

Mosiah 17:2

1 Abinadi may have felt like a failure because he only had one convert.
Joseph B. Wirthlin, in *CR*, Apr. 1989 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989], 11

Influence

2 Your call has eternal consequences for others and for you. In the world to come, thousands may call your name blessed, even more than the people you serve here. They will be the ancestors and the descendants of those who chose eternal life because of something you said or did, or even what you were.

Henry B. Eyring, "Rise to Your Call," *Ensign*, May 2002, p. 76

3 Sadly, in today's world, a person's importance is often judged by the size of the audience before which he or she performs. That is how media and sports programs are rated, how corporate prominence is sometimes determined, and often how governmental rank is obtained. That may be why roles such as father, mother, and missionary seldom receive standing ovations. Fathers, mothers, and missionaries "play" before very small audiences. Yet, in the eyes of the Lord, there may be only *one size* of audience that is of lasting importance—and that is just *one*, each one, you and me, and each *one* of the children of God. The irony of the Atonement is that it is infinite and eternal, yet it is applied individually, one person at a time.

M Russell Ballard, "The Atonement and the Value of One Soul," *Ensign*, May 2004, p. 87

4 Sister Chieko N. Okazaki is the first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. When Sister Okazaki was eleven years old, Sister Rosetta Colclough, a missionary in Hawaii, came to her junior high and invited all of the students to a special religion class taught at the LDS chapel near the school. Three other Japanese girls and Sister Okazaki, all Buddhists, accepted the invitation. This was her introduction to Christian instruction: four years later she joined the Church.

After she was called to the Relief Society general presidency, Sister Okazaki received a letter from Rosetta that contained an article Rosetta had written fifteen years earlier describing those religion classes:

One day on the eleven o'clock period, only four [Japanese girls] came to class. I was very disappointed there were so few . . . [But] near the close of the period, we stood in the little chapel with bowed heads and closed eyes, repeating in unison the Lord's Prayer . . . As we prayed, I suddenly felt a bright light envelop us, coming from above like an inverted cone. A wonderful feeling of peace and joy filled my heart. I led the prayer very slowly as the bright light enfolded us. I was sure the girls felt it also, as their faces shone with an expression of deep reverence. We almost whispered "good-bye" so as not to break the spell, and they tip-toed out. I thought, "One or more of those girls will join the Church and become a great influence for good" . . .

. . . [When] I heard your name announced by Sister Jack . . . I sat up straight and watched the TV screen eagerly and saw your name appear on the screen. Then you started to speak. The dark hair has turned to silver, but that sweet face was easily recognized. Yes, this is my little Chieko whom I taught at the Honomakau chapel in Kohala so many years ago. As I listened to your voice, tears of joy ran down my cheeks.

I thank my Heavenly Father that I had the privilege of teaching you about Jesus Christ our Savior in that little chapel . . . (Chieko N. Okazaki, *Ensign*, May 1993, pp.84-85.)

Sister Colclough was disappointed at first when only four girls showed up for her religion class, but she did not realize at the time that one of them would be called by the Lord to preach the gospel throughout the world. Because of her deep love for others and her messages of kindness, service, and unity, Sister Okazaki has become one of the most beloved Church leaders of our time. Her impact on the lives of Church members is incalculable. Because of the domino effect, Rosetta's missionary class (where only four girls attended) has affected thousands of individuals.

Sister Okazaki described how we are all interconnected when she said:

Brothers and sisters, we never know how far the effects of our service will reach. We can never afford to be cruel or indifferent or ungenerous, because we are all connected, even if it is in a pattern that only God sees. I am

part of the pattern. Rosetta is part of this pattern. You are part of this pattern. And the Savior is part of this pattern. In fact, I like to think that the Savior is the spaces in the pattern, for there would be no pattern at all without them. (*Ensign*, May 1993, p 85.)

Mosiah 17:2-3

5 *Alma—the Name*

The appearance of the two men named *Alma* in the Book of Mormon has occasioned much comment from critics. They observe that *Alma* is a woman's name and Latin rather than Hebrew. (Many recognize the phrase *alma mater*, which means "beneficent mother" and refers to the school from which someone has graduated.) They are correct, of course. If Joseph Smith knew the name *Alma* at all in the early 19th century, he would have known it as a woman's name in Latin. Recent documentary finds demonstrate, however, that *Alma* also occurs as a Semitic masculine personal name in the ancient Near East—just as it does in the Book of Mormon.

Daniel C. Peterson, *Ensign*, Jan. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 21

Alma 17:4

6 *Write the Words of Abinadi*

It is possible that some of the passages Mormon gives us were not taken from any written record but were revealed directly to him. For example, we know we receive the major portion of Abinadi's preaching from Alma's account of it (Mosiah 17:4). But who recorded Abinadi's final testimony after Alma had fled from Noah's assassins? Perhaps some bystander preserved it (or even some court recorder taking minutes of the execution), but perhaps, too, it was revealed directly to Mormon or another historian.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *The Book of Mormon: It Begins with a Family* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983] 225

7 Surely Mormon was able to include within his abridgment of the large plates but a portion of the testimony of Abinadi. To remember and record "all the words of Abinadi" would have required divine assistance. Jesus explained that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, will bring to our remembrance that which has been taught us (John 14:26).

President Wilford Woodruff, one of the greatest scribes and note takers of this dispensation, described his own experience in recalling and recording the words of Joseph Smith: "There is one subject I wish to speak upon and that is the keeping of a journal with respect to the dealings of God with us. I have many times thought the Quorum of the Twelve and others considered me rather enthusiastic upon this subject; but when the Prophet Joseph organized the Quorum of the Twelve, he counseled them to keep a history of their lives, and gave his reasons why they should do so. I have had this spirit and calling upon me since I first entered this Church. I made a record from the first sermon I heard, and from that day until now I have kept a daily journal. Whenever I heard Joseph Smith preach, teach, or prophesy, I always felt it my duty to write it; I felt uneasy and could not eat, drink, or sleep until I did write; and my mind has been so exercised upon this subject that *when I heard Joseph Smith teach and had no pencil or paper, I would go home and sit down and write the whole sermon, almost word for word and sentence by sentence as it was delivered, and when I had written it it was taken from me, I remembered it no more. This was the gift of God to me.*" (Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors*, pp. 476-77; italics added.)

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 2: 249

Mosiah 17:9

8 *"I will not recall the words..."*

Life is precious. We struggle to keep body and soul together. We cling to mortality with tenacity and plead and pray and labor in behalf of the sick and the afflicted. But some things matter more than life. Our faithfulness—our

loyalty to truth and goodness, our commitment to those things which God prizes—must be “stronger than the cords of death” (D&C 121:44). The Lord’s prophets value the whisperings of the Spirit more than the breath of life.

Milliet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on BOM*, Vol. 2, p. 251

9

An Incident in the Life of Joseph Smith

The most classic of all the incidents in the life of the Prophet Joseph of his fearlessness, took place one dismal night in the dark dungeon in Richmond, Missouri, when Colonel Price’s guards were boasting of their heinous deeds, the wicked acts that they had committed against the Mormons, of defiling wives and daughters, and bashing the heads of men which Parley Pratt said was so loathsome and so repulsive that he could hardly refrain from rebuking them himself as he lay on the hard ground. But he said nothing to Joseph, although he knew he was awake. All of the brethren were chained together with two big chains, and they were padlocked to one another. On a sudden impulse, the Prophet rose to his feet and in a voice of thunder roared at the filthy guards:

“Silence, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still. I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die this instant!”

He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained to his brethren and without a weapon except the power of God which was mightily in him, he was calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, while the foul-mouthed men quailed before, dropped their guns, and crouching at his knees, begged his pardon. For the rest of the night they remained quiet.

Elder Parley P. Pratt declared:

“I have seen the ministers of justice clothed in magisterial robes and criminals arraigned before them, while life suspended on a breath, in the courts of England; I have witnessed a congress in solemn session to give laws to nations; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones, and crowns, and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms, but dignity and majesty have I seen but one, as it stood in chains at midnight in a dungeon in an obscure village in Missouri.

Mosiah 17:10

10 *Ye will shed innocent blood*

To “shed innocent blood” is to murder, to take the life of one who is innocent and undeserving of death. It is a “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16-17), a crime against humanity, a heinous offense to heaven for which there is no forgiveness.

In the ultimate sense, the most serious sin is to shed the only completely innocent blood, the blood of Jesus Christ. To blaspheme against the Holy Ghost is to assent unto the death of Christ anew and thus come out in open rebellion against God, this after having “tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:5-6; see also D&C 132:27; JST, Mark 14:30).

When Alma and Amulek were taken as prisoners in the wicked city of Ammonihah, they were forced to witness the merciless and inhumane deaths of women and children. “And when Amulek saw the pains of the women and children who were consuming in the fire, he also was pained; and he said unto Alma: How can we witness this awful scene? Therefore let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames. But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; for behold the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, *that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day.*” (Alma 14:10-11; italics added.) “The Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain,” General Moroni explained, “that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; therefore ye need not suppose that the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God” (Alma 60:13).

Milliet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the BOM*, Vol. 2, p. 251

Mosiah 17:11**11** *For he feared his word*

President Marion G. Romney explained that no one is justified in rejecting the truths of salvation “on the basis that he does not know they are true, because everything the Lord does or says has within itself the evidence of its own authenticity, and every person is divinely endowed with the means to discover that evidence and know for himself that it is true” (CR, April 1976, pp. 120-21). Noah—like his fellow apostles of darkness Sherem, Korihor, and the pre-repentance Zeezrom—indeed knew that the word preached to him was true (Jacob 7:14; Alma 30:42; Alma 11:24).

Ibid, p. 252

12 *Peer Pressure*

I am so grateful that prophets do not crave popularity.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report*, Apr. 1978, pp.116-117

13 “My husband said he still remembers going to his first examination at the University of Utah . . . As the professor passed out the examination and left the room, he said some classmates started to pull out little cheat papers from pockets and from under their books. He said, ‘My heart began to pound as I realized how difficult it is to compete with cheaters.’ . . . About then a tall, thin student stood up in the back of the room and said, ‘I sold my farm and put my wife and three little children in an upstairs apartment to go to medical school and I’ll turn in the first one of you who cheats and YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT!’ They believed it. My husband said he looked like Abraham Lincoln. There were many sheepish expressions and those cheat papers started to disappear as fast as they had appeared . . . That man cared more about character than popularity. When I heard the name of J. Ballard Washburn to be sustained as a member of the Quorum of Seventy, I remembered that he was that medical student.”

Janette C. Hales, *BYU Devotional*, Mar. 16, 1993

14 “[To the young women], Choose your friends with caution. In a survey made in selected wards and stakes of the Church, we learned a most significant fact: those persons whose friends married in the temple usually married in the temple, while those persons whose friends did not marry in the temple usually did not marry in the temple. The influence of one’s friends appeared to be a highly dominant factor—even more so than parental urging, classroom instruction, or proximity to a temple.”

Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, May 1997, pp. 94-95

15 “If I now had in my possession one hundred million dollars in cash, I could buy the favor of the publishers of newspapers and control their presses; with that amount I could make this people popular, though I expect that popularity would send us to hell.”

Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 3:160

16 “Popularity is never a test of truth. Many a prophet has been killed or cast out. As we come closer to the second coming, you can expect that as the people of the world become more wicked, the prophet will be less popular with them.”

Ezra Taft Benson, *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 1980, pp.26-30

17 “Individuals who do wrong want you to join them because they feel more comfortable in what they are doing when others do it also. They may also want to take advantage of you. It is natural to want to be accepted by peers, to be part of a group—some even join gangs because of that desire to belong, but they lose their freedom, and some lose their lives . . . You don’t need to compromise your standards to be accepted by good friends . . . No one intends to make serious mistakes. They come when you compromise your standards to be more accepted by others.”

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, p.37

18 The year my schoolmates and I enrolled in junior high, the building could not accommodate all of the students, and it was determined that our seventh-grade class would be sent back to our old grade school.

We were insulted. We were furious. We'd spent six years in that grade-school building, and we were ready to move on. We were above going to school one more year with the younger grades. We felt we deserved something better....We decided that we wouldn't tolerate this kind of treatment and that we should show our displeasure by going on strike.

The next day, we did not show up for school. But we had no place to go....So we just wandered about and wasted the day.

The next morning, the principal, Mr. Stearns, whose demeanor matched the sound of his name, was at the front door of the grade school to greet us as we entered. He said some fairly straightforward things and then told us that we could not come back to school until we brought a note from our parents....There was only one thing to do: go home and get the note.

I will never forget walking sheepishly into the house. Mother was, of course, surprised to see me and asked what was wrong. I told her what I had done and explained that I needed a note. She wrote this brief note, the most stinging rebuke she ever gave me:

Dear Mr. Stearns,

Please excuse Gordon's absence yesterday. His action was simply an impulse to follow the crowd....

I resolved then and there that I would never do anything in which I was simply following the crowd. I determined that I would make my own decisions on the basis of their merits and my standards, and would not be pushed in one direction or another by those around me.

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something* [New York: Times Books, 2000], 13-14

19 It is not easy to die, even to die for one's testimony, but the taste of death is so much sweeter to those whose lives bear fervent witness of Him whose servants they are. Occasionally in the overall scheme of things the Lord asks certain of his representatives to shed their own blood in a martyr's death, that their testament might be in full force (see D&C 135:5; Heb. 9:16-17).

Robert Millet, CES Symposium, Aug. 1986, 103

20 Consider yourself in that same circumstance [as Abinadi]. Would there not have been a flood of emotion pour over your body? Would there not have been, if only for a moment, a touch of panic, a desire to flee, a hope that the heavens would open and rescue would come?...Would you not then have seized upon the words "unless thou wilt recall all the words which thou has spoken evil concerning me and my people" [Mosiah 17:8] as the hoped-for route of escape? Would not most of us have sought to find some manner of taking advantage of that opportunity to avoid the sentence of death? Under circumstances such as that, it would not seem too difficult to clothe in respectability the desire to live by simply considering all of the good which you could continue to do if your life were prolonged, and contemplating how you might "recall all the words" in such an equivocal way as to still leave intact the teachings which you had sought to impart....

While his martyrdom, described as having been "death by fire," would undoubtedly have been a physically painful experience, it is my thought that Abinadi's moment of supreme triumph occurred in those moments when he formed the phrase: "I will not recall the words which I have spoken" (Mosiah 17:9)....

One almost has to wonder how someone like Abinadi would feel if he were to hear some of the excuses we use for failing to do what the Lord has asked. Can you see yourself trying to explain to him why it is that you haven't been able to share the gospel with others? Why you are less than totally obedient? Or how, having taken the covenants of marriage, you can justify treating your husband or wife in less than a loving and nurturing way?

Cree-L. Kofford, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 71-72

21

Total Devotion to Christ May Sometimes Cost Martyrdom

In the gospel sense, *martyrdom* is the voluntary acceptance of death at the hands of wicked men rather than to forsake Christ and his holy gospel. It is the supreme earthly sacrifice in which a man certifies to his absolute faith and to the desires for righteousness and for eternal life which are in his heart.

Martyrs of religion are found in every age in which there have been both righteous and wicked people on earth. Christ himself was a martyr who voluntarily laid down his life, according to the Father's plan, that immortality and eternal life might become available for his brethren. (John 10:10-18.) "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13.)

Many apostles, prophets, and saints have been martyred for the gospel cause. (Matt. 23:29-33; Luke 11:47-51; Acts 7; 22:20; Hela. 13:24-28; D. & C. 135.) The Prophet and Patriarch of this dispensation laid down their lives in the gospel cause, as literally thousands of others have done. Men, women, and children, young and old, weak and strong, sick and well, were driven by the thousands from Missouri and Illinois, many to early and untimely deaths as a direct result of the persecutions and diseases thus heaped upon them. Is a saint any less a martyr who is driven from a sick bed into blizzards to freeze and die than he would have been had an assassin's bullet brought merciful death in a brief destroying moment?

Thousands who have lived in this dispensation shall find place with "the martyrs under the altar that John saw." (D. & C. 135:7.) They shall be classed with those who "loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11); they are "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." (Rev. 6:9.) They shall "rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Rev. 6:11.) Martyrdom is not a thing of the past only, but of the present and of the future, for Satan has not yet been bound, and the servants of the Lord will not be silenced in this final age of warning and judgment. There are forces and powers in the world today, which would silence the tongue and shed the blood of every true witness of Christ in the world, if they had the power and the means to do it. There are those who would destroy every prophet of God, if they could. Martyrs of true religion are yet to have their blood shed in Jerusalem. "And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." (Rev. 11:1-12.) True it is that "the woman," of whom John wrote is and shall be "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." (Rev. 17:6.)

True martyrs of religion receive eternal life. "Whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal." (D. & C. 98:13; Mark 8:35; John 12:25; Rev. 2:10.) But the mere laying down of one's life standing alone is not gospel martyrdom. Both the righteous and the wicked have and do sacrifice their lives for friends or country without gaining thereby any hope or assurance of exaltation. Those on the other hand who have the truth and who could escape death by denying it are the martyrs who shall receive a martyr's reward — eternal life. When they seal their testimony with their blood, they are honored and their murderers are condemned. (D. & C. 136:39.)

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 469

22

Having delivered his majestic messianic prophecy and called the wicked to repentance, Abinadi, like his prophetic partner, Stephen (see Acts 7), submitted to a cruel death at the hands of crueler men. It is not easy to die, even to die for one's testimony, but the taste of death is so much sweeter to those whose lives and words bear fervent witness of him whose servants they are. Frequently the Lord requires certain of his representatives to shed their own blood in a martyr's death that their testament might be in full force (see D&C 135:5; Hebrews 9:16-17).

And so the testator was dead. But the testament lived on. And faith had come to one by hearing the word of God as preached by a legal administrator. As recorded by Mormon, some time during Abinadi's sermon a heart was touched and a witness planted as to the truthfulness of his words; a "young man...believed the words which Abinadi had spoken." And because of the power of the word, the power of a single human testimony, the course of events in the Nephite story would never be the same.

Milliet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the BOM*, Vol. 2 p. 252

Mosiah 17:13-20

23

Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, by Willard Richards

Possibly the following events occupied near three minutes, but I think only about two, and have penned them for the gratification of many friends.

Carthage, June 27, 1844

A shower of musket balls was thrown up the stairway against the door of the prison in the second story, followed by many rapid footsteps.

While Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Mr. Taylor, and myself, who were in the front chamber, closed the door of our room against the entry at the head of the stairs, and placed ourselves against it, there being no lock on the door, and no catch that was usable.

The door is a common panel, and as soon as we heard the feet at the stairs head, a ball was sent through the door, which passed between us, and showed that our enemies were desperadoes, and we must change our position.

General Joseph Smith, Mr. Taylor and myself sprang back to the front part of the room, and General Hyrum Smith retreated two-thirds across the chamber directly in front of and facing the door.

A ball was sent through the door which hit Hyrum on the side of his nose, when he fell backwards, extended at length, without moving his feet.

From the holes in his vest (the day was warm, and no one had his coat on but myself), pantaloons, drawers, and shirt, it appears evident that a ball must have been thrown from without, through the window, which entered his back on the right side, and passing through, lodged against his watch, which was in his right vest pocket, completely pulverizing the crystal and face, tearing off the hands and mashing the whole body of the watch. At the same instant the ball from the door entered his nose.

As he struck the floor he exclaimed emphatically, "I am a dead man." Joseph looked towards him and responded, "Oh, dear brother Hyrum!" and opening the door two or three inches with his left hand, discharged one barrel of a six shooter (pistol) at random in the entry, from whence a ball grazed Hyrum's breast, and entering his throat passed into his head, while other muskets were aimed at him and some balls hit him. Joseph continued snapping his revolver round the casing of the door into the space as before, three barrels of which missed fire, while Mr. Taylor with a walking stick stood by his side and knocked down the bayonets and muskets which were constantly discharging through the doorway, while I stood by him, ready to lend any assistance, with another stick, but could not come within striking distance without going directly before the muzzle of the guns.

When the revolver failed, we had no more firearms, and expected an immediate rush of the mob, and the doorway full of muskets, half way in the room, and no hope but instant death from within.

Mr. Taylor rushed into the window, which is some fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. When his body was nearly on a balance, a ball from the door within entered his leg, and a ball from without struck his watch, a patent lever, in his vest pocket near the left breast, and smashed it into "pie," leaving the hands standing at 5 o'clock, 16 minutes, and 26 seconds, the force of which stood by his side, where he lay motionless, the mob from the door continuing to fire upon him, cutting away a piece of flesh from his left hip as large as a man's hand, and were hindered only by my knocking down their muzzles with a stick; while they continued to reach their guns into the room, probably left handed, and aimed their discharge so far round as almost to reach us in the corner of the room to where we retreated and dodged, and then I recommenced the attack with my stick.

Joseph attempted, as the last resort, to leap the same window from whence Mr. Taylor fell, when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered his right breast from without, and he fell outward, exclaiming, "Oh Lord, my God!" As his feet went out of the window my head went in, the balls whistling all around. He fell on his left side a dead man.

At this instant the cry was raised, "He's leaped the window!" and the mob on the stairs and in the entry ran out.

I withdrew from the window, thinking it of no use to leap out on a hundred bayonets, then around General Joseph Smith's body.

Not satisfied with this I again reached my head out of the window, and watched some seconds to see if there were any signs of life, regardless of my own, determined to see the end of him I loved. Being fully satisfied that he was dead, with a hundred men near the body and more coming round the corner of the jail, and expecting a return to our room, I rushed towards the prison door, at the head of the stairs, and through the entry from whence the firing had proceeded, to learn if the doors into the prison were open.

When near the entry, Mr. Taylor called out, "Take me." I pressed my way until I found all doors unbarred, returning instantly, caught Mr. Taylor under my arm and rushed by the stairs into the dungeon, or inner prison, stretched him on the floor and covered him with a bed in such a manner as not likely to be perceived, expecting an immediate return of the mob.

I said to Mr. Taylor, "This is a hard case to lay you on the floor, but if your wounds are not fatal, I want you to live to tell the story."

I expected to be shot the next moment, and stood before the door awaiting the onset.

HC, 6:619-21