

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 11: “Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ”

(2 Nephi 31-33)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand the doctrine of Christ and have an increased desire to press forward, feasting on His words.

Chapters 2 Ne. 31-33 mark Nephi’s change of subject—from the workings of the Lord in the future to the practicalities of living the gospel in this conclusion of Nephi’s great record. Nephi speaks in great **plainness** so that there can be no question as to what one must do to obtain eternal life. A more complete blueprint for salvation could hardly be written.

In 2 Nephi 31, Nephi discusses:

- **repentance** (v. 5, 11-13),
- **baptism** (v. 4-19),
- **the gift of the Holy Ghost** (v. 12-18),
- **obedience** (v. 10-12),
- **enduring to the end** (v. 15-16, 20),
- **following Christ** (v. 10, 16),
- **faith, hope, and charity** (v. 20. 2 Ne 33:8-11),
- **feasting on the words of Christ** (v. 20, 2 Ne 32:3),
- **following the Spirit** (2 Ne 32:5,8),
- **and prayer** (2 Ne 32:8-9).

1. Nephi teaches of the doctrine of Christ.

Bruce R. McConkie: “The baptism of the Spirit is called the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost... **By the power of the Holy Ghost** – who is the Sanctifier (3 Ne. 27:19-21) – **dross iniquity, carnality, sensuality, and every evil thing is burned out of the repentant soul as if by fire**; the cleansed person becomes literally a new creature of the Holy Ghost. (Mosiiah 27:24-26.) He is born again. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 73).

Bruce R. McConkie: “Nephi explains that Christ did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized in that: 1) **He humbled himself** before the Father; 2) **He covenanted to be obedient** and keep the Father’s commandment; 3) **He had to be baptized** to gain admission to the celestial kingdom; and 4) **He set an example** for all men to follow. (2 Ne. 31:4-11.) Our Lord’s baptism ‘showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them’ (2 Ne. 31:9) (*Mormon Doctrine*, 71).

2. Nephi teaches that we must press forward and endure to the end.

PRESS FORWARD: To move forward with determination, regardless of adversity or distraction

2 Nephi 31:15-16: “Endure to the end” does not mean to endure to the end of a sacrament meeting, to endure to the end of a calling, to endure to the end of a trial, or to endure to the end of a boring lesson. The phrase is used all too often as a synonym for patience. **What it really means is to endure to the end of your life, never diverting from the path of discipleship.**

Neal A. Maxwell: “Hence we are not merely to exist to the end but are to persist in coping with what is occurring in the holy present. If we will follow the example of the Son of the living God, great things await us. **Even yesterday’s spiritual experience, however, does not guarantee us against tomorrow’s relapse.** Persistence thus matters greatly. More than a few, for instance, have had supernal, spiritual experiences only to fall away later; or, more often, merely to pull off to the side of the road, though intending only a brief rest stop.

“Hence the emphasis on enduring well to the end is wise, simply because **we are at risk till the end!**... Included in the enduring process is **meeting the test of being constantly improved.** Remodeling is costly and painful. **But how can we realistically expect the arduous process of putting off the old man and putting on the new man to be otherwise?”** (*If Thou Endure It Well*, 122-3).

3. Nephi speaks of the importance of feasting on the words of Christ.

FEASTING: Conveys the idea of receiving strength and nourishment from teachings and spirit of Christ.

Neal A. Maxwell: “We need to feast upon the words of Christ in the scriptures as these words come to us from living prophets. **Just nibbling occasionally will not do.** Feasting means **partaking with relish and delight and savoring—not gorging episodically in heedless hunger, but partaking gratefully, dining with delight, at a sumptuous spread carefully and lovingly prepared by prophet-chefs over the centuries.** **These words plus the gift of the Holy Ghost will tell us all things we should do.** The scriptures, ancient and continuing, are the key of knowledge... Appreciation for and the acceptance of the scriptures and the words of the living prophets are much more important steps than many realize... **To turn aside His teachings is to turn away from Him, and disdain for His doctrines is disdain for Him”** (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward*, 28).

Neal A. Maxwell: “Since **feasting** on the word of God has a ‘more powerful affect upon the minds of the people than... anything else’ (Alma 31:5), the more of the word of God we have and act upon, the more we will press forward. **Much spiritual energy is necessary for the marathon of discipleship”** (*A Wonderful Flood of Light*, 11).

4. Nephi declares that people will believe his words if they believe in Christ.

from **“Bless My Heart, I’m Trying to Overcome Fake Niceness”** by Susan Elzey, *Meridian*, 1/24/12

I couldn’t believe it. I turned on my iPod in the kitchen on New Year’s Day, and the first song to play was “I’m Trying to Be Like Jesus.” Immediately all my failures of the last year of my trying to be like Jesus came to the forefront, and I hung my head before a whole clean slate to try again to be like Him in “deed and in thought,” especially in being kind to others. That’s a biggie. . . It’s not that I don’t try; I do. But I came to the conclusion last year that I am not a naturally nice person. . . Even at my ultimate fake niceness, I’m naturally cynical and suspicious of people’s motives. I struggle with pessimism, which I like to think is the objectivity that comes naturally to me as a journalist. I’m probably wrong.

I decided to change my personality, outlook on life, conversations, motives, and inward woman in one challenging effort and become a “bless your heart” person. . . The whole project was incredibly difficult and at the end of a week or so, **it fizzled out.** I was back to being me, but now with a clearer realization that **even if the outer woman changes and the conversation changes, it really needs to be the inner woman who changes.**

So I think I know where the answer lies, the difference between being naturally nice and fake nice. The answer is that **the Savior can change hearts.** He and His amazing grace can make the thoughts and the feelings match the actions. It might take some time and some painful experiences, but if we continue to do the actions, the feelings can follow.

from **“The Battle in Our Brains”** by Catherine Keddington Arveseth, *Meridian*, 1/30/12

Several months ago I attended the Mormon Women Project Salon Event, at which I heard Tina Peterson speak. The title for her breakout session was, **“Becoming a Deliberate Student of the Gospel.”**

Tina first talked about the mechanics of effective scripture study; they were standard “should-dos” until she got to #4.

1. **Pray** before you begin.
2. **Read**, cross-reference, **immerse yourself in the texts.**
3. **Keep a notepad** and pencil near you. **Write down every impression that comes to you, without dismissing thoughts that may seem random or out of context.**
4. Over time, **look back** at what you have written and **search for patterns.** Trends and themes will emerge. **You will see what the Holy Ghost is trying to teach you.**

Wow, I thought. Looking for **patterns, themes, and messages over time? That hadn’t occurred to me.**

Then Tina got serious, and she said, “Now I’m going to tell you what I feel strongly you need to hear.”

Synapses are how our brains process messages. They are crucial to the biological computation of perception and thought. Tina explained that in this information age when messages, images, and information are coming at us almost faster than we can receive them, our brains are creating new neural pathways to accommodate the input. The first time we see an image on a screen, our brain creates a new neural pathway to process that image. **Input always travels the path of least resistance.** So the second time we see the new image, it will travel the same route. And before long, the new neural pathway has been stimulated enough to “desire” of itself continued activation. **A habit is born.**

After that, when the brain is not currently occupied, we long for that image. That is why we constantly check our phones or email. . . Without realizing it, we have begun to crave these places of input to the point where they can surreptitiously dominate our time. . . **Tina said the only way to counterbalance this is with ancient and modern scripture. We must expose our brains repeatedly to the image or sound of God’s words.** Printed, glowing on the page, read aloud, or discussed with friends. **That is where God’s Spirit lives. Satan knows the physiology of the brain. He knows if he can encourage over-stimulation** through an overload of **mundane or technical information,** he can increase the odds that we will not seek more spiritual sources for input, thus **making scripture study tedious.** . . Then Tina said this, **“Your time with the Word of the Lord is your personal Urim and Thummim. It is here that God will speak to you. Frequent the scriptures often enough that your brain craves that kind of input, that your day feels incomplete without it.”**

Neal A. Maxwell: “Today my plea is to those members already inside but **whose discipleship is casual,** individuals whom we love, whose gifts and talents are much needed in building the kingdom! . . . Any call for greater consecration is, of course, really a call to all of us. . . [My] comments are for the essentially “honorable” members who are **skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship** and who are **casually engaged** rather than “anxiously engaged.” Such members accept callings but not all of the accompanying responsibilities; hence, their Church chores must often be done by those already “anxiously engaged.” Some regard themselves as **merely “resting”** in between Church callings. But we are never in between as to this soaring call from Jesus: “What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” (3 Ne. 27:27). Only greater consecration will cure ambivalence and casualness in any of us! The tutoring challenges arising from increased consecration may be severe but reflect the divine mercy necessary to induce further consecration. **If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary.** Deprivation may prepare us for further consecration, though we shudder at the thought. If we are too easily contented, **God may administer a dose of divine discontent.** His long-suffering thus becomes very necessary to maximize our agency and development. We “cannot bear all things now,” but the Lord “will lead [us] along,” as we “give place” in our thoughts and schedules and “give away” our sins, which are the only ways we can begin to make room to receive all that God can give us. (D&C 78:18; D&C 50:4; Alma 32:27-28) (“Settle This in Your Hearts,” CR October 1992)