

**Alma 26:5-7****1** *Joy of Missionary Work*

"A short time ago, I stood in a little room in Wales, in which my mother was born 102 years before, the room so small that the six-foot bed covers the entire width, and its length is barely two feet longer than it is wide, and the old rafters just two feet above my head, so about eight feet high. But my thoughts on that occasion have been sacred to me. I share one or two with you.

"I thought, as Sister McKay and I stood in that small bedroom, how different life would be now if two humble elders had not knocked at that door a hundred years ago! And how different life would be if my mother's father and mother had not accepted that message! I looked around the village and found descendants of others who heard it at that time, descendants of some who ridiculed my grandfather and grandmother for having accepted the truth; and they made light of their religion, scoffed at them and ostracized them for having accepted Mormonism. I realized how unenlightened those neighbors were when they condemned my grandparents....

"... Father's folk were way up in the north of Scotland. It was only through the gospel that Father and Mother met. So I expressed gratitude, as I sensed it probably never so keenly before, as we stood in that little room, six by eight." *Gospel Ideals*, pp. 122-23.

**Alma 26:8****2** The magnificent expression of His love came in His death when He gave His life as a sacrifice for all men. That Atonement, wrought in unspeakable pain, became the greatest event of history, an act of grace for which men gave nothing but which brought the assurance of the Resurrection to all who have or would walk the earth.

No other act in all of human history compares with it. Nothing that has ever happened can match it. Totally unselfish and with unbounded love for all mankind, it became an unparalleled act of mercy for the whole human race. . . . He was and is the great central figure of human history, the zenith of the times and season of all men. President Gordon B. Hinckley, "At the Summit of the Ages," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999 p. 73

**3** **Alma 26:11-12**

"Aaron saw in Ammon's words what he thought was a departure from the path of humility.... Aaron thought, also, that Ammon boasted in his own might and wisdom. Boasting is generally associated with pride, and it usually imputes exaggeration, ostentatiousness, or vaingloriousness, to the one who vents his pride...[but] Ammon... did not boast in [his own strength]"

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 3:364

**4** The Lord has said that no one can assist with this work unless he is humble and full of love. (See Doctrine and Covenants 12:8) But humility does not mean weakness. It does not mean timidity; it does not mean fear. A man can be humble and also fearless. A man can be humble and also courageous. Humility is the recognition of our dependence upon a higher power, a constant need for the Lord's support in His work...

We are engaged in missionary service to testify of the greatest event that has transpired in this world since the resurrection of the Master: the coming of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, to the boy-prophet, Joseph Smith. We are sent out to testify of a new volume of scripture, a new witness for Christ.

Missionary work provides us the happiest years of our lives. I know whereof I speak. 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.

Ezra Taft Benson, *Come unto Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983]94-95, 97-98

5 We have no chance to be lifted up in the pride of our hearts with regard to the position we occupy. If the President of the Church or either of his counselors or of the apostles or any other man feels in his heart that God cannot do without him, and that he is especially important in order to carry on the work of the Lord, he stands upon slippery ground. I heard Joseph Smith say that Oliver Cowdery, who was the second apostle in this Church, said to him, "If I leave this Church it will fall."

Said Joseph, "Oliver, you try it." Oliver tried it. He fell; but the kingdom of God did not. I have been acquainted with other apostles in my day and time who felt that the Lord could not do without them; but the Lord got along with his work without them. I say to all men---Jew and Gentile, great and small, rich and poor---that the Lord Almighty has power within himself, and is not dependent upon any man, to carry on his work; but when he does call men to do his work they have to trust in him.

G. Homer Durham, comp., *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 123-24

6 The Joy in a Converted Soul. It was about 1969 when a young woman named Susan Gerszewski came to see me. "Bishop, you've got to take my Name off the records of the Church."

I said, "Oh Susan, what's wrong?"

"My brothers think I'm a dork for being here at BYU, and I can't stand the pressure when I go home and my parents are wondering what's gone wrong with me."

All of a sudden, the Lord stepped in and words came out of my mouth like this: "Susan, I promise you that if you stay faithful, your brothers will join the Church and your parents' heart will soften." Now how could I say that? I couldn't. Only the Lord could.

She said, "Oh, I just don't know, Bishop, I just don't know." I said, "Well, Susan, is the Book of Mormon true?"

"Well, of course it is, Bishop."

"Do you love the Savior and do you believe in Heavenly Father?"

"Yes I do."

"Is the Prophet the head of the Church today?"

"Of course."

"Is this the true Church?"

"Of course it is. But I just can't stand the pressure."

I said, "Susan, will you be willing to try, because the Lord just gave you a promise." She said, "Well I guess I can try." That year she moved out of the ward, and I lost track of her.

In 1972 I volunteered to teach another religion class at BYU, besides Book of Mormon, before going to my dental office. There were about sixty students in this Gospel Principles class, and life was going merrily along. Then, on the last day to drop the class, this student came up to me and he said, "I've got to drop your class."

I asked, "How come?"

He said, "I'm on scholarship, and if I don't get a B or B+ I could lose my scholarship; and I got a C+ on the test and besides I'm not a Mormon." I looked at the information sheet I had students fill out before class, and I'd missed it. He'd checked "nonmember" so close to the "member" box that I'd missed it.

I said, "Well, Jim, you mean you're afraid you won't get a B?"

He said, "Well, how can I?" I'm not a member, and I just can't risk it."

I said, "Jim, I've got an idea. Do you normally study once a week for this class?"

He answered, "Yes."

I said, "Jim, I've got it. Would you mind studying with me Tuesday nights before class on Wednesday, for an hour?"

He said, "Yes, but what will that do?"

I continued, "Well, Jim, you want a B, right? Do you know who makes out the grades?"

He answered, "Well, you do."

I smiled, "That's right Jim, I'm guaranteeing you a B or B+."

"You mean you'll guaran..."

"I guarantee it. Look, I'm going to teach you extra Tuesday nights. If you're in my house for an hour, I'll make up the test too. I'll even help you prepare for the test. Jim, I'm guaranteeing you this."

Jim replied, "That's a deal. I'm going to study with you."

So Jim came up to my house, and this went on for a couple of weeks. One day he asked, "Hey Brother Ed, could I bring my brother and my roommate up? We have banana splits and root beer floats and doughnuts every study night; we might as well have parties when you teach." And so I said, "You bet, you bring them up." So we went along for four more weeks, and then one night they came up and they were kind of kidding around a lot, so I said, "You guys are sure having a hoot tonight. What's up around here?"

They looked at each other as if to say, "OK, who's going to tell him?" and then Jim finally said, "Brother Ed, we've been thinking, and we talked to our bishop, and we all want to be baptized, and will you baptize us and confirm us members of the Church next week?"

As I floated down from the ceiling I said, "Yes, Jim, I will, I will, I will." Well, it turned out his name was Jim Gerszewski, but I had mispronounced his name. Jim was Susan's brother; Susan was at the baptism, and the joy was felt by all.

You tell me that God our Father and Jesus Christ are not in charge of everything on this earth. How could those words come out of my mouth; "Your brothers will join the Church?" How, two years later, could one of those brothers be in my class? There were 20,000 students at BYU. Don't tell me that the Lord's hand isn't in all things that are good. All these boys served missions. All three were married in the temple.

So as I learned that year, the Spirit "will show unto you all things what ye should do" (2 Ne. 32:5). The vision in missionary work is to prepare people to feel the Spirit. Their needs are individual—you've got to be in tune to what they need. Once they feel the Spirit, you can invite them to make a commitment, and then you must follow up to help them keep that commitment.

Ed J. Pinegar, *Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon*, pp.301-303

## 7 **Alma 26:13-15**

### Source of Rejoicing

Brigham Young once said, "I had only traveled a short time to testify to the people, before I learned this one fact, that you might prove doctrine from the Bible till doomsday, and it would merely convince a people, but would not convert them. You might read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and prove every iota that you advance, and that alone would have no converting influence upon the people. Nothing short of a testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost would bring light and knowledge to them—bring them in their hearts to repentance. Nothing short of that would ever do. You have frequently heard me say that I would rather hear an Elder, either here or in the world, speak only five words accompanied by the power of God, and they would do more good than to hear long sermons without the Spirit. That is true, and we know it."

John A. Widtsoe, comp., *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 330

## 8 Is it possible to be happy when life is hard? To feel peace amid uncertainty and hope in the midst of cynicism? Is it possible to change, to shake off old habits and become new again? Is it possible to live with integrity and purity in a world that no longer values the virtues that distinguish the followers of Christ?

Yes. The answer is yes because of Jesus Christ, whose Atonement ensures that we need not bear the burdens of mortality alone....

Through the years I like you, have experienced pressures and disappointments that would have crushed me had I not been able to draw upon a source of wisdom and strength far greater than my own. He has never forgotten or

forsaken me, and I have come to know for myself that Jesus is the Christ and that this is His Church. With Ammon I say '[For] who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy...? Behold,... I cannot say the smallest part of which I feel' (Alma 26:16). I testify that in this, the twilight of the dispensation of the fullness of times, when Lucifer is working overtime to jeopardize our journey home and to separate us from the Savior's atoning power, the only answer for *any* of us is Jesus Christ.

Sheri Dew, in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 85-86; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 67.

## 9 Alma 26:17-20

### *Justice and Mercy*

Know this: Truth, glorious truth, proclaims there is...a Mediator....

Through Him mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice.

This truth is the very root of Christian doctrine.

Boyd K Packer, *Ensign*, Mat 1977, 56.

## 10 Alma 26:22

### *Mysteries*

Consider the words of President Joseph Fielding Smith:

"There are in the gospel such things as mysteries. A mystery is, of course, some truth which is not understood. All the principles of the gospel and all truth pertaining to the salvation of men are simple when understood. Until it is understood, however, a simple truth may be a great mystery.

"Gospel truths appeal more to the spirit, that is, they are spiritually discerned. A man may know a thing to be true by the teaching of the Spirit, but he may not be able to explain it to others. This may not be in keeping with modern worldly teaching, but it is true nevertheless. Revelations through the Spirit of the Lord, many times, cannot be explained. . . .

"The best educated man in the world may not be able to comprehend the simple truths of the gospel because his soul is not in tune; he has not been enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord. He, therefore, fails to see and feel the significance of these principles. . . .

"To understand spiritual things, a man must have spiritual discernment, that is, guidance by the Holy Ghost. For this reason we are confirmed and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:296-97

## 11

Ammon here describes the natural man as the man who is without repentance, faith, good works, and constant prayer. A person ceases to be a natural man when the Holy Ghost becomes his companion. The natural man is the man devoid of the spirit of prophecy and revelation. The man of God, as contrasted with the natural man, has the promise that he may know things that are not generally known and that he may be an instrument for righteousness in the hands of God to bring many into repentance. The promise is not appended to a priesthood office or to a particular calling. Indeed, the promise is not limited to men. It extends to every faithful member of the Church (see also D&C 76:5-10).

Millett & McConkie *Commentary*, Vol. 3 p. 181

## 12 Alma 26:26

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative:... to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.

"False Gods We Worship", *Ensign*, Jun 1976, p. 6

13 **Alma 26:27***Depressed and About to Turn Back*

There are times when you simply have to righteously hang on and outlast the devil until his depressive spirit leaves you. As the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Thine adversity and thine afflictions, shall be but a small moment: And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” (D&C 121:7-8). To press on in noble endeavors, even while surrounded by a cloud of depression, will eventually bring you out on top into the sunshine. Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1974

## 14

[An experience of Gordon B. Hinckley on his mission to England] Elder Hinckley found some of that discouragement common to missionaries facing new circumstances in a new land. He was not well physically, and as he went to his first street meeting . . . he recalls: “I was terrified. I stepped up on that little stand and looked at that crowd of people that had gathered. . . . They looked rather menacing and mean, but I somehow stumbled through whatever I had to say.” Down in spirit and facing no success in missionary endeavors, Gordon wrote a letter to his father, saying: “I am wasting my time and your money. I don’t see any point in my staying here.” In due course a gentle but terse reply came from his father. That letter read: “Dear Gordon. I have your letter [of such and such a date]. I have only one suggestion. Forget yourself and go to work. With love, Your Father.” President Hinckley says of that moment, “I pondered his response and then the next morning in our scripture class we read that great statement of the Lord: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35). That simple statement, that promise, touched me. I got on my knees and made a covenant with the Lord that I would try to forget myself and go to work. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, June 1995, p. 8

## 15

As you nurture the seedlings of faith in others, you will find yourself saying, “Is it already the end of the day?” rather than “Will this day ever end?” Pioneer women did not have time to wallow in discouragement. They were too busy working their way toward Zion. Mary Ellen Smoot, *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, p. 13

## 16

Discouragement and fear are tools of the devil.  
G.Homer Durham, *N. Eldon Tanner: His Life and Service* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 315

## 17

Without a doubt, Joseph Smith was a prophet with a great spirit of accomplishment and tenacity. On one occasion he said to his cousin, George A. Smith: “Never be discouraged. If I were sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia, with the Rocky Mountains piled on me, I would hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage, and I would come out on top.”

John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet* [New York: Macmillan, 1946], 9; as quoted in Angel Abrea, in Conference Report, Apr 1984 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984], 97

## 18

I hope that all of us, when the day of release from laboring in the . . . Mission, can say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” If you do, you’ll go on to fruitful lives. I have no question about that. Your future lies in the present, in the habits of work that you establish here, in your spirit of dedication, in your ambition to achieve something. As you do in the mission field, so you are likely to do all the rest of your lives....

I know it isn’t easy. It’s discouraging at times, sure. Aren’t you glad it isn’t just all fun all the time? Those valleys of discouragement make more beautiful the peaks of achievement....

19 I am not too worried about how many baptisms you have, whether it is 1 or 100. My only concern is that you give your best effort to the work. And whether it be 1 or 100, it is wonderful.... I know you get tired. I know you get discouraged sometimes...

You are making a sacrifice, but it is not a sacrifice, because you will get more than you give up. You will gain more than you give, and it will prove to be an investment with tremendous returns. It will prove to be a blessing instead of a sacrifice. No one who ever served in this work as a missionary who gave his or her best efforts need worry about making a sacrifice, because there will come blessings into the life of that individual for as long as he or she lives. I have not the slightest doubt about that.

*Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, 1995-99* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 1:364, 372, 375, 377.

20 If you are unhappy, if you are feeling weary, troubled, or disillusioned, may I ask you to try something? Instead of dwelling on your troubles, focus instead on creating something remarkable, something of eternal significance. Nurture a testimony; strengthen a relationship; write a family history; go to the temple; serve.

Read the family proclamation and the Relief Society declaration; make a commitment to live those principles and celebrate....

"This is not a time for dragging feet or stooped shoulders," President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled. "Stop seeking out the storms and enjoy more fully the sunlight."

Mary Ellen Smoot, in Conference Report, Apr. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 80.

21 It is God's work, it is not yours—and you have the right to claim from God greater power than you have in order to do his work. Always remember that!

I am not given much to worry.... I say to myself, "... If I am doing the best I know how, I am not going to worry." I am going to let Him do the worrying when I am doing the best that I know how for him.... Do not feel that you cannot reach out, outside and beyond yourselves for power which you do not possess in order to be successful in your work. We have to have that outside power.

*Matthew Cowley Speaks* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 354-355.

22 There have been numerous studies that have shown that as western culture in particular has moved into other parts of the world and been adopted by other countries, their levels of depression have risen, which would suggest... that there is something, culturally about western civilization that tends to promote discouragement and despair and depression.... So what is it about western civilization, not just America, but western civilization in general that promotes depression? There is no question that we are a very consumer driven kind of civilization. We like things. And we live in enough luxury that we can have things. We want our fast food to come to us faster. We want bigger screened TVs. I mean if you have a 19-inch and then you walk through... [the mall] you see that they come this big, we're not satisfied with our 19-inch anymore. We want more room on our Ipod. We want everything bigger and faster and we want it NOW. And unfortunately we grow up with that.... You only have to turn the TV on or walk through... [the mall] to realize all you don't have. I don't like going to ...[the mall] because I didn't realize all the things I wanted until I got there. Life's good and then I see there is an even better, bigger thing that I could have if I'd just buy it.... To learn to be content is a great advantage and great gain in life. And to not always be living wanting more or bigger or faster or better, but to learn to be content and to count your blessings is a great blessing in journeying through life.

Grant C. Anderson, Orem Institute Devotional, 24 Feb. 2006.

23 Some despondency is physically caused. Glandular maladies can poison the system and issue in melancholy moods beyond the power of anyone's satisfactory control. To the victims of such depressive states the best-intentioned counsel... may easily do more harm than good. To the black moods they suffer because of bodily dysfunctioning, further dejection is added when they, in their powerlessness, are held accountable.

In such cases the wise physician is an indispensable resource. The vast majority of us, however, who fall victim to occasional or settled moodiness and gloom have no such justification....

Much of the depression we struggle with downstream could have been prevented upstream if we had been wise. Great convictions to live by, great resources to live from, great purposes to live for, the love of nature, the companionship of books, the nurture of friendship, conscience—such factors enter into a life that keeps its savor, and furnish an immunity to despondency which makes cure needless.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, *On Being a Real Person* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943], 208-209.

## 24 Alma 26:27-30 *Realities of Missionary Service*

I was reading again the twenty-third chapter of Alma and the story of Ammon's mission. I read out loud, as I sometimes do, trying to put myself in the position of the characters in the book, imagining that I was saying or hearing the words, that I was there... with a clarity which cannot be described and which would be difficult to comprehend by one who has not experienced it, the Spirit spoke to my soul, saying, *Did you notice? Everything that happened to Ammon happened to you....*

It was a thought that had never occurred to me before. I quickly reread the story. Yes, there were times when my heart had been depressed and I had thought about going home. I too had gone to a foreign land to teach the gospel to the Lamanites. I had gone forth among them, had suffered hardships, had slept on the floor, endured the cold, gone without eating. I too had traveled from house to house, knocking on doors for months at a time without being invited in, relying on the mercies of God.

There had been other times when we had entered houses and talked to people. We had taught them on their streets and on their hills. We had even preached in other churches. I remembered the time I had been spit upon. I remembered the time when I, as a young district leader assigned by the mission president to open up as new town, had entered, with three other elders, the main square of a city that had never had missionaries before. We went into the park, sang a hymn, and a crowd gathered.

Then the lot fell upon me, as district leader, to preach. I stood upon a stone bench and spoke to the people. I told the story of the restoration of the gospel, of the boy Joseph going into the grove and the appearance of the Father and the Son to him. I remembered well a group of teenage boys, in the evening shadows, throwing rocks at us. I remembered the concern about being hit or injured by those who did not want to hear the message.

I remembered spending time in jail while my legal right to be a missionary in a certain country was decided by the police authorities.... I still remember the feeling I had when the door was closed and I was far away from home, alone, with only the mercies of the Lord to rely on for the deliverance. I remembered enduring these things with the hope that "we might be the means of saving some soul" (Alma 26:30).

And then on that day as I read, the Spirit testified to me again, and the words remain with me even today: *No one but a missionary could have written this story. Joseph Smith could never have known what it was like to be a missionary to the Lamanites, for no one he knew had ever done such a thing before.*

F. Burton Howard, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 124-125.

**Alma 26:35**25 *All power*

Unless God had power over all things, and was able by his power to control all things, and thereby deliver his creatures who put their trust in him from the power of all beings that might seek their destruction, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell, men could not be saved.

*Lectures on Faith, 4:12.*

**A Merciful Being**

26

"Mercy is not showered promiscuously upon mankind," wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "except in the general sense that it is manifest in the creation and peopling of the earth and in the granting of immortality to all men as a free gift" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 484). Rather, mercy is granted (because of the grace, love, and condescension of God), as it is with all blessings, to those who comply with the law upon which its receipt is predicated (see D&C 130:20-21). That law is the law of righteousness: *those who sow righteousness reap mercy* (see Hosea 10:12). There is no promise of mercy to the wicked; rather, as stated in the Ten Commandments, the Lord promises to show mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments (see Exodus 20:6; Daniel 9:4; D&C 70:18).

Millett & McConkie, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol 3, p.184

**Alma 26:37**

27

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative: to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies."

*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, edited by Edward L. Kimball, p. 417