

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 5: “Hearken to the Truth, Give Heed unto It”

(1 Nephi 16-22)

LESSON GOAL: To inspire class members to follow Nephi’s example of **faith** and **willing obedience**.
To “**more fully persuade [us] to believe in the Lord [our] Redeemer and liken all scripture unto [ourselves].**”
(1 Nephi 19:23)

Joseph Smith: “If men to do not comprehend the character of God, they don’t comprehend themselves.

Bruce R. McConkie: **FAITH** The Prophet taught that faith is “the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness. . . Faith is the moving cause of all action in intelligent beings. . . in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 261).

OBEDIENCE “Obedience is the first law of heaven, the cornerstone upon which all righteousness and progression rest. It consists in **compliance with divine law**, in conforming to the mind and will of Deity, in **complete submission** to God and his commands. . . and being ruled by him whose we are” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 539).

RIGHTEOUSNESS “Plain and simply stated, righteousness is the quality and type of living that **results from obedience** to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. No persons are wholly righteous; . . . however, the saints attain a high degree of righteousness; their conduct becomes blameless, upright, and just; they acquire the attributes of equity, integrity, rectitude, and justice; **they attain a state of godliness**” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 654-655).

DILIGENCE “**Pure dogged determination, perseverance**, application to duty, zeal, industry, **heed to counsel**. Continuing diligence in church service is a mark of **testimony, conversion, and spiritual stability**” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 197).

CHARACTERISTICS OF LAMAN AND LEMUEL (“Lessons from Laman and Lemuel,” Neal Maxwell, Oct. 1999)

- Failing to understand the dealings of the Lord with His children
 - Didn’t understand that tutoring of God will require difficult things
 - Spiritually numbed; murmured against God
 - Seldom responded to tenderness of others
 - Rebels instead of leads; resentful instead of righteous
 - Remorse for sin never lasted long
 - Quick to complain
 - Ingratitude for the Liahona
 - Rejection of prophets and scriptures
 - Displayed little lasting spiritual curiosity
- “But they would not . . . partake of the fruit”—(1 Nephi 8:35)

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEPHI

- Righteous and willing to hearken to the truth
 - Kept commandments with all diligence; exhorted his brothers to
 - Had a great knowledge of the goodness of God
 - Sorrowful for the hardness of his brothers’ hearts
 - Filled with anguish and heart pain at brothers’ unbelief
 - Forever obedient
 - Prayed often and fervently
 - Sought the Lord at top of the mountain
 - Quoted scripture and truth of prophets
 - Praised God in his afflictions
- Endured great trials with patience

1. The Lord guides the families of Lehi and Ishmael according to their faith and diligence.

Neal A. Maxwell: “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 Ne. 16:2)**, this may signal that **spiritual surgery** is underway, **painfully severing pride from the soul**” (*Ensign*, November 1987, 31).

“There is kindness in this pain, for as **truth**, the Lord’s laser, **cuts through to all** but the hardest of hearts, so the healing light of the gospel is let in. The outer encrustations of evil can make us so insensitive that only **the cuts ‘to the very center’** have any hope of bringing the desired response!” (*Things As They Really Are*, 79.)

“Most of us don’t like to be cut to the center [1 Ne. 16:2], and when the **gospel standards cut** us, it hurts. The tendency is to deal with the pain by **rejecting further surgery**” (*For the Power Is in Them . . . : Mormon Musings*, 49).

M. Russell Ballard: (1Ne. 16:29: “**And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.**”) “A series of seemingly **small but incorrect choices** can become those little soul-destroying termites that eat away at the foundations of our testimony until, before we are aware, we may be brought near to **spiritual and moral destruction.**’ In a similar way, the **small acts of kindness**, the tiny deeds of Christian service, the silent but significant **efforts to control our own thoughts and feelings**—these are the simple things that build character and shape human destiny everlastingly. The world takes notice of the public accomplishments, the spectacular victories. But who knows of the **private battles of the soul**, thousands of them, waged and won? . . . Who knows of the infinite struggles, the buffetings, the adversarial onslaughts faced and overcome by the sinless Son of Man in the Garden of the Oilpress, finished before his public victory over the grave on Golgotha? **Truly, the ‘little things’ form and shape the disciple of Christ**” (Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God: Reflections on the Cost of Discipleship*, 77).

President Spencer W. Kimball: “The Lord gave to ... every person, a conscience which tells him every time he starts to go on the wrong path. He is always told if he is listening; but people can, of course, become so used to hearing the messages that they ignore them until finally they do not register anymore.

“You must realize that you have **something like the compass, like the Liahona**, in your own system. Every child is given it. ... If he ignores the Liahona that he has in his own makeup, he eventually may not have it whispering to him. ... Our ship will not get on the wrong course ... if we listen to the dictates of our own Liahona, which we call the conscience” (Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 117; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 79).

Bruce R. McConkie and Robert Millet: (1 Ne 17:45: “**Ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words**”) “**True religion is a feeling.** It is common in anti-Mormon literature for attacks to be made on prayer and on trusting one's feelings as sources for obtaining truth. In the realm of spiritual understanding both are fundamental. **Truth is felt.** Falsehood is often clothed in erudite and sophisticated arguments. One does not have to be able to refute the argument to know that it is false. **Truth feels good; falsehood does not.** Christ spoke of the inability of the wicked to ‘understand with their heart’ (Matthew 13:15), while the righteous ‘understood in their hearts’ things too marvelous to utter (3 Nephi 19:33-34). Describing the spirit of revelation for Joseph Smith, the Lord said, ‘I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart’ (D&C 8:2). Because of their wickedness, such understanding was lost to Nephi's rebellious brothers.” (Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, vol. 1, 137).

Boyd K. Packer: “The Holy Ghost communicates with the spirit through the mind more than through the physical senses. This guidance comes as thoughts, **as feelings**, through impressions and promptings. It is not always easy to describe inspiration. The scriptures teach us that **we may ‘feel’ the words of spiritual communication** more than hear them, and see with spiritual rather than with mortal eyes” (1 Nephi 17:45)” (CR, Oct. 1989).

Orson F. Whitney: “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. **All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . .** and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.” (*Every Good Thing: Talks from the 1997 BYU Women's Conference* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1998], 22).

2. Nephi demonstrates unwavering faith by fulfilling the Lord's command to build a ship.

L. Tom Perry: “This is one of the more interesting stories we have in the scriptures because it tells of an instance in which **the Lord provided help but then stepped aside** to allow one of His sons to exercise his own initiative. I have sometimes wondered what would have happened if Nephi had asked the Lord for tools instead of a place to find the ore to make the tools. I doubt the Lord would have honored Nephi's request. You see, the Lord knew that Nephi could make the tools, **and it is seldom the Lord will do something for us that we can do for ourselves**” (Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 87–88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 64).

4. Insights from 1 Nephi 19–22

Neal A. Maxwell: “The Lord has said, ‘I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.’ (1 Nephi 20:10) He knows, being omniscient, how we will cope with affliction beforehand. But we do not know this. **We need, therefore, the refining that God gives to us, though we do not seek or crave such tribulation.** Is not our struggling amid suffering and chastening in a way like the efforts of the baby chicken still in the egg? It must painfully and patiently make its own way out of the shell. To help the chick by breaking the egg for it could be to kill it. Unless it **struggles itself** to break outside its initial constraints, it may not have the strength to survive thereafter.

“Afflictions can soften and sweeten us, and can be a chastening influence. We often think of chastening as something being done to punish us, such as by a mortal tutor who is angry and peevish with us. **Divine chastening, however, is a form of learning** as it is administered at the hands of a loving Father. (Helaman 12:3.) (*All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], 38-39.)

Joseph Fielding Smith: (1 Ne 22:17: “**He will preserve the righteous by his power...Wherefore, the righteous need not fear...**”) “**Do not think for a moment that the days of trial are over.** They are not. If we keep the commandments of the Lord, we shall prosper, we shall be blessed; the plagues, the calamities that have been promised will be poured out upon the peoples of the earth, and we shall escape them, yea, they shall pass us by. But remember the Lord says if we fail to keep his word, if we walk in the ways of the world, they will not pass us by, but we shall be visited with floods and with fire, with sword and with plague and destruction. **We may escape these things through faithfulness**” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:34).

“The Lord commanded me, and I must obey” (2 Nephi 33:15).

Heber J. Grant: “No obstacles are insurmountable when God commands and we obey” (CR, Oct. 1899, 18).