording the river Sidon (Alma 43:28–35)” (Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 297–98).

Captain Moroni expected the blessings of the Lord because he had given his best efforts. He was perhaps the brightest military mind of his day, and yet he showed humility by following the prophet's counsel. This made Captain Moroni a mighty instrument in the hand of God.

Alma 43:18–22, 37–38. What Protective Armor Do We Have Today?

- Captain Moroni provided his army with protective armor, which made a significant difference in the battles against their enemies (see Alma 43:37–38). President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) explained one way that we could apply these verses to our lives today:

“We have the four parts of the body that the Apostle Paul said or saw to be the most vulnerable to the powers of darkness. The loins, typifying virtue, chastity. The heart typifying our conduct. Our feet, our goals or objectives in life and finally our head, our thoughts.

“. . . We should have our loins girt about with truth. What is truth? Truth, the Lord said, was knowledge of things as they are, things as they were and things as they are to come [D&C 93:24]. . . . ‘Our loins shall be girt about with truth,’ the prophet said.

“And the heart, what kind of a breastplate shall protect our conduct in life? We shall have over our hearts a breastplate of righteousness. Well, having learned truth we have a measure by which we can judge between right and wrong and so our conduct will always be gauged by that thing which we know to be true. Our breastplate to cover our conduct shall be the breastplate of righteousness.

“[By] what shall we protect our feet, or by what shall we gauge our objectives or our goals in life? . . . ‘Your feet should be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.’ (Ephesians 6:15). . . .

“And then finally the helmet of salvation. . . . What is salvation? Salvation is to be saved. Saved from what? Saved from death and saved from sin. . . .

“Well, now the Apostle Paul . . . had his armoured man holding in his hand a shield and in his other hand a sword, which were the weapons of those days. That shield was the shield of faith and the sword was

the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. I can't think of any more powerful weapons than faith and a knowledge of the scriptures in the which are contained the Word of God. One so armoured and one so prepared with those weapons is prepared to go out against the enemy” (*Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [Nov. 9, 1954], 2–3, 6–7; see also Ephesians 6:13–17; D&C 27:15–18).

ALMA 43:23–25

Why did Captain Moroni seek counsel from the prophet? In what ways can we seek counsel from the prophet?

Alma 43:23–25. Obeying the Prophet Brings Blessings

- Captain Moroni's desire to seek and follow the prophet's counsel led to many victories. Life's battles today will also be won by following the prophet.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) emphasized why we need to follow the prophets: “Let us harken to those we sustain as prophets and seers, as well as the other brethren as if our eternal life depended upon it, because it does!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 117; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 77).

Alma 43:45–47. “Even unto Bloodshed”

- Human life is sacred. Taking an innocent life is “an abomination in the sight of the Lord” (Alma 39:5). One may justifiably take another's life, however, when defending oneself, family, freedom, religion, or country. President Gordon B. Hinckley helped explain the concept of war and bloodshed:

“When war raged between the Nephites and the Lamanites, the record states that ‘the Nephites were inspired by a better cause, for they were not fighting for . . . power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church.

“And they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God’ (Alma 43:45–46).

“The Lord counseled them, ‘Defend your families even unto bloodshed’ (Alma 43:47). . . .

“It is clear from these and other writings that there are times and circumstances when nations are justified, in fact have an obligation, to fight for family, for liberty, and against tyranny, threat, and oppression. . . .

“. . . We are a freedom-loving people, committed to the defense of liberty wherever it is in jeopardy. I believe that God will not hold men and women in uniform responsible as agents of their government in carrying forward that which they are legally obligated to do. It may even be that He will hold us responsible if we try to impede or hedge up the way of those who are involved in a contest with forces of evil and repression” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 83–84; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 80).



Alma 43:54; 44:1–2; 48:11, 22–23. Moroni “Did Not Delight in Bloodshed”

- Captain Moroni “did not delight in bloodshed” (Alma 48:11) even though he was justified in taking another person’s life while defending his country. He reluctantly fought the Lamanites for many years (see Alma 48:22). When he did fight, he maintained charity for all, including those on the opposing side. The record states that Captain Moroni stopped the battle on more than one occasion in order to spare as many lives as possible (see Alma 43:54–44:1–2; 55:19). Lives were taken reluctantly and with sorrow that “their

brethren [were sent] out of this world . . . unprepared to meet their God” (Alma 48:23). Captain Moroni firmly believed that those who kept their covenants with God and met with death would be “redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ” and leave this “world rejoicing” (Alma 46:39).

Some readers may wonder how a man concerned with keeping the covenants of the Lord could be so involved in military affairs. This concern may be why Mormon wrote that Moroni “did not delight in bloodshed” and was taught “never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives” (Alma 48:11, 14).

Alma 45 Insert. “Account of the People of Nephi”

- The italic insert before the summary of Alma 45 is part of the original record (for a more detailed explanation, see commentary for The First Book of Nephi: His Reign and Ministry on p. 12). The phrase “comprising chapters 45 to 62 inclusive” was added when the Book of Mormon was published in chapter format in the 1879 edition.

Alma 45:17–19. Alma Departed and “Was Never Heard of More”

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the phrase “taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord” (Alma 45:19) suggests that Alma was translated: “Moses, Elijah, and Alma the younger, were translated. The Old Testament account that Moses died and was buried by the hand of the Lord in an unknown grave is an error. (Deut. 34:5–7.) It is true that he may have been ‘buried by the hand of the Lord,’ if that expression is a figure of speech which means that he was translated. But the Book of Mormon account, in recording that Alma ‘was taken up by the Spirit,’ says, ‘the scriptures saith the Lord took Moses unto himself; and we suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself.’ (Alma 45:18–19.) It should be remembered that the Nephites had the Brass Plates, and that they were the ‘scriptures’ which gave the account of Moses being taken by way of translation. As to Elijah, the account of his being taken in ‘a chariot of fire . . . by a whirlwind into heaven,’ is majestically

set out in the Old Testament. (2 Kings 2.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 805).

Alma 46–50. The Contrast between Wicked and Righteous Leadership

- Mormon plainly exposed the striking differences between Amalickiah and Captain Moroni (see Alma 48:7; 49:25–28). Amalickiah wanted to “destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted” to the Nephites, and Captain Moroni wanted to preserve it (Alma 46:10).

Wicked men like Amalickiah who thrust themselves into power may prosper for a season by the world’s standards, but they ultimately bring ruin upon themselves and their followers. By contrast, leaders like Captain Moroni inspire people with noble desires that will ultimately overpower evil designs. The following chart contrasts Moroni and Amalickiah:

Captain Moroni	Amalickiah
Was appointed by “the voice of the people” and the judges as chief captain of the armies (Alma 46:34; see also 43:16).	Obtained power by fraud and deceit (see Alma 47:1–35; 48:7).
Rallied the people to righteousness and taught them to be faithful to God and their covenants (see Alma 46:12–21; 48:7).	Incited the people through hatred and propaganda (see Alma 48:1–3).
Rejoiced in the liberty and freedom of his country and the people (see Alma 48:11).	Sought to destroy the liberty of the people (see Alma 46:10).
Loved his brethren and labored “exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people” (Alma 48:12).	“Did care not for the blood of his people” and worked to promote his own selfishness (Alma 49:10).
A man governed by righteous principles who taught the Nephites to never raise the sword, except to defend one’s family, life, or freedoms (see Alma 48:10, 14).	A man governed by passion who taught the people to aggressively conquer and make oaths to destroy (see Alma 49:13, 26–27).

Captain Moroni	Amalickiah
Humbly sought God’s help in preserving life (see Alma 48:16).	Cursed God and swore to kill (see Alma 49:27).
Worked to put an end to contention and dissension (see Alma 51:16).	Worked to create contention and dissension (see Alma 46:6, 10).

ALMA 46:12–13
Why is it a solemn duty to defend our homes, freedoms, and religious rights? How can we defend our homes against the forces of evil?

Alma 46:12–15, 36. The Title of Liberty

- Rallying others for a righteous cause takes courage. President Ezra Taft Benson often taught concerning the importance of Captain Moroni’s actions in raising the title of liberty. He frequently emphasized the need to be an active citizen and promote liberty and freedom: “Improve your community by active participation and service. Remember in your civic responsibility that ‘the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing’ (Edmund Burke). . . . Do something meaningful in defense of your God-given freedom and liberty” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1988, 58; or *Ensign*, May 1988, 51).



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President Benson further taught:

“In that sacred volume of scripture, the Book of Mormon, we note the great and prolonged struggle for liberty. We also note the complacency of the people and their frequent willingness to give up their liberty for the promises of a would-be provider. . . .

“. . . Moroni, like the prophets whose words are recorded in the Book of Mormon, spoke of the

Americas as a chosen land—the land of liberty. He led the people in battle who were willing to fight to ‘maintain their liberty.’

“And the record states: ‘. . . that he caused the title of liberty to be hoisted upon every tower which was in all the land, . . . and thus Moroni planted the standard of liberty among the Nephites.’ [Alma 46:36.]

“This is our need today—to plant the standard of liberty among our people throughout the Americas.

“While this incident occurred some seventy years B.C., the struggle went on through one thousand years covered by this sacred Book of Mormon record. In fact, the struggle for liberty is a continuing one—it is with us in a very real sense today” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1962, 14–15).

Alma 46:23–27. The Prophecy of Joseph’s Coat

• The torn coat of Moroni—the title of liberty—was a reminder of the preserved remnant of the coat of Joseph of Egypt. Moroni declared that the Nephites were a remnant of the seed of Joseph and would only continue to be preserved as long as they served God (see Alma 46:22–24). President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) commented on the symbolism and prophecy regarding the preserved part of Joseph’s coat being fulfilled in our day:



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“We are told that there was a prophecy in the destruction of the coat of many colors worn by Joseph. Part of it was preserved, and Jacob, before his death, prophesied that as a remnant of the coat was preserved so should a remnant of Joseph’s posterity be preserved [see Alma 46:24].

“That remnant now found among the Lamanites shall eventually partake of the blessings of the Gospel. They shall unite with the remnant which is being gathered from among the nations and they shall be blessed of the Lord forever” (*The Way to Perfection* [1970], 121).

Alma 47:36. Dissension and Contention

• The Book of Mormon repeatedly warns that those who belong to the Church and then “dissent” become hard in their hearts and are apt to “entirely [forget] the Lord their God” (Alma 47:36).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned that the same problems exist today when dissenters become critical of the Church due to their own pride: “There are the dissenters who leave the Church, either formally or informally, but who cannot leave it alone. Usually anxious to please worldly galleries, they are critical or at least condescending towards the Brethren. They not only seek to steady the ark but also on occasion give it a hard shove! Often having been taught the same true doctrines as the faithful, they have nevertheless moved in the direction of dissent (see Alma 47:36). They have minds hardened by pride (see Daniel 5:20)” (*Men and Women of Christ* [1991], 4).

• Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the consequences of contention and dissension:

“‘He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me [saith the Lord]’ . . . (3 Nephi 11:29–30). . . .

“Throughout the world, Saints of the Lord . . . have learned that the path of dissent leads to real dangers. The Book of Mormon carries this warning:

“‘. . . not long after their dissensions they became more hardened and impenitent, and more wild, wicked and ferocious . . . ; giving way to indolence, and all manner of lasciviousness; yea, entirely forgetting the Lord their God’ (Alma 47:36).

“How divisive is the force of dissension! Small acts can lead to such great consequences. Regardless of position or situation, no one can safely assume immunity to contention’s terrible toll. . . .

“Contention fosters disunity” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 86–88; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 68, 70).

Alma 48:1–10. Make a Stand for Christian Principles

• Sometimes true followers of Christ must stand as Moroni’s people stood in defense of “their liberty, their

lands, their wives, and their children, and their peace” (Alma 48:10). Moroni was intent on helping his people “maintain that which was called by their enemies the cause of Christians” (Alma 48:10).

With the tide of wickedness in the world today, President Gordon B. Hinckley has advocated that “there are times when we must stand up for right and decency, for freedom and civilization, just as Moroni rallied his people in his day to the defense of their wives, their children, and the cause of liberty (see Alma 48:10)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 72).

ALMA 48:10-18
What qualities made Captain Moroni a successful leader?

Alma 48:19. “No Less Serviceable”

- What does it mean that Helaman was “no less serviceable”? President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) taught that all righteous service is equally acceptable to God even though not everyone will serve in prominent callings:

“Even though Helaman was not as noticeable or conspicuous as Moroni, he was as serviceable; that is, he was as helpful or useful as Moroni. . . .



“Not all of us are going to be like Moroni, catching the acclaim of our colleagues all day every day. Most of us will be quiet, relatively unknown folks who come and go and do our work without fanfare. To those of you who may find that lonely

or frightening or just unspectacular, I say, you are ‘no less serviceable’ than the most spectacular of your associates. You, too, are part of God’s army.

“Consider, for example, the profound service a mother or father gives in the quiet anonymity of a worthy

Latter-day Saint home. Think of the Gospel Doctrine teachers and Primary choristers and Scoutmasters and Relief Society visiting teachers who serve and bless millions but whose names will never be publicly applauded or featured in the nation’s media.

“Tens of thousands of unseen people make possible our opportunities and happiness every day. As the scriptures state, they are ‘no less serviceable’ than those whose lives are on the front pages of newspapers.

“The limelight of history and contemporary attention so often focuses on the *one* rather than on the *many*” (“No Less Serviceable,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1992, 64).

Alma 49–50. Fortification of Nephite Cities

- Moroni’s inspiration and foresight in fortifying the cities proved to be a turning point in the war. Thousands of Nephites were preserved because the cities were prepared. We can apply this lesson by fortifying our own lives with righteous thoughts and deeds in order to withstand evil attacks or “fiery darts of the adversary” (1 Nephi 15:24; see also Helaman 5:12📖). The Lord has promised that if we humbly seek Him, then He will show us our weakness and will “make weak things become strong” (Ether 12:27📖). The following chart lists some examples of how the fortifications of the Nephites could apply to us:

How the Nephites Were Fortified	How We Can Fortify
The weaker fortifications were strengthened (see Alma 48:9).	We must strengthen the weak spots in our lives.
The Nephites prepared for the enemy in a manner never before known (see Alma 49:8).	We must prepare as never before to stand against the wiles of the devil.
The Nephites made their weaker cities into strongholds (see Alma 49:14).	If we come unto Christ, He can make weak things become strong to us (see Ether 12:27).
The Nephites were given power over their enemies (see Alma 49:23).	If we are faithful and trust the Lord, He will give us power over our enemies.

How the Nephites Were Fortified	How We Can Fortify
After some Nephite victories, they did not stop in their preparations (Alma 50:1).	When we have successfully overcome a temptation or trial, we must not let our guard down, but continue to endure and watch and pray always to not be overcome (see Alma 13:28).
The Nephites built security towers so they could see the enemy afar off (see Alma 50:4).	As we rely on prophets who are modern watchmen on the tower and see afar off, we will be better prepared for the future.

Alma 51:13. Take Up Arms to Defend One's Country

• As citizens we are subject to the governing laws of our country. Elder Russell M. Nelson offered the following counsel when faced with the duty of taking up arms to defend one's country:

“Men really are brothers because God really is our Father. Nevertheless, scriptures are studded with stories of contention and combat. They strongly condemn wars of aggression but sustain obligations of citizens to defend their families and their freedoms [see Alma 43:45–47; 46:11–12, 19–20; 48:11–16]. . . . Members of this Church will be called into military service of many nations. ‘We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he



holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society’ [D&C 134:1].

“During the Second World War, when members of the Church were forced to fight on opposing sides, the First Presidency affirmed that ‘the state is responsible for the civil control of its citizens or subjects, for their political welfare, and for the carrying forward of political policies, domestic and foreign. . . . But the Church itself, as such, has no responsibility for these policies, [other] than urging its members fully to render . . . loyalty to their country’ [in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (1965–75), 6:155–56]” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 42; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 40).

Points to Ponder

- What would you include in a list of the most important spiritual fortifications you need to be safe from the enemy who seeks your destruction?
- In what ways can Latter-day Saint soldiers serve like Captain Moroni during times of war?
- What impact can a valiant leader have on a country, state, community, or family?

Suggested Assignments

- Since not all of us will be preeminent like Moroni, describe the valuable service given by mothers and fathers. In addition, describe the importance of a Sunday School teacher, Primary chorister, Scoutmaster, a Relief Society visiting teacher, or a Church calling of your choice.
- Write down some of the weak areas in your life and your plans to “fortify” them against wickedness.