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Stories from the Book of Mormon: Lesson 4— Rebellion of the Lamanites

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Abstract: This lesson's objective was to show that wrongdoing and disobedience to God's will bring evil results.

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. What is your idea of culture?
2. In what way do people express their ideals of culture?
3. Why is the theater conducive to culture and a knowledge of the world's best literature?
4. Name several great American poets, and give something of the life and writings of your favorite American poet.
5. What are the influences that make for refinement and culture today?
6. Can you give reasons why a man who tills the soil develops fine traits of culture?
7. Why has the Bible been an influence for the development of art and culture?
8. Discuss the culture of the Mormons as expressed in the architecture of the Salt Lake Temple and other Church buildings; by their interest in the drama, music, and education.
9. Name some famous Utah painters, sculptors, musicians, and architects.

Stories from the Book of Mormon

For optional use of Relief Societies in stakes and missions in countries other than the United States, in lieu of social science lessons.

Lesson 4—Rebellion of the Lamanites

Tuesday, February 22, 1944

Note: For the full effect of this lesson it is imperative that the teacher and the class have *at hand* the Book of Mormon.

Lesson Objective: To show that wrongdoing and disobedience to God's will bring evil results.

TWO great forces are at work in this world—the force of good and the force of evil. From one comes light; from the other darkness. This being so, mortal man has always found himself between the cross-fire of these two influences. He is free, however, to make his own choice as to which way he would direct his life, whether to seek righteousness and the will of the Lord, or whether to follow selfish desires and become subject to the powers of evil.

The outcome of this personal struggle when multiplied into families, tribes or nations sets in motion a spiral of hate that often is not stopped short of bloodshed and de-

struction. The story of two ancient and great nations of people in America which sprang from one common ancestor has within its history this struggle between good and evil.

From the beginning account of Lehi's family, when this prophet was first commanded to lead his family out of the doomed city of Jerusalem, there were seeds of discord present in the family group. Laman and Lemuel, the older sons, early manifested a hardness of heart toward the things of God. At times these brothers did repent and found themselves once again in the narrow way, but never did this repentant mood persist long enough to give goodness the upper

hand in their souls. The result was that with the passing of Lehi in the promised land came the contention for leadership of the little colony.

Nephi, the youngest of the brothers born in Jerusalem, became, by divine appointment, the leader of his brethren—and this because of his choice of the good and his zeal in obeying the will of the Lord. Laman and Lemuel would not accept Nephi's leadership. Neither would they humble themselves to inquire of the Lord as to Nephi's appointment as prophet, feeling that if God had placed their younger brother over them it was unjust. This feeling grew to a point of such intense hatred that the Lord warned Nephi of his brothers' intent upon his life. They sought to kill him. A separation of the little colony became the only solution to prevent bloodshed and further animosity. Nephi relates this parting of the family ties as follows: "Behold, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the anger of my brethren. But behold, their anger did increase against me; inasmuch that they did seek to take away my life. Yea, they did murmur against me, saying: Our younger brother thinks to rule over us; and we have had much trial because of him; wherefore, now let us slay him, that we may not be afflicted more because of his words. For behold, we will not have him to be our ruler; for it belongs unto us, who are the elder brethren, to rule over this people. Now I do not write upon these plates all the words which they murmured against me. But it sufficeth me to say, that they did seek to take away my life. And it came to pass

that the Lord did warn me, that I, Nephi, should depart from them and flee into the wilderness, and all those who would go with me. Wherefore, it came to pass that I, Nephi, did take my family, and also Zoram and his family, and Sam, mine elder brother and his family, and Jacob and Joseph, my younger brethren, and also my sisters, and all those who would go with me. And all those who would go with me were those who believed in the warnings and the revelations of God; wherefore, they did hearken unto my words. And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were possible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days we did pitch our tents. And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi. And all those who were with me did take upon them to call themselves the people of Nephi" (II Nephi 5:1-9).

The full result of this unfortunate disagreement in the land of promise was not to be realized immediately. With the passing of years came bitter fruits which must always attend those who are disobedient to the will of God and who fail to repent. Laman and Lemuel and those who remained with these two elder sons of Lehi became known as the Lamanites. Darkness took possession of them. Their desires for peace, industry and the arts died. In place of these traits of culture came the wish for blood, slothfulness and idolatry. They became skilled warriors apt in the art of cunning and the insidious use of weapons, such as the bow, the ax, and the cimeter. The

use of this last named, a saber in kind, indicates the sly treacherous nature which had crept into their souls. Its point hooks upward, making a thrust from a crouching position more effective. Enos, a prophet who lived about 179 years after Lehi left Jerusalem, and who had seen wars between the Lamanites and the followers of Nephi (called then the Nephites), describes the sorrowful state into which the Lamanites had fallen in these words: "And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were in vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a bloodthirsty people; full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us" (Enos 20).

With no record to inform them of the will of God, the Lamanites soon lost the desire to worship. They were cut off from the presence of the Lord. And with their failure to recognize Nephi as their rightful leader they lost the priesthood, which is the right to act upon earth in the name of the Lord. To further add to their misery the Lord cursed them with a dark skin in order to make them unattractive to the people of Nephi.

Our lesson this week gives little in the way of uplift—its objective being to show that wrongdoing and

disobedience to God's will bring evil results. From it, however, and from the study of the Lamanites comes a very significant fact for one who questions the value of the record of God's word to His children. Blind and ignorant though these Lamanites had become, still they felt that the power their enemies, the Nephites, had over them was due, in part at least, to records Nephi had preserved for his people. In such an understanding rests a hope for the future return to light of this benighted race. Note the significance of this verse of Enos the prophet: "For at the present our strugglings were vain in restoring them (the Lamanites) to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers" (Enos 14).

Questions for Active Reading and Discussion

With the help of the suggested readings given below have the class carry on the discussion as follows: first, answer the question; second, read the passage given to discover plain and precious truths of the Gospel brought to light in the Book of Mormon. If time permits, have each member of the class add a passage of his own selection from within the Book of Mormon (II Nephi, Chapters 4 and 5, and Enos)—a passage that has brought new meaning to a Gospel truth.

1. What was the punishment that came upon the Lamanites for their evil doing? Read II Nephi 5:19-26.
2. What is the hope for the Lamanites as found in the blessing of Lehi? Read II Nephi 4:6-9.

The next question may be used if needed for class activity, or it may be assigned for home study.

3. How may one forgiven of sins respond to the Lord? Read the Book of Enos.