

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 26: “Converted unto the Lord”

(Alma 23-29)

LESSON GOAL: To encourage us to strengthen our conversion and increase our desire to help others become converted.

1. The Anti-Nephi-Lehies are converted to the Lord.

Bruce R. McConkie: “In the full gospel sense, conversion is more—far more—than merely changing one’s belief from that which is false to that which is true; it is more than the acceptance of the gospel truths, than the acquirement of a testimony. To convert is to change from one status to another, and gospel conversion consists in the transformation of man from his fallen and carnal state to a state of saintliness” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 162).

J. F. McConkie & R. L. Millet: “The two aspects of conversion—the nature of the preaching by the sons of Mosiah and the depth of the conversions—are inextricably tied. These missionaries did not trifle with the Lamanites or entertain them or seek by manipulation to bring them into the Church. They preached the **gospel**. They preached **creation, fall, and atonement**. They preached **faith, repentance**, and rebirth. They preached **Christ** by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus the listeners were converted to Christ, not to the missionaries” (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 3, 165).

THE ROAD TO TRUE CONVERSION—(The Pattern Given in Alma 22-27)

1. **I will give up all that I possess.** (Alma 22:15) “And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.”

2. **I will give away all my sins.** (Alma 22:18) “O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day. . .”

Ezra Taft Benson: “Each of us must surrender our sins if we are to really know Christ. We do not know Him until we become like Him. There are some, like this king, who must pray until they, too, have ‘a wicked spirit rooted’ from them so they can find the same joy” (*Come Unto Christ*, 51).

3. **The greater the temptation, the stronger will be my commitment not to sin.** (Alma 24:16) “And now, my brethren, if our brethren seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords, yea, even we will bury them deep in the earth, that they may be kept bright, as a testimony that we have never used them, at the last day; and if our brethren destroy us, behold, we shall go to our God and shall be saved.”

4. **I want to be different from the world.** (Alma 23:16-17) “The king and those who were converted were desirous that they might have a name, that thereby they might be distinguished from their brethren;” (Alma 27:27) “And they were among the people of Nephi, and also numbered among the people who were of the church of God. And they were also distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end.”

Neal A. Maxwell: “The **ALMOST** valiant resemble the valiant, except that they show considerably less consecration and measurably more murmuring. They are less settled spiritually and are more distracted by the world. They progress, but do so episodically rather than steadily and pause on plateaus” (*Men & Women of Christ*, 3).

5. **I feel gratitude even in adversity.** (Alma 24: 9-10) “We have been convinced of our sins, and of the many murders, which we have committed. And I also thank my God, yea, my great God, that he hath granted unto us that we might repent of these things, and also that he hath forgiven us of those our many sins and murders which we have committed, and taken away the guilt from our hearts, through the merits of his Son.”

6. **I would rather die than sin.** (Alma 24:19) “When these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth, they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried their weapons of war, for peace.”

7. **I desire to be an instrument in the hands of God.** (Alma 26:3) “For our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God! And this is the blessing, which hath been bestowed upon us, that we have been made instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work.”

8. **I would rather give than receive.** (Alma 26:32) “They had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy; they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren.”

9. **I am willing to repair any damage I have ever done to anyone.** (Alma 27:8) “Yea, if the Lord saith unto us go, we will go down unto our brethren, and we will be their slaves until we repair unto them the many murders and sins which we have committed against them.”

2. The Anti-Nephi-Lehies seek safety among the Nephites.

The Origin of the Name “Anti-Nephi-Lehies”:

1. “Dr. Hugh Nibley has found a Semitic and common Indo-European root corresponding to “anti” and that means ‘in the face of’ or ‘facing,’ as of one facing a mirror, and by extension ‘one who imitates.’ **Thus the term ‘Anti-Nephi-Lehies’ might refer to those who imitate the teachings of the descendants of Nephi and Lehi**” (*A Companion To Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, 209-210).
2. “The “anti” came from the Egyptian “-nty,” meaning “**he of, the one of.**” **So, instead of having the sense of “against,” it means “the one of Nephi and Lehi”** (Dennis Largey, Ed., *The Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 67).

Spencer J. Condie: “Following Nephi’s counsel to ‘liken all scriptures unto us,’ **we can use the conversion of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies as a metaphor for our own lives.** When we become truly converted, the testimony of our conversion may well be borne in **our burying deep in the earth our sharp tongues in lieu of sharp swords.** Our post-conversion sanitary landfill might also be used to **discard our hot tempers, our evil speech patterns, our penchant for off-color jokes, our ethnic epithets, our greediness, unkindness, and lack of compassion**” (*Your Agency: Handle With Care*, 140).

3. Ammon and Alma rejoice in the accomplishment of the Lord’s work.

CAN YOU REJOICE AS AMMON?

My joy is full.....Alma 26:11
My heart is brim with joy.....Alma 26:11
I will rejoice in my God.....Alma 26:11
Great reason to rejoice.....Alma 26:13
We will glory in the Lord.....Alma 26:16
I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.....Alma 26:16

Joseph Smith: “**Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God**” (TPJS, 255).

Ezra Taft Benson: “My beloved coworkers, you face the happiest years of your lives. I know whereof I speak. I have been there. **I have tasted the joy of missionary work.** There is no work in all the world that can bring an individual greater joy and happiness. **I pray your joy will be full,** and like Ammon of old, you will be able to say, “My joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.” (Alma 26:11) (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 213).

Neal A. Maxwell: “**When we reach a point of consecration, [of conversion] our afflictions will be swallowed up in the joy of Christ.** It does not mean we won’t have afflictions, but they will be put in a perspective that permits us to deal with them. With our steady pursuit of **joy** and with each increasing measure of **righteousness**, we will experience one more drop of delight—one drop after another—until, in the words of a prophet, ‘**our hearts are brim with joy.**’ At last, the soul’s cup finally runs over!” (*Brim with Joy*, 13).

4. Conclusion

Dallin H. Oaks: “The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our **acts and thoughts—what we have become.** . . . We qualify for eternal life through a process of conversion. . . . The **conversion** He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. **To testify is to KNOW and to DECLARE. The gospel challenges us to be “converted,” which requires us to DO and to BECOME.**

Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. The **conversion** we must achieve requires us to be **a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough . . .** We are challenged to move through a **process of conversion** toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. **Charity, “the pure love of Christ,” is not an act but a condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes.**” (“The Challenge to Become,” General Conference, October, 2000)

Neal A. Maxwell: “**Desire denotes a real longing or craving.** Hence righteous desires are much more than passive preferences or fleeting feelings. Of course our genes, circumstances, and environments matter very much, and they shape us significantly. Yet there remains an inner zone in which we are sovereign, unless we abdicate. In this zone lies the essence of our individuality and our personal accountability. . . . Mostly, brothers and sisters, **we become the victims of our own wrong desires.** . . . Like it or not, therefore, **reality requires that we acknowledge our responsibility for our desires. . . . Righteous desires need to be relentless,** therefore, because, said President Brigham Young, ‘the men and women who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom will find that **they must battle every day**’ (*Journal of Discourses* 11:14). Therefore, true Christian soldiers are more than weekend warriors. . . . **Some of our present desires, therefore, need to be diminished and then finally dissolved**” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 21-22).