

Lesson #25

“THEY TAUGHT WITH POWER AND AUTHORITY OF GOD”

Alma 17-22

INTRODUCTION: President Benson said:

We love all of our missionaries who are serving the Lord full-time in the mission field. But there is a difference in missionaries. Some are better prepared to serve the Lord the first month in the mission field than some who are returning home after twenty-four months. We want young men entering the mission field who can enter the mission field "on the run," who have the faith, born of personal righteousness and clean living, that they can have a great and productive mission.

But as we raise the level of expectation for the performance of our missionaries, we must also raise the level of expectation for the performance of all of the members of the Church in fulfilling our missionary duties. If the standard is to be raised, it is raised for all of us. We must be more faithful. We must be more spiritually in tune. We must prepare ourselves to assist the missionaries in finding those of our Heavenly Father's children who will embrace the message of the Restoration.

From the missionary experiences of the sons of Mosiah, this lesson will provide wonderful insights into the things missionaries must be prepared to do in order to enter the mission field "on the run," and to get over the higher bar.

1. THE SONS OF MOSIAH PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE LAMANITES (Alma 17:1-18)

What price are we willing to pay to be or to become effective advocates of the Lord, his gospel, and the restoration? Notice what the sons of Mosiah were willing to do.

1. "They had **searched the scriptures diligently** that they might know the word of God." (Alma 17:2)
2. "They had given themselves to **much prayer, and fasting**; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God. (Alma 17:3)
3. "They had been **teaching the word of God** for the space of **fourteen years** among the Lamanites . . ." (Alma 17:4)
4. "**Neither were any** of the sons of Mosiah **willing to take upon them the kingdom** [to be king]." (Mosiah 29:3)

They had an attitude among them that seemed to say **good enough is not good enough! I will not be done until I have done all that I can do!** The result of this passion for excellence was that they "had much success in bringing many to the knowledge of the truth. . ." (Alma 17:4)

2. AMMON SERVES AND TEACHES KING LAMONI; MANY OF THE PEOPLE ARE CONVERTED (Alma 17-19)

There are some great lessons about missionary work here that are worth some inspection by prospective, full-time, returned, and member missionaries.

1. (Alma 17:11) "**Yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me.**" *Patience and long-suffering* are two of the defining characteristics of true Christians. We must wait for the Lord to act in our behalf and in behalf of our investigators. Jesus usually comes to our assistance in the fourth watch (see Mark 6:48), not the first. And in the meantime, those for whom and with whom we labor may not be friendly nor receptive. Therefore, while we wait, we must be good examples. **People must know that our love is stronger than inconvenience or embarrassment or impatience.** But we must not forget that some really great church members took a really long time to accept the truth.
2. (Alma 17:25) "**I will be thy servant.**" Ammon had the wisdom to offer to be a servant when he had been offered a place in the royal family. (Alma 17:24) He had refused a throne to come on a mission and was not inclined to change directions now that he had arrived. He might have marched into the palace and whipped out his flip chart for a first discussion, but he did not. For the first three days of his mission all he did was herd sheep, but then the opportunities came with stunning rapidity and unexpected success. **Every soul we teach must feel this: that our primary and all but exclusive motive is to serve them and thereby help them.**
3. (Alma 17:29) "I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king, **that I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants**, that I may lead them to believe in my words." In a situation where fellow-shepherds "began to weep exceedingly," Ammon's heart was "swollen

within him with joy” because he saw an opportunity to win hearts. We should constantly be looking for the same kinds of opportunities and seize them with the same enthusiasm shown by Ammon at the waters of Sebus.

4. (Alma 17:30) “These were the thoughts of Ammon when he saw the afflictions of **those whom he termed to be his brethren.**” Ammon thought of the other shepherds as equals. We must not convey a “holier-than-thou” or “more-worthy-than-thou” attitude as we meet and teach others (Alma 18:17— “Behold, I am a man . . .”). Our attitude should say, *“I am no better than you. I am only different from you in that I have something precious that you do not have that I would like to give to you.*

5. (Alma 18:3) “We know that **he is a friend** to the king.” Last year, my son was in a car wreck, was not seriously hurt, but did spend the night in the hospital in Kanab. The next morning two friends left home 4:00 A.M. and drove to Kanab, 5 hours each way, to get him. They did not have to go. But they went because he was their friend. Ammon defended the king’s flocks and his fellow shepherds for the same reason. *You are my friend . How can I help you? How can I serve you?*

6. (Alma 18:5) “**Lamoni began to fear exceedingly, with fear lest he had done wrong** in slaying his servants . . .” People who hear the gospel from missionaries of this caliber will have a stirring of conscience and will begin to fear that they have done wrong. These feelings of conscience will create in them a desire to know their standing before the Lord, and to know that they should do. Remember the day of Pentecost?

7. (Alma 18:8-10) Lamoni “was more astonished, because of the faithfulness of Ammon, saying: Surely **there has not been any servant** among all my servants **that has been so faithful as this man . . .**” The combined effect of your concern, your patience, your example, your humility, your friendship will work on the hearts of your contacts, convincing them of your honesty and faithfulness.

8. (Alma 18:11-14) “. . . **he knew not what he should say unto him.**” This is such an important part of this process. Investigators who have had this kind of experience with you will often want to know more but they will not know what to ask or how to ask. We must be sensitive to their difficulty and prayerful that the inspiration of the Spirit will teach us to teach.

9. (Alma 18:15,16) “Ammon, being filled with the Spirit of God, therefore **he perceived the thoughts of the king.**” When it is time to teach, **the Spirit will help us know what to teach.** Other scriptures speak plainly of this. D&C 33:8-10 commands three times, “Open your mouths.” D&C 100: 5,6 declares,

Therefore, verily I say unto you, lift up your voices unto this people; speak the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts, and you shall not be confounded before men; For it shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say.

10. (Alma 18:17-20) “And the king said . . . **Thou mayest speak boldly,** and tell me concerning these things; . . . And now, if thou wilt tell me concerning these things, whatsoever thou desirest I will give unto thee” Ammon is now in a position to speak boldly. If he had given that same sermon on the day he arrived in Ishmael, he would probably have ended up in prison like his brethren, or worse! But now the soil has been prepared and is ready for some serious planting, and Ammon can teach freely everything that needs to be taught.

11. (Alma 18:24-40) “And Ammon began to speak unto him with boldness, and said unto him . . . **Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?**” We must begin our teaching where the person is in his or her spiritual understanding. Thus Ammon begins not with God but with the Great Spirit; not with the restoration but with the creation.

3. AMMON IS LED BY THE SPIRIT TO DELIVER HIS BRETHREN. LAMONI’S FATHER IS CONVERTED (Alma 20-22)

The true sign of greatness in this work as in all divine work is not how much others notice us, but how much the Lord notices us. Our usefulness is not to be evaluated by the quantity of accolades or praise, nor even by the numbers of our converts, **but by the presence of the Holy Ghost in our lives.**

12. **Look for opportunities to teach.** Ammon shows us this better than any missionary in the scriptures with the possible exception of the Apostle Paul. While others were swinging swords and clubs and seeking death, Ammon was rejoicing and preparing to teach the gospel. Missionaries must be alert for opportunities to share the gospel.

13. (Alma 17:11) “And the Lord said unto them also: **Go forth** among the Lamanites . . .” In the absence of success or spiritual direction there is always one thing a missionary can do. He or she can *go forth.* Go back to work. Knock on one more door. Teach one more discussion. Talk to one more contact on the street. Go forth.