

**Alma 32:2-16**

- 1 *Humility*  
Just as soil needs preparation for a seed, so does a human heart for the word of God to take root. Before he told the people to plant the seed, Alma told them that ... the circumstances of their lives, which led them to be humble, had prepared them.  
Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, November 1995, 38.
- 2 Humility: "To joyfully, voluntarily and quietly submit one's whole life to God's will."  
Alice T. Clark
- 3 Spiritual Humility: "The recognition of one's dependence upon God for all things temporal and spiritual, coupled with a willingness to accept his law."  
Rodney Turner
- 4 The recognition of guilt should give one a sense of humility, or a "broken heart and a contrite spirit," and bring him to the proverbial "sackcloth and ashes" attitude. This does not mean that one must be servile and self-effacing to the destructive point, but rather one must have an honest desire to right the wrong.  
Conviction would incorporate within it the recognition that the broken law was God's law, that all his laws are designed for the ultimate benefit and glory of man, and that in his loving omniscience God knows what is best for each of us. Then with respect and reverence and a developing love for God we generate a desire to please him and eventually be like him and near him. This gives the incentive and willingness to move along the path which will accomplish those purposes, including doing whatever is necessary to get the forgiveness which will make possible the eventual realization of these goals. This is true humility in the context of conviction of guilt.  
This humility needs to be voluntary, as it normally will be when the offender becomes convinced of his sin without outside pressures. (Quotes Alma 32:15-16)  
Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, (1969), 159-160.
- 5 [From a letter to a disbeliever.] May I repeat, the time will come when there will be a surrender of every person who has ever lived on this earth, who is now living, or who ever will live on this earth; and it will be an unforced surrender, an unconditional surrender.... It is not *if* you will... [come] to the great truth; it is *when*, for I know that you cannot indefinitely resist the power and pressure of the truth.  
Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, Sept. 1978 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978], 8.
- 6 "We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are. (See D&C 38:24; D&C 81:5; D&C 84:106.)  
"We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement. (See Jacob 4:10; Hel. 15:3; D&C 63:55; D&C 101:4-5; D&C 108:1; D&C 124:61, 84; D&C 136:31; Prov. 9:8.)  
"We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us. (See 3 Ne. 13:11, 14; D&C 64:10.)  
"We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service. (See Mosiah 2:17.)  
"We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others. (See Alma 4:19; Alma 31:5; Alma 48:20.)  
"We can choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently.  
"We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God. (See D&C 58:43; Mosiah 27:25-26; Alma 5:7-14, 49.)

*"We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives. (See 3 Ne. 11:11; 3 Ne. 13:33; Moro. 10:32.)*

*"Let us choose to be humble. We can do it. I know we can."*

*Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," Ensign, May 1989, p. 6*

### **Alma 32:17**

#### 7 *Show me a sign*

The sign-seekers, the God-tempters, presume to put the Almighty on trial by challenging him to prove his own existence. Korihor typified them: "Except ye show me a sign, I will not believe." (Alma 30:48.) In their pride, the Korihors of this world set up the preconditions under which they may condescend to believe. But it is all a sham; their insistence on signs is not meant to foster faith but to justify doubt. And the seed of faith will never grow in the soil of doubt. Where there is a will to doubt, a heavenly sign or evidence will be ignored, rejected, or rationalized away. The Lord told young Joseph Smith: "Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show them all these things [obtained from the hill Cumorah] which I have committed unto you." (D&C 5:7; cf. Luke 16:31.) The rational mind will always reject what the hardened heart is unprepared to accept. That is why signs without faith are a barrier against, not a path to God.

The last thing sign-seekers should seek is a sign. In insisting upon knowing before believing, they become their own worst enemy...

Just as a wise parent keeps medicine or tools out of a child's reach, so does God withhold divine knowledge from the ill-prepared. In his wisdom and mercy, he has ordained that faith must precede certitude so that, in the very process of exercising faith, the individual develops the spiritual maturity needed to possess divine knowledge in righteousness. Thus capacitated, such knowledge magnifies rather than diminishes one's relationship to God.

Rodney Turner, "A Faith Unto Salvation," *Studies in Scriptures*, Edited by Kent P. Jackson, vol 8, pp.21-22

### **Alma 32:18**

#### 8 *Is this faith*

Bible Dictionary, Faith: Faith is to hope for things which are not seen, but which are true (Heb. 11:1; Alma 32:21), and must be centered in Jesus Christ in order to produce salvation. To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone. The Lord has revealed himself and his perfect character, possessing in their fullness all the attributes of love, knowledge, justice, mercy, unchangeableness, power, and every other needful thing, so as to enable the mind of man to place confidence in him without reservation. Faith is kindled by hearing the testimony of those who have faith (Rom. 10:14-17). Miracles do not produce faith but strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ; in other words, faith comes by righteousness, although miracles often confirm one's faith.

Faith is a principle of action and of power, and by it one can command the elements and/or heal the sick, or influence any number of circumstances when occasion warrants (Jacob 4:4-7). Even more important, by faith one obtains a remission of sins and eventually can stand in the presence of God.

All true faith must be based upon correct knowledge or it cannot produce the desired results. Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel and is more than belief, since true faith always moves its possessor to some kind of physical and mental action; it carries an assurance of the fulfillment of the things hoped for. A lack of faith leads one to despair, which comes because of iniquity.

Although faith is a gift, it must be cultured and sought after until it grows from a tiny seed to a great tree. The effects of true faith in Jesus Christ include (1) an actual knowledge that the course of life one is pursuing is acceptable to the Lord (see Heb. 11:4); (2) a reception of the blessings of the Lord that are available to man in this life; and (3) an assurance of personal salvation in the world to come. These things involve individual and personal testimony, guidance, revelation, and spiritual knowledge. Where there is true faith there are miracles, visions,

dreams, healings, and all the gifts of God that he gives to his saints. Jesus pointed out some obstacles to faith in John 5:44 and 12:39-42 (cf. James 1:6-8).

The most complete and systematic exposition on faith is the Lectures on Faith, prepared for and delivered in the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1832. Other references to faith include JST Gen. 14:26-36; Rom. 10:14-17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:1-40; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 1:8-9; Enos 1:6-8; Alma 32; Moro. 10:11; D&C 46:13-16.

Bible Dictionary pp. 669-670

## 9 **Alma 32:19** **He That Knoweth the Will of God and Doeth it not**

When individuals are blessed with visions, revelations, and great manifestations, look out, then the devil is nigh you, and you will be tempted in proportion to the vision, revelation, or manifestation you have received. Hence thousands, when they are off their guard, give way to the severe temptations which come upon them, and behold they are gone.

Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1856], 3:206.

10 Faith is the assurance which men have of the existence of things which they have not seen, and the principle of action in all intelligent beings. If men were duly to consider themselves, and turn their thoughts and reflections to the operations of their own minds, they would readily discover that it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them; that without it both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental.

Lectures on Faith, 1:9-10

## 11 **Alma 32:21** *"Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge."*

Faith and perfect knowledge are not incompatible, else how would God, whose knowledge is perfect possess the attribute of faith? (See Hebrews 11:3.) Alma is defining faith from the viewpoint of mortality, not the vantage point of the eternities. In our present world, faith serves as an assurance of the existence of the unseen. By contrast, in the *Lectures on Faith* Joseph Smith spoke of faith in its unlimited sense. Faith, he declared, is "the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist." (*Lectures on Faith* 1:16.) Among exalted beings, "Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence!" (*Lectures on Faith* 1:24; see also 2:2.)

Faith is a process, a divine process built upon knowledge and understanding of eternal verities as well as upon personal righteousness. One may possess a slight amount of faith—having but little understanding of the principles of the gospel and living but a portion of the gospel law; or one may possess that quality and kind of faith which Joseph Smith called "faith unto life and salvation." We must remember that Alma is speaking to a people with little or no faith. They must be instructed simply and plainly, must build their knowledge and witness of truth slowly but surely. They do not know of the Christ, of the necessity for the ordinances, or of the gifts and graces which are the companions of the Saints. They must be nurtured slowly. For them, faith and knowledge are almost at opposite ends of a continuum.

On the other hand, to those who already possess enough faith to have come out of the world, to have believed in the Lord Jesus and accepted the words of his anointed servants—to such the process of faith is grander and more expansive. These come to understand the nature and kind of being that God is, and in so doing they come to

appreciate that faith is a principle of power which characterizes the work of God. God has all knowledge. God has all faith. By virtue of his omniscience and his omnipotence he commands that things come to pass. By virtue of his perfect faith, this virtue and principle of power, he has absolute confidence that his word will be fulfilled and his command realized. "In the eternal sense," Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written, "because faith is the power of God himself, it embraces within its fold a knowledge of all things. This measure of faith, the faith by which the worlds are and were created and which sustains and upholds all things, is found only among resurrected persons. It is the faith of saved beings. But mortals are in process, through faith, of gaining eternal salvation. Their faith is based on a knowledge of the truth, within the meaning of Alma's statement that 'faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things,' but that men have faith when they 'hope for things which are not seen, which are true.' In this sense faith is both preceded and supplanted by knowledge, and when any person gains a perfect knowledge on any given matter, then as pertaining to that thing, he has faith no longer; or, rather, his faith is dormant; it has been supplanted by pure knowledge." (*New Witness*, pp.209-10.)

According to Joseph Smith, faith is built upon knowledge of three things: (1) the idea of the existence of God; (2) a correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes; and (3) an actual knowledge that the course in life one is pursuing is according to God's will (see *Lectures on Faith*, 3:2-5). The first two prerequisites for faith in God have to do with a knowledge of God. They may be had through studying and searching and pondering the word of the Lord and the testimonies of those who have known him. The third prerequisite has to do with ourselves. A person may have the assurance from the Lord that he is on course only if he is indeed on course! There exists in the souls of the faithful a constant yearning to improve, to repent, to bring their lives into harmony with the heavens. There also exists in those souls a quiet confidence born of the Spirit, a consciousness of increasing victory over self, a subtle but certain assurance and peace that the Lord is pleased. Such a knowledge, such a victory, comes only through an unconditional surrender to the will of the Master, only through a willingness to sacrifice all things for the kingdom's sake (see D&C 97:8; *Lectures on Faith* 6:7).

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol 3, pp. 227-229.

## 12 Alma 32:21 *Hope for things not seen*

*Casual belief* is a passive kind of belief that never stirs the soul to do anything more than think with the mind. It is the belief Jesus referred to when he said to those who professed faith or belief but did not want to do any works... (JST James 2:18-19).

*Causal belief* is a belief that leads to action. The scriptures equate it with faith. It is the substance of hope, the mental assurance of things hoped for but not seen (JST Heb. 11:1). Faith and causal belief are a gift of God given to men and women who live the laws which entitle them to this endowment of power, for it is a power (D&C 130:20-21). There is an uncommon dimension of faith in a few men and women that, when exercised in a true belief of Jesus Christ, causes the elements to react both physically and spiritually. This uncommon faith has a catalytic power to direct all matter and make earthly energy sources submissive. In the gospel sense this causal belief or faith generates salvation and eternal life.

Kenneth W. Anderson, *The Book of Mormon: From Zion to Destruction* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1995], 31-32.

## 13 Faith exists when absolute confidence in that which we cannot see combines with action that is in absolute conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father.... Only when our faith is aligned with the will of our Heavenly Father will we be empowered to receive the blessings we seek.

"Shall He Find Faith on the Earth?" *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 83-84; as quoted in Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, Feb. 2004 [*Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004*], 65

**Alma 32:21****14** “Which are True”

“By way of illustration I borrow the following from the works of Orson Pratt: ‘When Europeans first began their explorations in the New World, the Indians whom they met were much amazed at the power and explosive properties of gunpowder and asked many questions respecting the manner in which it was produced. The Europeans, taking advantage of the ignorance of the . . . [Indians], and seeing an opportunity to increase their wealth by the deception, told the Indians that it was the seed of a plant which grew in the lands they had come from, and doubtless it would thrive in their land also. The Indians, of course, believed this statement, and purchased the supposed seed, giving in exchange for it large quantities of gold. In implicit faith they carefully planted the supposed seed, and anxiously watched for its sprouting and the appearance of the plant; but it never came. They had faith in the statements made to them by the Europeans, but as these statements were false, and therefore the evidence on which the Indians based their belief untrue, their faith was vain.’ Thus must it ever be. Only correct evidence, only truthful testimony can produce fruitful, profitable, true faith. No matter how sincere one’s belief may be in an error, that will not transform the error into truth. The sincere faith of the Indians in what the Europeans had said about the gunpowder seed did not make that substance produce a plant yielding gunpowder. And so faith in false doctrines, founded upon false testimony, cannot savor of salvation.”

B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel and Man’s Relationship to Deity*, pp. 46-47

**15**

Alma defines faith as the “hope for things which are not seen” and adds the very important qualification “which are true.” Faith cannot successfully be exercised in falsehoods or untruths. Gods of wood and stone, gods created by the hands of men, cannot dispense the blessings of heaven. Nor is such power found in gods created in the minds of men and crafted by the witchery of words. Sincerity is commendable. Zeal is to be appreciated. But saving faith can be exercised only in that which is true. Some would like to suppose that these gods born of men share in heaven’s powers if worshipped with sufficient sincerity or pursued with zeal. Such is not the case. Miscalculated longitudes and latitudes, though coupled with sincerity and zeal, will not bring to the safety of its home port the ship lost at sea.

Joshua charged the children of Israel to “fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth” (Joshua 24:14). One can hardly imagine his having directed the Lord’s hosts to “fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and error,” or to serve him in “truth and hypocrisy.” The formula for heaven’s blessings is, and ever must be, that we worship in sincerity and in truth. Thus the Lord’s people in the last days have been charged to serve him “in righteousness and in truth unto the end” (D&C 76:5). Illustrating this doctrine, Joseph Smith taught that it was through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ that Abel offered an animal sacrifice that was acceptable to God. “Cain,” however, “offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven,” which required the ritual to be a type of the shedding of Christ’s blood, the Prophet declared. (*Teachings*, p. 58.)

President N. Eldon Tanner explained: “The scriptures give us evidence of the reality and personality of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. In order to believe in God it is necessary for us to understand his nature and attributes. Our faith in him must be based on true principles. Faith will avail us nothing if it is based on a false premise. For example, some of the early American colonists in dealing with the Indians gave them gunpowder to plant with the promise that they could raise a crop of gunpowder. In explicit faith the Indians planted the gunpowder, but of course they harvested nothing from their efforts because their faith was based on falsehood.” (CR, April 1978, p. 20.)

There is another facet of faith which is often misunderstood. Faith is not the power of positive thinking. One does not have faith simply because he is positive or optimistic. Faith is based on the truth, the truth as God knows it, the truth as a manifestation of the will and pleasure of the Lord. We do need to be positive for there is no virtue in being long-faced and dreary. But faith is another matter entirely. If a priesthood bearer is called upon to heal a dying man, for example, he does not command the sick one to rise from his bed of affliction in the name of faith, when that “faith” is no more than wishful thinking or hope that the man will lie. “Working by faith is not the mere speaking of a

few well-chosen words,” Elder McConkie wrote. “Anyone with the power of speech could have commanded the rotting corpse of Lazarus to come forth, but only one whose power was greater than death could bring life again to the brother of Mary and Martha. Nor is working by faith merely a mental desire, however strong, that some eventuality shall occur. There may be those whose mental powers and thought processes are greater than any of the saints, but only persons who are in tune with the Infinite can exercise the spiritual forces and powers that come from him.

“Those who work by faith must first have faith; no one can use a power that he does not possess, and the faith or power gained by obedience to those laws upon which its receipt is predicated.... And then—when the day is at hand and the hour has arrived for the miracle to be wrought—then they must be in tune with the Holy Spirit of God. He who is the Author of faith, he whose power faith is, he whose works are the embodiment of justice and judgment and wisdom and all good things, even he must approve the use of his power in the case at hand. Faith cannot be exercised contrary to the order of heaven or contrary to the will and purposes of him whose power it is. Men work by faith when they are in tune with the Spirit and when what they seek to do by mental exertion and by the spoken work is the mind and will of the Lord.” (*New Witness*, pp. 191-92.)

Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol 3, pp. 229-230

## 16 Alma 32:22

### *Believe*

“Belief, humble belief, is the foundation of all. Righteousness, and the beginning of spiritual progression,” wrote Bruce R. McConkie. “It goes before good works, opens the door to an eternal store of heavenly truth, and charts the course to eternal life.” With but few exceptions, *belief* is used in holy writ as a synonym for *faith*. Belief in Christ brings salvation. Failure to believe in Christ brings damnation. False systems of religious belief close the doors of heaven, while belief in principles of truth opens those doors. “It is one thing to believe God is a personal being in whose image man is made, as the scriptures attest, and quite another to believe he is a spirit nothingness that fills the immensity of space, as the creeds of Christendom aver. What men believe is the governing force in their lives. If they truly believe the truth, they will be saved in the kingdom of God; if they truly believe a lie, they will fail to gain this high reward.

Salvation comes to those who believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rejection of his gospel closes the door to salvation. Men believe his gospel, are seeking to believe, or do not believe; and if they do not, they must of necessity believe something else. Men do not and cannot live in a vacuum; they believe one thing or another. Disbelief in the gospel consists of belief in other things that do not lead to salvation....

Thus God’s holy word calls for a belief in Christ that is infinite and eternal. It is not a mere lip-service declaration that he is the Savior nor a mere confessing with idle lips that he is Lord of all. To believe in Christ in the sense of gaining eternal life is to believe his words and accept his messengers. It is to honor his prophets and take counsel from his apostles. It is to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16), to believe what he believes, and to say what he would say in all situations. It is to abide in the truth and keep the commandments. It is to enjoy the gifts of the Spirit, to work the works of righteousness, and to perform miracles as he did. (*New Witness*, pp. 21-24.) It is to believe in his name, to take that name upon us, and to have full confidence in the promises associated with our so doing.

Ibid, p. 231

## 17 Alma 32:27

### *A Desire to Believe*

During a zone conference, a missionary asked the instructor why his investigators did not receive answers to their prayers. They were reading the Book of Mormon and praying about it. The investigators were looking for the fulfillment of Moroni’s promise that those who read the book and pray with real intent, with faith in Christ, will receive an answer. [See Moroni 10:3-5.] The instructor questioned the missionary regarding the prayers of the investigators.

“Were they praying with real intent?” The missionary answered, “Yes, but they know they will not receive an answer!”

Alma states that unbelief causes the person to “resist the Spirit of the Lord” so that the seed is cast out before it has a chance to grow (Alma 32:28). A desire to believe is a prerequisite for an answer. Confirmations by the Holy Spirit are not given to unbelievers. They would not recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Further, praying with “real. Intent” implies praying with a desire to believe as well as a desire to know.

Merrill J. Bateman, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 26

18 The terms faith and belief are sometimes regarded as synonyms, nevertheless each of them has a specific meaning in our language, although in earlier usage there was little distinction between them, and therefore the words are used interchangeably in many scriptural passages. Belief, in one of its accepted senses, may consist in a merely intellectual assent, while faith implies such confidence and convictions as will impel to action.... Belief is in a sense passive, an agreement or acceptance only; faith is active and positive, embracing such reliance and confidence as will lead to works. One cannot have faith without belief; yet he may believe and not still lack faith. Faith is vivified, vitalized, living belief....

Neither belief nor its superior, actual knowledge, is efficient to save; for neither of these is faith. If belief is a product of the mind, faith is of the heart; belief is founded on reason, faith largely on intuition....

The mere possession of knowledge gives no assurance of benefit there from. It is said that during an epidemic of cholera in a great city, a scientific man proved to his own satisfaction, by chemical and microscopic tests, that the water supply was infected, and that through it contagion was being spread. He proclaimed the fact throughout the city, and warned all against the use of unboiled water. Many of the people, although incapable of comprehending his methods of investigation, far less or repeating such for themselves, had faith in his warning words, followed his instructions, and escaped the death to which their careless and unbelieving fellows succumbed. Their faith was a saving one. To the man himself, the truth by which so many lives had been spared was a matter of knowledge.... Nevertheless, in a moment of forgetfulness he drank of the unsterilized water, and soon thereafter died a victim of the plague. His knowledge did not save him, convincing though it was; yet others, whose reliance was only that of confidence or faith in the truth that he declared, escaped the threatening destruction. He had knowledge; but, was he wise? Knowledge is to wisdom what belief is to faith, one an abstract principle, the other a living application. Not possession merely, but the proper use of knowledge constitutes wisdom. [*Articles of Faith* (1949)

James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, (1949), 96-100

19 **Alma 32:27**  
*Experiment on my word*

Faith and faith only... is the moving cause of all action; without it both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity and all... exertions would cease, both physical and mental.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Restoration of all Things*, 186.

20 The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ advises men to test its truths in human life. It approves distinctly of the experimental method. The Savior laid down the principle in a luminous statement: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7:16-17) On another occasion He repeated the thought: “If I do not the works of the Father, believe me not. But I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.” (John 10:37-38) The words of the Apostle Paul, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21), are of the same import. There is constant advice in the scriptures to let the effects of gospel living be evidence of its truth, as for example: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16)...

Joseph Smith the Prophet, recognized this method of testing truth. He read the words of James, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5); and believing in God, he went into the grove to test the reality of the promise there made. Thus came the First Vision.

Running through the scriptures is the doctrine that truth as well as untruth may be recognized by its effects, and the counsel is given to test the claims of the gospel by rendering obedience to its principles of action. Obedience itself becomes but a call to do certain things, so that certain rewards may be received. Obedience may therefore be counted as a phase of the experimental method.

All should test their religious beliefs. But all such testing must be done in the right spirit and buy the right method. Every testing must be a sincere and honest search for truth. The truth or the goodness, not the untruth or the evil, of a system must be sought; then untruth or evil, if it exists, is automatically discovered. There must be no bending of means or methods to bolster up prejudice. An honest seeker of truth must accept truth unhesitatingly when found, and yield full surrender to it. The truth-seeker must be single-minded—for truth. Errors must be thrown out, however appealing they may be to man-made appetites.

The experimental method is applicable and should be used in the field of religion as in every other field of human activity. Only then can a full conviction of its truth be won. “Practicing our religion” is the best direct method of gaining a “testimony of its truth,” and that should be the constant concern of every Latter-day Saint.

John A. Widstoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (1951), 26-27

## 21 **Alma 32:27-28**

*Experiment – Plant Seed*

Often in the Church, we refer to Alma 32 as being a great chapter on faith. This I not incorrect; but the seed Alma refers to is not faith, it is *the word of God* (see Alma 32:28).

*Selected Writings of Gerald N. Lund* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999], 119

22 Seed: Word of God (vs. 28)

Soil: Your heart (vs. 28)

Sprout: Enlarging of your soul, enlightening understanding, and deliciousness (vs. 28)

Tree: Increased knowledge that the seed was good (vs. 28)

Fruit: Everlasting life (vs. 41-43)

*Scripture Study for Latter Day Saint Families*, p. 201

23 Just as soil needs preparation for a seed, so does a human heart for the word of God to take root. Before he told the people to plant the seed, Alma told them that their hearts were prepared. They had been persecuted and cast out of their churches. Alma with his love and the circumstances of their lives, which led them to be humble, had prepared them. They were then ready to hear the word of God. If they chose to plant it in their hearts, the growth in their souls would surely follow, and that would increase their faith.... First of all... to plant the seed, they have to try it be keeping commandments.... That feeling of surrender is not likely to come unless they experience some feeling of being loved and lowly of heart.

Henry b. Eyring, *Ensign*, Nov. 1955 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995] 38

24 To soundly plant good seeds in your heart requires prolonged, intense, unremitting pondering. It is a deep, ongoing, regenerating process which refines the soul.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, May 1985, p. 23-25

- 25 [Spiritual] Scientific Method—Believing, one sees  
 “We do in order to know.”  
 Rodney Turner

26 **Alma 32:34-35**  
*Swelleth Souls and Enlighten Understanding*

A few weeks ago our four-year-old grandson, Michael, reported to his parents, “When I pray, my heart feels like a roasted marshmallow,”.... The prophet Alma described these feelings... [in Alma 32:34-35]. Learning to discern the teachings of the Spirit is an important part of helping faith become a reality. My daughter Karen shared her experience. She said, “When I was just a little girl, I started reading the Book of Mormon for the first time. After many days of reading, I came one night to 1 Nephi 3:7:...I felt strongly impressed.... But the deep impression was really more of a feeling, I had seen my parents mark verses in their scriptures with a red pencil. So I got up and searched through the house until I found a red pencil, and with a great sense of solemnity and importance, I marked that verse in my own Book of Mormon.” Karen continued, “Over the years as I read the scriptures, that experience was repeated time and time again.... In time I came to recognize that feeling as the Holy Ghost.”  
 Janette Hales Beckham, *Ensign*, Nov 1997 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997], 75

27 **Alma 32:38-39**  
*Faith and doubt cannot exist at the same time*

Where doubt and uncertainty are there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts... cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not there faith is weak.  
 Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 6:12

28 **Alma 32:39-43**  
*Seed, Tree of Life*

Alma's seed is the same as Lehi's rod of iron.... Alma teaches one how to find the strait and narrow path and hold on to the rod. It begins with a desire to believe [see Alma 32:27]....

In Alma's experiment, a person plants a seed in his heart, and by nourishing it continually, it grows into a tree of life within. What does this mean?... If one has the tree (Christ) and its fruit (the Atonement and its blessings) within oneself, one's countenance will reflect Christ's image [see Alma 5:14]. Through the experiment of trying the word, one is blessed by the Holy Spirit and receives the gifts of faith, love, virtue, brotherly kindness, and so on, and one experiences the mighty change of heart—one is born of God. The person becomes a new creature in Christ, as Christ is within him....

Lehi's tree is symbolic of the Savior. One obtains the fruits of the Atonement by holding to the rod of iron until one reaches the tree and partakes of the fruit. Alma teaches the same truths. By experimenting on the word (planting and nurturing the seed), a person's desire to believe is rewarded by a witness of the Spirit. He receives truth line upon line and precept upon precept. By diligent and patient continuance, the seed matures into a tree with a person's heart and soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the additional light with the person causes him to reflect the Savior's characteristics in his countenance and being. He puts off the natural man and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He receives a new heart and experiences a new birth.

Merrill J. Bateman, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 27, 29-30.

29 Alma used a seed to stand for the word. He taught the discouraged Zoramites that if they would “give place, that a seed may be planted in [their] heart[s]” (Alma 32:28), and then notice if good feelings went with it, they would begin to understand and life would be different for them. Could that be a way of saying: “Decide, just for yourself, that you will make a place for scripture reading. And then, as you begin to do that notice what feelings go with it?” Alma then taught that “as the tree beginneth to grow” (Alma 32:37), it would need to be nourished with great care. Could that be a way of saying: “Nourish the desire to read. Do some things that will keep you reading and help you to understand in new ways. Let others keep you excited and help you learn more from the scriptures so that the word will continue to grow?” Alma taught that if this nourishing continued for a long time, there would be wonderful fruit. Please turn to Alma, chapter 32, verse 42:...”ye shall pluck the fruit.... And ye shall feast upon the fruit... that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.” Could that be a way of saying: “When you continue reading, and doing the things that you read about, eventually life will change in a way that is difficult to even imagine. Your daily discouragements will be replaced with a knowledge of how much God loves you. You will feast and be filled.”

Virginia H. Pearce, *Ensign*, May 1995 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995], 89

### **Alma 32**

30 *Faith*

“Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness. It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith.”

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 264

31 “Faith is not a substitute for truth but a pathway to it.”

K. Douglas Bassett, *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon*

32 “Belief in a sense is passive, an agreement or acceptance only; faith is active and positive embracing such reliance and confidence as will lead to works.”

James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 96-97

33 “Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence.”

Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 1:24

34 “So the combination of faith in Christ plus faith unto repentance is vitally important. That concept is one of the greatest insights we have into the importance of simple, clear faith—faith sufficient to repent. Apparently faith great enough to move mountains is not required; faith enough to speak in tongues or to heal the sick is not needed; all that we need is just enough faith to recognize that we have sinned and to repent of our sins, to feel remorse for them, and to desire to sin no more but to please Christ our Lord.”

Robert E. Wells, *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, 1991 Sperry Symposium, pp. 6-7

35 “Could faith be the answer? We all know that more faith won’t make our problems disappear. But I believe as our faith increases, we become more able to not only survive the hard times but become better because of them. . . . faith means that I really believe that: (1) Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ live, and they are in charge of this world. (2) They know me. (3) They love me. (4) They have a plan for my future. (5) I will obey the commandments, work hard, and trust in their plan. Sooner or later, everything will be okay.”

Virginia H. Pearce, *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 92

36 “Of all our needs, I think the greatest is an increase in faith.”

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, p. 54

37 [A lesson learned as a missionary on a sailboat in Tonga] “Once I asked the Lord to bless us with a good tail wind so we could get to Foa quickly. As we got under way, one of the older men said, ‘Elder Groberg, you need to modify your prayers a little.’ ‘How’s that?’ I replied. ‘You asked the Lord for a tail wind to take us rapidly to Foa. If you pray for a tail wind to Foa, what about the people who are trying to come from Foa to Pangai? They are good people, and you are praying against them. Just pray for a good wind, not a tail wind.’ . . . We may pray for a particular type of weather, or to preserve someone’s life, when that answer to our prayer may hurt someone else. That’s why we must always pray in faith, because we can’t have true, God-given faith in something that is not according to His will. If it’s according to His will, all parties will benefit. I learned to pray for a good wind and the ability to get there safely, not necessarily a tail wind.”

John H. Groberg, *In the Eye of the Storm*, p. 175

38 As faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Saviour has said, and that truly, that “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16; italics added.)

As we receive by faith all temporal blessings that we do receive, so we in like manner receive by faith all spiritual blessings that we do receive. But faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. Thus says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, [11:3].

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

*Lectures on Faith*, 1:12-14

39 “In a world filled with skepticism and doubt, the expression ‘seeing is believing’ promotes the attitude, ‘You show me, and I will believe.’ We want all of the proof and all of the evidence first. It seems hard to take things on faith.

“When will we learn that in spiritual things it works the other way about—that believing is seeing? Spiritual belief precedes spiritual knowledge. When we believe in things that are not seen but are nevertheless true, then we have faith.”

Boyd K. Packer, “What Is Faith?” in *Faith*, pp. 42-43

40 “There are two kinds of faith. One of them functions ordinarily in the life of every soul. It is the kind of faith born by experience; it gives us certainty that a new day will dawn, that spring will come, that growth will take place. It is the kind of faith that relates us with confidence to that which is scheduled to happen. . .

“There is another kind of faith, rare indeed. This is the kind of faith that causes things to happen. It is the kind of faith that is worthy and prepared and unyielding, and it calls forth things that otherwise would not be. It is the kind of

faith that moves people. It is the kind of faith that sometimes moves things. Few men possess it. It comes by gradual growth. It is a marvelous, even a transcendent, power, a power as real and as invisible as electricity. Directed and channeled, it has great effect.

Boyd K. Packer, "What Is Faith?" in *Faith*, pp. 42-43

41 Are you one who has tried to exercise faith and has felt no benefit? If so, you likely have not understood and followed the principles upon which faith is founded....

Some of those principles are:

- Trust in God and in His willingness to provide help when needed no matter how challenging the circumstance.
- Obey His commandments and live to demonstrate that He can trust you.
- Be sensitive to the quiet prompting of the Spirit.
- Act courageously on that prompting.
- Be patient and understanding when God lets you struggle to grow and when answers come a piece at a time over an extended period time....

Even if you exercise your strongest faith, God will not always reward you immediately according to your desires. Rather, God will respond with what in His eternal plan is best for you.... Indeed, were you to know His entire plan, you would never ask for that which is contrary to it even though your feelings tempt you to do so. Sincere faith gives us understanding and strength to accept the will of our Heavenly Father when it differs from our own. Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 78-79.

42 Faith exists when absolute confidence in that which we cannot see combines with action that is in absolute conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father. Without all three—first, absolute confidence; second, action; and third, absolute conformity—without these three, all we have is a counterfeit, a weak and watered-down faith.

Joseph B. Wirthlin. In Conference Report, Oct. 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002], 89

43 At Haun's Mill, a heroic pioneer woman, Amanda Smith, learned by faith how to do something beyond her abilities and the scientific knowledge of her time. On that terrible day in 1838, as the firing ceased and the mobsters left, she returned to the mill and saw her eldest son, Willard, carrying his seven-year-old brother, Alma. She cried, "Oh! My Alma is dead!"

"No, Mother," he said, "I think Alma is not dead. But Father and brother Sadius are [dead]!" But there was no time for tears now. Alma's entire hipbone was shot away. Amanda later recalled.

"Flesh, hip bone, joint and all had been ploughed out.... We laid little Alma on a bed in our tent and I examined the wound. It was a ghastly sight. I knew not what to do.... Yet was I there, all that long, dreadful night, with my dead and my wounded, and none but God as our physician and help. 'Oh my Heavenly Father,' I cried, 'what shall I do? Thou seest my poor wounded boy and knowest my inexperience. Oh, Heavenly Father, direct me what to do!' And then I was directed as by a voice speaking to me.

".... I was directed to take... ashes and make a lye and put a cloth saturated with it right into the wound.... Again and again I saturated the cloth and put it into the hole.... And each time mashed flesh and splinters of bone came away with the cloth; and the wound became as white as chicken's flesh.

"Having done as directed I again prayed to the Lord and was again instructed as distinctly as though a physician has been standing by speaking to me. Near by was a slippery-elm tree. From this I was told to make a ... poultice and fill the wound with it.... The poultice was made, and the wound, which took fully a quarter of a year of linen to cover... was properly dressed....

"I removed the wounded by to a house... and dressed his hip; the Lord directing me as before. I was reminded that in my husband's trunk there was a bottle of balsam. This I poured into the wound, greatly soothing Alma's pain.

"Alma my child,' I said, 'you believe that the Lord made your hip?'

"Yes, mother.'

"Well, the Lord can make something there in the place of your hip, don't you believe he can, Alma?'

"Do you think that the Lord can, Mother?' inquired the child in his simplicity.

"Yes, my son,' I replied, 'he has showed it all to me in a vision.'

"Then I laid him comfortably on his face, and said: 'Now you lay like that, and don't move, and the Lord will make you another hip.'

"So Alma laid on his face for five weeks, until he was entirely recovered—a flexible gristle having grown in place of the missing joint and socket, which remains to this day a marvel to physicians....

"It is now nearly forty years ago, Alma has never been the least crippled during his life, and he has traveled quite a long period of time as a missionary of the gospel and [is] a living miracle of the power of God." ["Amanda Smith," in Andrew Jenson, comp., *Historical Record*, 9 vols. (1882-90), 5:84-86; paragraphing and punctuation altered.]

The treatment was unusual for that day and time, and unheard of now, but when we reach an extremity, like Sister Smith, we have to exercise our simple faith and listen to the Spirit as she did. Exercising our faith will make it stronger. As Alma taught: [Alma 32:27-29]....

Righteousness is a companion to faith. Strong faith is earned by keeping the commandments.

James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Apr. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 22-23

