

Mosiah 9:1

1

Zeniff

Zeniff, a man who evidently was somewhat learned, had a personal knowledge of the Land of Lehi-Nephi, and also was acquainted with the language spoken by the Lamanites therein, was therefore appointed a spy to learn, if possible, the size and strength of the Lamanite armies. It must always be remembered that the Nephites regarded Lehi-Nephi as the land of their father's first inheritance. The idea of the leader of this first expedition was to overwhelm the Lamanite armies and take possession of the whole land. But, Zeniff, in making his report of the conditions he found among the Lamanites, told of so many good things which he saw that, he says, "I was desirous that they should not be destroyed."

Instead, Zeniff advocated that a treaty be arranged with the king of the Lamanites for his people to repossess their old homes. He argued with such ardor that a great contention arose between members of the expedition who favored this peaceful settlement of their purposes and those who preferred a war-like attack, and the leader of them ordered Zeniff to be slain. But in the attempt to carry out that order a riot ensued in which all but fifty of their number perished by violence. These survivors returned to their starting place to tell the sad ending, the failure of their attempts.

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 2:107-8

Mosiah 9:3

2

Over-Zealousness

While we question the wisdom of Zeniff, we could ask if the same kind of zeal causes people today to make agreements or sign contracts that will ultimately place them in political or financial bondage. Individuals can be over-zealous for material possessions, or they can become so involved in a cause or in their work that they begin to neglect the weightier matters that are most important, such as family, church, and service to others.

Over-zealousness is an exercise of free agency that can have serious consequences. President Marion G. Romney voiced his concern about our use of free agency in these words: "Free agency, however, precious as it is, is not of itself the perfect liberty we seek, nor does it necessarily lead thereto. As a matter of fact, through the exercise of their agency more people have come to political, economic, and personal bondage than to liberty."¹

Clyde J. Williams, "Deliverance and Bondage," *Mosiah, Salvation Only Through Christ*, BYU Religious Studies Center, Edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., p. 263

3

The overzealous tend to judge others by their own standard. True excellence in gospel living—compliance with the established laws and ordinances in a quiet and patient manner—results in humility, in greater reliance upon God, and in broadening love and acceptance of one's fellow man. What I am doing in the name of goodness ought to bring me closer to those I love and serve, ought to turn my heart toward people, rather than causing me to turn my nose up in judgmental scorn and rejection. The greatest man to walk the earth, the only fully perfect human being, looked with tenderness and compassion upon those whose ways and actions were less than perfect.

Robert Millet, CES Symposium, Aug. 1993

4

In the context of Zeniff's experience, we may define overzealous as making decisions too quickly without approval of those in authority and without full consideration of the consequences of our actions. An overzealous person is quick to do his own will and slow to consider the Lord's will....

The Book of Mormon gives no hint that Zeniff sought out the will of the Lord in prayer or even a visit with his spiritual leaders concerning this risky decision to move. It is not hard for anyone who has a sense of the relationship between the Nephites and Lamanites at that point in history to see the potential downside in his decision to move to

¹ Marion G. Romney, "The Perfect Law of Liberty," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981

the land of the Lamanites without seeking appropriate confirmation. But without consideration of the consequences of such a move, Zeniff and his colony moved forward.

Jack R. Christianson and K. Douglas Bassett, *Life Lessons from the Book of Mormon*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 223-224

- 5 Virgil I. Grissom, lieutenant colonel of the United States Air Force. He spoke on travel in space. In 1965 he became the world's first astronaut to maneuver his spacecraft while orbiting.
- "You can't just step on the gas out there,' Gus Grissom said. "In fact, one craft gains on another by slowing down." He explained that a decrease in speed brings the craft closer to the earth. The orbit is thus shortened, and the craft gains by "riding closer to the rail."

Gus Grissom talked of space travel. He could have described how to get ahead on earth, too. Many a man moves out front by slowing down and putting better personal control on his course in life, even as Grissom skillfully maneuvered in orbiting.

Wendell J. Ashton, *To Thine Own Self*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972], 50

- 6 The world is so noisy. There are voices everywhere trying to influence us. We all need time to think. We need to drown out the clamor and noise and simply be quiet. We need time to ponder and meditate, and to contemplate the deeper things of life. We need time to read and to immerse ourselves in the thoughts of great minds.

Our lives are so busy. We run from one thing to another. We wear ourselves out with our studies and our social lives and our pursuit of money....We are entitled to spend some time with ourselves. We need to spend time out in nature where we can think and breathe deeply and feel the earth and listen to the sounds of the ocean or the woods or the mountains....

I ask you to think about all of the time you spend in front of your computer, maybe surfing the Internet, or plugged in to video games, or watching some of the inane programs and sports contests on television. I am not anti-sports. I enjoy a good football or basketball game. But I have seen so many men and women become addicted to sports or the Internet or video games....I believe their lives would be richer and more rewarding if at least occasionally they would get up from watching a game that will be forgotten tomorrow, get up from surfing one more web site, and spend a little time reading and thinking and simply Being Still.

They would be blessed if they would occasionally ride out into the darkness at night, look at the stars, and ponder their place in the world....

The scriptures admonish: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Way To Be!* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002], 103-106

- 7 Are there parts of our lives that we could rest for a season in an effort to renew our souls so we can be more productive, especially in the ways that matter most to the Lord?...

[Think of] the last time you remodeled any part of your house, and see how many additional electrical outlets you added to each room. Then think about where you have added extension cords with four to six more outlets to provide power for new electrical devices. Despite all [the]...new laborsaving devices, I would guess your life is more, not less, complicated....

For many television is robbing them of valuable family time....

Unfortunately, with the blessings of the new information age also come challenges, as evil influences have a new medium of transmission and new ways of infiltrating our minds. Worldly influences enter our homes in new shapes and forms to challenge our resolve to use our time wisely and for the Lord's purposes.

Perhaps we could...call "time-out." ...Determine...that we will discontinue those activities that are of little value and worth that might even jeopardize our eternal welfare.

L. Tom Perry, *Ensign*, Nov. 1999 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999], 75-76

Mosiah 9:9*Obedience*

8

Obedience—exact compliance—is the absolute prerequisite for you to wield these weapons in the battle for souls. Obey with exactness. You needn't waste time questioning the rules and directions...Obey. Simply obey. Do it, and do it with a happy countenance, with a willing heart. I promise great blessings for such obedience.

David B. Haight, 1994

Mosiah 9:12*"lazy and idolatrous"*

9

Neither temporal nor spiritual salvation can be gained without work, and idleness is a grievous sin. Idlers—those who waste time in doing nothing, who are lazy, indolent, slothful—"shall be had in remembrance before the Lord" (D&C 68:30-31)...Idleness and abominable practices always go together....Idleness breeds idolatry (Alma 1:32).

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 372

As virtue cleaves to virtue, so vice cleaves to vice; as honest toil is an invitation to the Spirit of the Lord, so idleness allures the spirit of the adversary. Idleness tends to breed thievery and plundering, which in turn bring the shedding of blood, fighting, and even wars (see Enos 1:20). Such are the fruits of idolatrous worship—worship that requires neither humility nor righteousness, but rather satisfies some supposed whim or appetite and thus justifies such rituals in living as satiate a person's carnal appetites and desires.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 2: 195

Mosiah 9:17*"In the strength of the Lord"*

11

A modern military leader, using a classic Bible story, illustrated the superiority of Spirit over weapons in this language: "When Samson took the fresh jawbone of an ass and slew a thousand men therewith, he probably started such a vogue for the weapon, especially among the Philistines, that for years no prudent donkey dared to bray. Yet, despite its initial popularity, it was discarded and now appears only as a barrage instrument for acrimonious debate.

"History is replete with countless other instances of military implements each in its day heralded as the last word—the key to victory—yet each in its turn subsiding in its useful but inconspicuous niche. New weapons are useful in that they add to the repertoire of killing, but be they tank or tomahawk, weapons are only weapons after all. Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and of the man who leads that gains the victory. In biblical times this spirit was ascribed ... to the Lord. It was the spirit of the Lord, courage, that came mightily upon Samson at Lehi that gained the victory—not the jawbone of an ass." (Ladislav Farago, Patton: Ordeal and Triumph, p. 107.)

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 2: 196