

Alma 8:11 *Rest*

We must not be too busy sawing to take time to sharpen the saw.

Stephen R. Covey, personal communication

2

[Joseph Smith] said it tried some of the pious folks to see him play ball with the boys. He then related a story of a certain prophet who was sitting under the shade of a tree amusing himself in some way, when a hunter came along with his bow and arrow, and reproved him. The prophet asked him if he kept his bow strung up all the time. The hunter answered that he did not. The prophet asked why, and he said it would loose its elasticity if he did. The prophet said it was just so with his mind, he did not want it strung up all the time.

Hyrum Andrus, *Joseph Smith: The Man and the seer*, p. 16.

3

Alma 8:8-9

"I think it is high time," the prophet [Joseph Smith] wrote, "for a Christian world to awake out of sleep, and cry mightily to that God, day and night, whose anger we have justly incurred." The condition of the world should be, he wrote, as a stimulant "to arouse the faculties, and call forth the energies of every man, woman or child that possesses feelings of sympathy for their fellows; or that is in any degree endeared to the budding cause of our glorious Lord." The prophet was inspired to call upon the inhabitants to turn from their sins, and the Lord has called the weak to call upon the great to repent. This epistle was much like the calls to repentance by the prophets in ancient Israel, and without any questions was necessary to be given to the world shortly after the restoration of the Gospel and the Priesthood.

Church History and Modern Revelation, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949], 2:139

4

Alma 8:10*Wrestling in mighty prayer*

May I ask you today to consider the effectiveness of your prayers? How close do you feel to your Heavenly Father? Do you feel that your prayers are answered? Do you feel that the time you spend in prayer enriches and uplifts your soul? Is there room for improvement?

There are many reasons our prayers lack power. Sometimes they become routine. Our prayers become hollow when we say similar words in similar ways over and over so often that the words become more of a recitation than a communication. This is what the Savior described as "vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7). Such prayers, He said, will not be heard....

Do your prayers at times sound and feel the same? Have you ever said a prayer mechanically, the words pouring forth as though cut from a machine? Do you sometimes bore yourself as you pray?

Prayers that do not demand much of your thought will hardly merit attention from our Heavenly Father. When you find yourself getting into a routine with your prayers, step back and think. Meditate for a while on the things for which you really are grateful.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, "Improving Our Prayers," in *Brigham Young University 2002-2003 Speeches* [2003], 260.

5

Except ye have the Spirit ye shall not teach.... Now, you have to pray for this.... But when you pray, do you really ask the Lord, as His servants, to speak through you, to let His power rest upon you and let the Holy Ghost bear witness to the people as you testify to them? Do you really pray that way? Have you really learned to plead with the Lord as if you very life depended upon it? It is necessary because your very life does depend on it, my brethren and sisters—your life as a missionary of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005], 2:451-452.

6 **Alma 8:14**

It is interesting to note that, other than in the book of Job and a few other places, there are very few scriptural references to physical or mortal pain. The pain most frequently spoken of in the scriptures is the pain and anguish of the Lord and His prophets for the disobedient souls.

Robert D. Hales, *Ensign*, Nov. 1998 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1998], 15

7

Sometimes when you are going through the most severe tests, you will be nearer to God than you have any idea, for like the experience of the Master Himself in the temptation on the mount, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross at Calvary,.... "And behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matthew 4:11). Sometimes that may happen to you in the midst of your trials.

Harold B. Lee, *Teachings*, 192

8 **Alma 8:10-16***Difficult Missionary Work*

In June 1830, Samuel Harrison Smith trudged down a country road in New York State on the first official missionary journey of the restored Church. He had been set apart by his brother, the Prophet Joseph. The first missionary traveled twenty-five miles that first day without disposing of a single copy of the new and strange book that he carried on his back. Seeking lodging for the night, faint and hungry, he was turned away, after briefly explaining his mission, with the words: "You liar, get out of my house. You shan't stay one minute with your books." Continuing his journey, discouraged and with heavy heart, he slept that first night under an apple tree. So began, in the most inauspicious way, the missionary work of this dispensation through the restored Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Ezra Taft Benson (*God, Family, Country*, p. 188)

9

One of the greatest secrets of missionary work is *work*. If a missionary works, he will get the Spirit; if he gets the Spirit, he will touch the hearts of the people, and he will be happy. Then there will be no homesickness nor worrying about the families, for all time and talents and interests are centered on the work of the ministry. Work, work, work—there is no satisfactory substitute, especially in missionary work. We must not allow ourselves to become discouraged. Missionary work brings joy, optimism, and happiness. We must not give Satan an opportunity to discourage us. Here again, work is the answer. The Lord has given us a key by which we can overcome discouragement (Matt. 11:28-30).

Ezra Taft Benson (*Come Unto Christ*, p. 96-97)

10

[To missionaries] ..."you must know that Lucifer will oppose you, and be prepared for his opposition. Do not be surprised. He wants you to fail. Discouragement is one of the devil's tools. Have courage and go forward. Recognize that the gospel has been preached with some pain and sorrow from the very beginning of time. Do not expect that your experience will be otherwise."

James E. Faust (*Ensign*, May 1996, p. 42)

11

I received a mission when I embraced this work; it has never been taken from me yet... We [John Taylor and I] have been over a great many rough roads [and] traveled hard.... For over thirty years we have labored to preach the gospel.... In my early missions... I have waded swamps and rivers and have walked seventy miles or more without eating. In those days we counted it a blessing to go into a place where there was a Latter-day Saint. I went once 150 miles to see one; and when I got there he had apostatized, and tried to kill me. Then, after traveling seventy-two miles without food, I sat down to eat my meal with a Missouri mobocrat, and he damning and cursing me all the time. Wilford Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses* [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1869], 12:11-12

- 12 "Do your duty; that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest" ["The Legend Beautiful" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow].
 "Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears—the fear of failure—there is no more comforting assurance to be had than these words of the Lord: 'My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them' [Ether 12:27].
 "Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes."
 (Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 64-65; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 50).
- 13 **Alma 8:17**
 President Joseph Fielding Smith observed: "The Lord says if we labor all our days and save but one soul, how great will be our joy with him; on the other hand *how great will be our sorrow and our condemnation if through our acts we have led one soul away from this truth*"
Doctrines of Salvation, Vol 1:314
- 14 **Alma 8:18**
Return Speedily
 However much faith to obey God we now have, we will need to strengthen it continually and keep it refreshed constantly. We can do that by deciding now to be more quick to obey and more determined to endure. Learning to start early and to be steady are the keys to spiritual preparation....
 A loving Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son have given us all the help they can to pass the test of life set before us. But we must decide to obey and then to do it. We build the faith to pass the tests of obedience over time and through our daily choices. We can decide now to do quickly whatever God asks of us.
 Henry B. Eyring, Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 39, 41; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 38, 40.
- 15 **Alma 8:18**
By Another Way
 A number of years ago I was teaching... in a returned missionary Book of Mormon class at BYU. A student named Kristen Hall sent me ... [a] letter.... The following is a portion of that letter:
 "I had been in Portugal for two months, still with my first companion, and we were in the process of finding another area to proselyte. It seemed we had already worked the small city and we were absolutely stumped as to what to do. As we searched, we thought about a barrio (state funded apartments) of about fifteen buildings called Largateiro. The elders had told us never to go there because the last missionaries were driven out with rocks. We thought about working there, but were concerned because of this. It was the only place we hadn't gone. We went there and began to meet the people. They told us they knew who we were and they didn't believe in our teachings.
 "The next morning as I began my personal study I prayed that the Lord would teach me through the scriptures what He would have me do. I came to Alma 8:11 and I saw where Alma had had a similar experience with the people of Ammonihah who said, "We know that thou art Alma... and we do not believe" (Alma 8:11). We began to pray about the area and how we should work there. As I continued to read of Alma's experience I saw something I had never seen before. After Alma had been kicked out of the city he was met by an angel who comforted him and then encouraged him to back to Ammonihah. In verse 18 it says, 'he entered the city by another way.'
 That is when it came to us; we needed to enter that barrio a different way—to proselyte it in a way that hadn't been done before. So we decided to work through the inactive members. So we began contacting them, and they began to invite their friends.

I had read Alma 8:18 many times before but had never thought of it in that way. I know that the Lord used that scripture to answer our prayer. Following this, we began to see success.

I'm confident that each person who has read the Book of Mormon with faith and diligence over the years can bear a similar testimony.... The Book of Mormon truly has the power to act as a Liahona in our lives."

Jack R. Christianson and K. Douglas Bassett, *Life Lessons from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 264-266

Alma 8:19-21

16 *Amulek*

One of the great lessons from what we know of Amulek is that once God knows we will obey, He will try to give us the greatest of all blessings: sanctification and hope of eternal life. The process of receiving that may take more pain and loss than we would think to seek. But with that mighty change God blesses us with the spiritual sight to see value which dwarfs the loss, the trials, and the adversity. The story of Amulek's life after that day is a sobering yet hopeful lesson for all of us.

Henry B. Eyring

17 God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs. Therefore, it is vital that we serve each other in the kingdom.... Often, our acts of service consist of simple encouragement or of giving mundane help with mundane tasks, but what glorious consequences can flow from mundane acts and from small but deliberate deeds!

Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, December 1974, 5.

Alma 8:26

18 *Fasting*

"Fasting, coupled with mighty prayer, is powerful. It can fill our minds with the revelations of the Spirit. It can strengthen us against times of temptation.

"Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. They can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. Testimonies grow. We mature spiritually and emotionally and sanctify our souls. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions....

"Fasting in the proper spirit and in the Lord's way will energize us spiritually. It will strengthen our self-discipline, fill our homes with peace, lighten our hearts with joy, fortify us against temptation, prepare us for times of adversity, and open the windows of heaven."

Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 95, 97-98; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 73, 75.

Alma 8:30-31

19 *Alma & Amulek: Companions*

In the early days of the Church, missionaries worked independently; and, until relatively recent times, missionaries would go into a city, and one would go down one side of the street and one down the other side of the street. We don't do that now. We work together so that one may stand as a witness of the other should there be troubles, should there be difficulty, or should there be an opportunity to bear testimony of the truth of this work.

You will have companions all during your mission. I hope you will appreciate them. I hope you look for the good in them. You will find it if you look for it. You won't find it if you don't look for it. I will be forever grateful for my missionary companions of long ago.... I had 4 companions, one of them for 15 months.... I'll always be grateful for that young man....

If you will cultivate a good companion relationship, that appreciation and respect for one another will remain with you throughout your lives.... What a precious thing is a good companion. He becomes your protector in times of trouble or in times of temptation.

Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, 1995-99 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004] 1:528-530

20	<p>It may not be on the mountain height Or over the stormy sea, It may not be at the battle's front My Lord will have need of me. But if, by a still, small voice he calls To paths that I do not know, I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in thine; I'll go where you want me to go.</p>	<p>Perhaps today there are loving words Which Jesus would have me speak; There may be now in the paths of sin Some wand'rer whom I should seek. O Savior, if thou wilt be my guide, Tho dark and rugged the way, My voice shall echo the message sweet: I'll say what you want me to say.</p>
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There's surely somewhere a lowly place
 In earth's harvest fields so wide
 Where I may labor through life's short day
 For Jesus, the Crucified
 So trusting my all to thy tender care,
 And knowing thou lovest me,
 I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in thine,
 I'll be what you want me to be.
 ("I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go " *Hymn, #270*)

21 What we need now is the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church. We need worthy, qualified, spiritually energized missionaries who, like Helaman's 2000 Stripling warriors, are "exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity" and who are "true at all times in whatsoever thing they [are] entrusted" (Alma 53:20).

Listen to those words, my young brethren: *Valiant, courage, strength, active, true*. We don't need spiritually weak and semicommitted young men. We don't need you to just fill a position; we need your whole heart and soul. We need vibrant, thinking, passionate missionaries who know how to listen to and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. This isn't a time for spiritual weaklings. We cannot send you on a mission to be reactivated, reformed, or to receive a testimony. We just don't have time for that. We need you to be filled with "faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God" (D&C 4:5).

As an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, I call upon you to begin right now—tonight—to be fully and completely worthy. Resolve and commit to yourselves and to God that from this moment forward you will strive diligently to keep your hearts, hand, and minds pure and unsullied from any kind of moral transgression. Resolve to avoid pornography as you would the most insidious disease, for that is precisely what it is. Resolve to completely abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs. Resolve to be honest. Resolve to be good citizens and to abide by the laws of the land in which you live. Resolve that from this night forward you will never defile your body or use language that is vulgar and unbecoming to a bearer of the priesthood.

And that is not all we expect of you, my young brethren. We expect you to have an understanding and a solid testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We expect you to work hard. We expect you to be covenant makers and covenant keepers. We expect you to be missionaries to match our glorious message.

Now these are high standards. We understand that, but we do not apologize for them. They reflect the Lord's standards for you to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, to enter the temple, to serve as missionaries, and to be

righteous husbands and fathers. There's nothing new in them, nothing you haven't heard before. But tonight we call upon you, our young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, to rise up, to measure up, and to be fully prepared to serve the Lord.

Many of you are already on this track, and we commend you for your worthiness and determination. For those of you who are not, let tonight be the beginning of your preparation process. If you find yourself wanting in worthiness, resolve to make the appropriate changes—beginning right now. If you think you need to talk to your father and your bishop about any sins you may have committed, don't wait; do it now. They will help you to repent and change so you can take your place as a member of the greatest generation of missionaries.

Please understand this: the bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised. The day of the "repent and go" missionary is over. You know what I'm talking about, don't you, my young brothers? Some young men have the mistaken idea that they can be involved in sinful behavior and then repent when they're 18 ½ so they can go on their mission at 19. While it is true that you can repent of sins, you may or you may not qualify to serve. It is far better to keep yourselves clean and pure and valiant by doing such simple things as:

- Developing a meaningful prayer relationship with your Heavenly Father.
- Keeping the Sabbath day holy.
- Working and putting part of your earnings in a savings account.
- Paying a full and honest tithing.
- Limiting the amount of time spent playing computer games. How many kills you can make in a minute with a computer game will have zero effect on your capacity to be a good missionary.
- Giving the Lord more of your time by studying the scriptures and gaining an understanding of the marvelous message of the Restoration that we have for the world.
- Serving others and sharing your testimony with them.

M. Russell Ballard, "The Greatest Generation of Missionaries", *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, p. 46.