

CHAPTER 5

1 Nephi 16–18

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why people respond differently to the same set of circumstances? Such was the case with Lehi's family. During their trials, some of the family members looked to God and trusted in Him while others complained, lacked faith, and rebelled. Our response to circumstances should produce growth and greater faith rather than an attitude of complaining and rebellion. As you read 1 Nephi 16–18, examine the challenges these people faced and how the Lord was able to help Lehi's family when they were faithful. Notice the suffering caused by rebelliousness and disobedience. Look for examples of how to be faithful during difficult circumstances by comparing the challenges in your life to the experiences of Lehi's family.

Commentary

1 Nephi 16:2. "The Guilty Taketh the Truth to Be Hard"

- Nephi declared truth to his disobedient brothers in an effort to help them turn their hearts to God. Those who offend the Spirit through wickedness often take offense when given inspired correction or chastisement. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why we should accept the Lord's correction even if it is painful: "God is not only there in the mildest expressions of His presence, but also in those seemingly harsh expressions. For example, when truth 'cutteth . . . to the very center' (1 Nephi 16:2), this may signal that spiritual surgery is underway, painfully severing pride from the soul" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 37; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 31).

1 Nephi 16:7–8. The Importance of Marriage

- After reading about the marriages between Lehi's and Ishmael's families, we are told that Lehi had fulfilled all the commandments the Lord had given him (see 1 Nephi 16:8). Marriage is central to the Lord's plans for His children. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared the Lord's view on marriage: "The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a

mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

1 Nephi 16:10, 26–29. The Liahona

- Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the purpose of the Liahona and compared it to the Holy Spirit in our day:

"The Liahona was prepared by the Lord and given to Lehi and his family after they left Jerusalem and were traveling in the wilderness (see Alma 37:38; D&C 17:1). This compass or director pointed the way that Lehi and his caravan should go (see 1 Nephi 16:10), even 'a straight course to the promised land' (Alma 37:44). The pointers in the Liahona operated 'according to the faith and diligence and heed' (1 Nephi 16:28) of the travelers and failed to work when family members were contentious, rude, slothful, or forgetful (see 1 Nephi 18:12, 21; Alma 37:41, 43).



"The compass also provided a means whereby Lehi and his family could obtain greater 'understanding concerning the ways of the Lord' (1 Nephi 16:29). Thus, the primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide both direction and instruction during a long and demanding journey. The director was a physical instrument that served as an outward indicator of their inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according to the principles of faith and diligence.



“Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The Holy Ghost was conferred upon you and me as we came out of the world and into the Savior’s Church through baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church and admonished to seek for the constant companionship of ‘the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you’ (John 14:17).

“As we each press forward along the pathway of life, we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. ‘For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do’ (2 Nephi 32:5).

“The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 31; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 30–31).

1 NEPHI 16:29

What are the “small means” referred to in this scripture? What spiritual small means have made a difference in your life?

1 Nephi 16:18. A Bow “Made of Fine Steel”

- One commentator explained the use of steel in the Book of Mormon: “The overall question of the use of metals by Book of Mormon cultures is an important topic that deserves detailed attention [see John Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985), 277–88]. . . . There are five explicit references to metal weapons and armor in the Book of Mormon. Two are references to Near East weapons: ‘the blade [of Laban’s sword] was of the most precious steel’ (1 Nephi 4:9), and Nephi’s bow was made of ‘fine steel’ (1 Nephi 16:18). The existence of steel (that is, carburized iron) weapons in the Near East in the early sixth century B.C. has been clearly demonstrated. Robert Maddin writes, ‘To sum up, by the beginning of the seventh century B.C. at the latest, the blacksmiths of the eastern Mediterranean had mastered two of the processes that make iron a useful material for tools and weapons: carburizing and quenching’ [“How the Iron Age Began,” *Scientific American*, Oct. 1977: 131]” (William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin [1990], 345–46).

1 Nephi 16:21–25. The Broken Bow Experience

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell shared how great lessons often come after difficulties: “Nephi’s broken bow doubtless brought to him some irritation, but not immobilizing bitterness. After all, he was just trying to feed the extended family, so why should he have to contend as well with a broken bow? Yet out of that episode came a great teaching moment. Irritation often precedes instruction” (*If Thou Endure It Well* [1996], 128).

- Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that adversity can help stimulate necessary growth in our lives:

“May I share some suggestions with you who face . . . the testing that a wise Heavenly Father determines is needed even when you are living a worthy, righteous life and are obedient to His commandments.

“Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously.

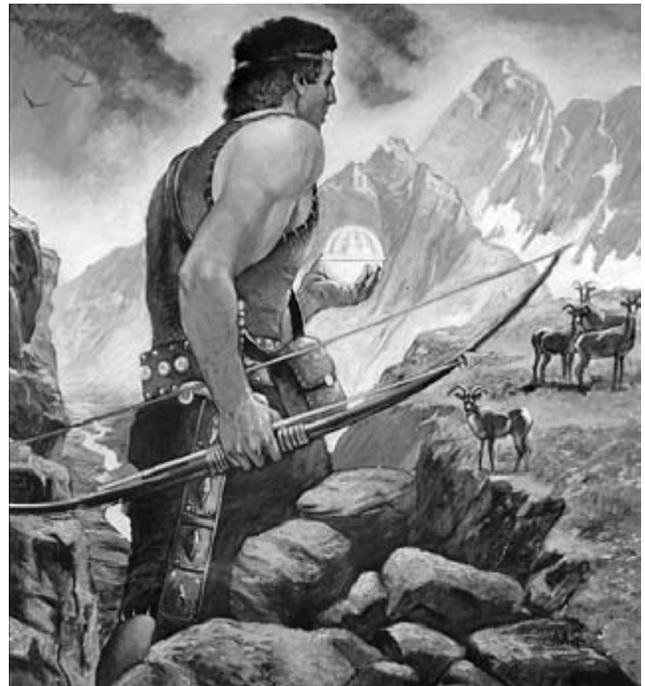
When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Proverbs 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 18; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16–17).

- The loss of Nephi’s bow raised doubts in Lehi’s colony, causing some to turn from God and focus on the negative. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled us to turn to the Lord when we face trials: “I have come to understand how useless it is to dwell on the *whys*, *what ifs*, and *if onlys* for which there likely will be given no answers in mortality. To receive the Lord’s comfort, we must exercise faith. The questions Why me? Why our family? Why now? are usually unanswerable questions. These questions detract from our spirituality and can destroy our faith. We need to spend our time and energy building our faith by turning to the Lord and asking for strength to overcome the pains and trials of this world and to endure to the end for greater understanding” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 14–15).

- Murmuring and complaining seemed to have become second nature for Laman and Lemuel. Even Lehi had become discouraged enough that he murmured. Elder Marion D. Hanks of the Presidency of the Seventy emphasized Nephi’s great character in how he approached this crisis:

“What to do? Nephi says he made a bow and an arrow out of some available wood, got a sling and stones and, ‘I said unto my Father, “Whither shall I go to obtain food?”’ It is a simple thing, isn’t it? . . . This means that Nephi went to his father and said, ‘Dad, the Lord has blessed you. You are his servant. I need to know where to go to get food. Dad, you ask him, will you?’ Oh, he could have gone to his own knees. He could have taken over.

“I count this one of the really significant lessons of life in the book, and, I repeat, the pages are full of them. A son who had strength enough, and humility enough, and manliness enough to go to his wavering superior and say, ‘You ask God, will you?’ because somehow he knew this is how you make men strong, that wise confidence in men builds them. Lehi asked God and God told him, and Lehi’s leadership was restored” (*Steps to Learning*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [May 4, 1960], 7).



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1 Nephi 16:23. Nephi’s Confidence in Lehi

- Nephi showed great humility by going to his father even after Lehi had murmured; Nephi still honored him. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) told of an experience that illustrates the principle of seeking counsel from our fathers, even though they may not be perfect:

“Some time ago, a young man came to my office requesting a blessing. He was about eighteen years of age and had some problems. There were no serious moral problems, but he was mixed up in his thinking and worried. He requested a blessing.

“I said to him, ‘Have you ever asked your father to give you a blessing? Your father is a member of the Church, I assume?’

“He said, ‘Yes, he is an elder, a rather inactive elder.’

“When I asked, ‘Do you love your father?’ he replied, ‘Yes, Brother Benson, he is a good man. I love him.’ He then said, ‘He doesn’t attend to his priesthood duties as he should. He doesn’t go to church regularly, I don’t know that he is a tithe payer, but he is a good man, a good provider, a kind man.’

“I said, ‘How would you like to talk to him at an opportune time and ask him if he would be willing to give you a father’s blessing?’

“‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I think that would frighten him.’

“I then said, ‘Are you willing to try it? I will be praying for you.’

“He said, ‘All right; on that basis, I will.’

“A few days later he came back. He said, ‘Brother Benson, that’s the sweetest thing that has happened in our family.’ He could hardly control his feelings as he told me what had happened. He said, ‘When the opportunity was right, I mentioned it to Father, and he replied, “Son, do you really want me to give you a blessing?” I told him, “Yes, Dad, I would like you to.”’ Then he said, ‘Brother Benson, he gave me one of the most beautiful blessings you could ever ask for. Mother sat there crying all during the blessing. When he got through there was a bond of appreciation and gratitude and love between us that we have never had in our home’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, 45–46; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 31–32).

1 Nephi 16:34. “The Place Which Was Called *Nahom*”

- The Hebrew meaning of *nahom* might be “consolation,” from the verb *nahom*, which means to “be sorry, console oneself” (see 1 Nephi 16:34*b*). An *Ensign* news article described an archaeological find that revealed the name *Nahom* in the Arabian Peninsula:

“A group of Latter-day Saint researchers recently found evidence linking a site in Yemen, on the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula, to a name associated with Lehi’s journey as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

“Warren Aston, Lynn Hilton, and Gregory Witt located a stone altar that professional archaeologists dated to at least 700 B.C. This altar contains an inscription confirming ‘Nahom’ as an actual place that existed in the peninsula before the time of Lehi” (“News of the Church,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2001, 79).



1 Nephi 17:4. Why Did It Take Eight Years to Make This Journey?

- In Alma 37:39–43 Alma informed us that Lehi’s family “did not travel a direct course” or “did not progress in their journey” because on so many occasions the Liahona ceased to work. It ceased because many of them did not exercise faith, and they transgressed the laws of God. This would explain why a journey that would have been of much shorter duration took so long. (Refer to the map “Possible Route Taken by Lehi’s Family” in the appendix, p. 410.)

1 Nephi 17:6. Twelve Conditions That Existed in the Land of Bountiful

- Lehi’s family “exceedingly rejoiced when [they] came to the seashore” at Bountiful (1 Nephi 17:6). Bountiful must have been a fertile area. Following are 12 conditions that existed in the land of Bountiful (identified in Warren P. and Michaela Knott Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi’s Journey across Arabia to Bountiful* [1994], 28–29):

1. Fresh water available year round
2. “Much fruit and also wild honey” (1 Nephi 17:5–6; 18:6)
3. Fertile ground in both the general area (17:5, 8) and the specific location (17:6) where Lehi’s family camped
4. Reasonable access from the interior desert to the coast
5. A mountain prominent enough to justify Nephi’s reference to “the mount” and close enough that he could go there to “pray oft” (18:3; see also 17:7)
6. Cliffs from which Nephi’s brothers could have thrown him “into the depths of the sea” (17:48)

7. Shoreline (17:5) suitable for the construction and launching of a ship (18:8)
8. Ore and flint for Nephi's tools (17:9–11, 16)
9. Enough large timber to build a seaworthy ship (18:1–2, 6)
10. Suitable winds and ocean currents to take the ship out into the ocean (18:8–9)
11. No population residing in the area
12. "Nearly eastward" of Nahom (17:1; see also 16:34)

Possible Route Taken by Lehi's Family



1 Nephi 17:7–19. Nephi's Faith Was Manifest by His Action

- Nephi's response to the Lord's command to build a ship gives us insight into his remarkable faith. Other prophets have also been overwhelmed at times by tasks commanded by the Lord. Moses felt inadequate when called to lead the children of Israel (see Exodus 4:1–5). Enoch felt he was slow of speech and wondered why the Lord called him (see Moses 6:31). Nephi might have been overwhelmed with the

thought of building an ocean-going vessel. Instead, his response displayed great faith: "Whither shall I go that I may find ore to smelt, that I may make tools to construct the ship . . . ?" (1 Nephi 17:9). Nephi's confidence did not likely come from any previous ship-building experience. Rather, his confidence stemmed from tremendous faith in God.



1 Nephi 17:23–34. Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt

- Nephi viewed his family's wilderness experience as a type or parallel to ancient Israel's wanderings in the wilderness (see 1 Nephi 17:13, 23, 30, 41–42). One writer discussed the witness the Book of Mormon provides regarding the exodus led by Moses: "The so-called higher critics of the Bible have raised the question as to whether or not the miracles of the exodus of Israel under Moses actually happened as they are recorded in the Old Testament. (See Exodus 14:19–20, 26–31; 16:4, 15; 17:5–6; Numbers 21:6–9.) However, the Book of Mormon substantiates the actuality of these miraculous events. (1 Nephi 17:23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 41.) Inasmuch as Nephi's knowledge of these miracles came from the authentic account on the brass plates of Laban (1 Nephi 5:11), Latter-day Saints should have no question concerning the reliability of the biblical account. Once again the Book of Mormon serves as a witness to its companion scripture, the Bible" (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [1976], 115).

1 NEPHI 17:19–46

In what ways did Nephi use the story of Israel's exodus to teach Laman and Lemuel? What are some events in your life that testify of God's mercy?

1 Nephi 17:45. Sensitivity to Spiritual Communication

- Why were Laman and Lemuel unable to understand the Lord's will, even after seeing an angel? Why couldn't they receive a spiritual confirmation of their journey as their younger brother Nephi did? (see 1 Nephi 2:16). Nephi identified the cause of their spiritual insensitivity as being "swift to do iniquity" (1 Nephi 17:45). President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency compared a person's worthiness of receiving the Spirit to receiving a signal on a cell phone:

"Cellular phones are used for much of the communication in our time. Occasionally, however, we find dead spots where the signal coming to a cell phone fails. This can happen when the cell phone user is in a tunnel or a canyon or when there is other interference.

"So it is with divine communication. The still, small voice, though still and small, is very powerful. It 'whispereth through and pierceth all things' [D&C 85:6]. . . . Perhaps something in our lives prevents us from hearing the message because we are 'past feeling' [1 Nephi 17:45]. We often put ourselves in spiritual dead spots—places and situations that block out divine messages. Some of these dead spots include anger, pornography, transgression, selfishness, and other situations that offend the Spirit" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 67–68; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 67).

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described spiritual communication:

"The Holy Ghost speaks with a voice that you *feel* more than you *hear*. It is described as a 'still small voice' [D&C 85:6]. And while we speak of 'listening' to the whisperings of the Spirit, most often one describes a spiritual prompting by saying, 'I had a *feeling*. . . .'

"Revelation comes as words we *feel* more than *hear*. Nephi told his wayward brothers, who were visited by an angel, 'Ye were past *feeling*, that ye could not *feel* his words.' [1 Nephi 17:45; italics added]" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 60).

- Laman and Lemuel were "past feeling" and could not "feel" the words of the Holy Ghost (1 Nephi 17:45). Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that spiritual insensitivity isn't just a problem for those with serious sin:

"I fear that some members of the Lord's Church 'live far beneath our privileges' with regard to the gift of the Holy Ghost. Some are distracted by the things of the world that block out the influence of the Holy Ghost, preventing them from recognizing spiritual promptings. This is a noisy and busy world that we live in. Remember that being busy is not necessarily being spiritual. If we are not careful, the things of this world can crowd out the things of the Spirit.

"Some are spiritually deadened and past feeling because of their choices to commit sin. Others simply hover in spiritual complacency with no desire to rise above themselves and commune with the Infinite. If they would open their hearts to the refining influence of this unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, a glorious new spiritual dimension would come to light. Their eyes would gaze upon a vista scarcely imaginable. They could know for themselves things of the Spirit that are choice, precious, and capable of enlarging the soul, expanding the mind, and filling the heart with inexpressible joy" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 27; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 27).

1 NEPHI 17:45

Examine this verse and identify different ways the Lord may speak at different times.

1 Nephi 18:9. Dancing and Singing

• Some may erroneously conclude from 1 Nephi 18:9 that the Lord does not approve of dancing or singing. Nephi said twice that they erred when their dancing and singing led them “to speak with much rudeness” (1 Nephi 18:9). The word *rude* refers to being harsh, vulgar, or coarse. The Lord has stated that He approves of proper dancing and singing (see Psalm 149:1–4; D&C 136:28). Note from these scriptures that we may praise the Lord through dancing and singing. Satan can use dancing or music, however, as a means of corruption and loss of the Spirit. This is why Church leaders caution us about the kinds of music we listen to and how we dance. The First Presidency has counseled:

“Choose carefully the music you listen to. Pay attention to how you feel when you are listening. Don’t listen to music that drives away the Spirit, encourages immorality, glorifies violence, [or] uses foul or offensive language. . . .

“Dancing can be fun and can provide an opportunity to meet new people. However, it too can be misused. When dancing, avoid full body contact with your partner. Do not use positions or moves that are suggestive of sexual behavior. Plan and attend dances where dress, grooming, lighting, lyrics, and music contribute to a wholesome atmosphere where the Spirit of the Lord may be present” (*For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God* [2001], 20–21).



1 Nephi 18:25. Horses

• There was controversy regarding horses in the Western Hemisphere before Columbus arrived. However, modern archaeological discoveries have shed new light on the subject: “Fossil remains of true horses, differing but very slightly from the smaller and inferior breeds of those now existing, are found abundantly in deposits of the most recent geological age, in almost every part of America, from Escholz Bay in the north to Patagonia in the South. In that continent however, they became quite extinct, and no horses, either wild or domesticated, existed there at the time of the Spanish conquest, which is the most remarkable as, when introduced from Europe the horses that ran wild proved by their rapid multiplication in the plains of South America and Texas that the climate, food, and other circumstances were highly favorable for their existence. The former great abundance of Equidae in America, their complete extinction, and their perfect acclimatization when reintroduced by man, form curious but as yet unsolved problems in geographical distribution.” (*New Americanized Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, p. 3197.) (Joy M. Osborn, *The Book of Mormon—The Stick of Joseph*, 2nd ed. [2001], 164).

Points to Ponder

- What qualities made Nephi someone the Lord could depend on?
- Why would asking your parents for counsel strengthen your relationship with them and with the Lord?
- Why is it dangerous to ignore or become “past feeling” to the promptings of the Holy Ghost?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a paragraph describing the purpose of the Liahona and the principles it worked by.
- Identify a doctrine or principle found in each of the following references:

1 Nephi 16:28 _____

1 Nephi 17:13–14 _____

1 Nephi 17:45–46 _____
_____.

1 Nephi 18:15–16 _____
_____.

- Compare Nephi’s previous experience of deliverance in 1 Nephi 7:16–18 with 1 Nephi 18:11–20. Then answer the following questions:

1. Even though this is the same righteous person with the same faith, why do you think Nephi was delivered immediately the first time and not until after four days on the second occasion?
2. What had to happen in 1 Nephi 18 before Nephi was delivered?