

**Alma 44:4****1** *Keep Commandments – Prosper in the Land*

The place to cure most of the ills of society is in the homes of the people. Building our homes as fortresses of righteousness for protection from the world takes constant labor and diligence. Membership in the Church is no guarantee of a strong, happy family. Often parents feel overwhelmed.... The righteous molding of an immortal soul is the highest work we can do, and the home is the place to do it. To accomplish this eternal work, we should make our homes gospel centered. When peace and harmony abound, the Holy Spirit will ever be present. The storms of the evil one can be stopped at the very entrance of our homes. Let us be sure the spiritual foundation of each home is the rock of our Redeemer, as Heleman taught his sons: [Hel. 5:12]. The Lord's standards for building a temple apply to building spiritual strength in our homes: "Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God" (D&C 88:119). Do we heed this counsel from the Lord? Do we do what He asks? We would do well to build our homes according to this plan or they are destined to fail.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, May 1993, p. 69.

**2** If our lives are centered in Christ, nothing can go permanently wrong.... On the other hand, if our lives are not centered on the Savior and his teachings, no other success can ever be permanently right.

Howard W. Hunter, *Teachings*, 40.

**3** Perhaps none of the latter-day prophets has written more on this subject than President Ezra Taft Benson. "I fully realize that the Lord has predicted wars and rumors of wars (D&C 45:26). I recognize that only true repentance can stay the destructive forces of war and calamity" (*Teachings* 7060).

He has also written: "Before the final triumphal return of the Lord, the question as to whether we may save our constitutional republic is simply based on two factors—the number of patriots and the extent of their obedience. That the Lord desires to save this nation which He raised up there is no doubt. But that He leaves it up to us, with His help, is the awful reality" (*An Enemy*, 55).

**Alma 44:5****4** *Sacred support we owe to our wives and children*

A wonderful sister recently said to a dear friend: "I want to tell you about the moment I ceased resenting my husband's time and sacrifice as a bishop....

"One day I poured out my frustration, and my husband agreed we should guarantee, in addition to Monday nights, one additional night a week just for us. Well, the first 'date night' came, and we were about to get into the car for an evening together when the telephone rang.

"This is a test,' I smiled at him. The telephone kept ringing...

My poor husband looked trapped between me and a ringing telephone...

"I'd better at least check,' he said with sad eyes. 'It is probably nothing at all.'

"If you do, our date is ruined,' I cried. 'I just know it.'

"He squeezed my hand and said, 'Be right back,' and he dashed in to pick up the telephone.

"Well, when my husband didn't return to the car immediately, I knew what was happening. I got out of the car, went into the house, and went to bed. The next morning he spoke a quiet apology, I spoke an even quieter acceptance....

"Several weeks later.... The memory was still fresh when I came upon a woman in the ward I scarcely knew. Very hesitantly, she asked for the opportunity to talk. She then told of becoming infatuated with another man, who seemed to bring excitement into her life of drudgery, she with a husband who worked full-time and carried a full load of classes at the university.... She had small children who were often demanding, noisy, and exhausting.... 'My

situation was such that I felt I deserved better than what I had. My rationalization persuaded me to think I could walk away from my husband, my children, my temple covenants, and my Church and find happiness with a stranger.'...

"She said, 'The plan was set; the time for my escape was agreed upon. Yet, as if in a last gasp of sanity, my conscience told me to call your husband, my bishop.... The telephone rang and rang and rang. Such was the state of my mind that I thought, "If the bishop doesn't answer, that will be a sign I should go through with my plan." The phone kept ringing, and I was about to hang up and walk straight into destruction when suddenly I heard your husband's voice. It penetrated my soul like lightning. Suddenly I heard myself sobbing, saying, "Bishop, is that you? I am in trouble. I need help." Your husband came with help, and I am safe today because he answered that telephone....

"I love my husband and my children with all my heart. I can't imagine the tragedy my life would be without them.... 'Then she said, 'I don't know you well, but I wish to thank you for supporting your husband in his calling. I don't know what the cost for such service has been to you or to your children, but if on a difficult day there is a particularly personal cost, please know how eternally grateful I will be for the sacrifice people like you make to help rescue people like me"...

I testify of home and family and marriage... I testify of the need to protect and preserve them while we find time and ways to serve faithfully in the Church. In what I hope are rare moments when these seem to be in conflict, when we find an hour or a day or a night of crisis when duty and spiritual prompting require our response, in those situations I pay tribute to every wife who has ever sat alone while dinner got cold, every husband who has made his own dinner,... and every child who has ever been disappointed in a postponed camping trip or a ball game a parent unexpectedly had to miss (and that better not be very often!).... I thank all who, in challenging circumstances across the Church, do the best they can to build the kingdom of God on earth.

Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002], 38-40.

## 5 Alma 44:5 *"to our lands"*

The right to property is based on scriptural precept (see D&C 134:2; Alma 44:5; Matthew 5:5; Isaiah 14:1). It recognizes that the earth belongs to the Lord, that He created it for man's blessing and benefit. Thus, man's desire to own property, his own home and goods, his own business, is desirable and good. Utopian and communitarian schemes that eliminate property rights are not only unworkable, they also deny man his inherent desire to improve his station. They are therefore contrary to the pursuit of happiness.

*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (1988), 607.

## 6 Alma 44:8-20 1 Nephi 4:32-37 *Oath Taking*

In such a situation there was only one thing Nephi could possibly have done, both to spare Zoram and to avoid giving alarm—and no westerner could have guessed what it was. Nephi, a powerful fellow, held the terrified Zoram in a vice-like grip long enough to swear a solemn oath in his ear.... But not every oath will do: to be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the life of something.... Today it is glibly employed by the city riffraff, but anciently it was an awful thing.... So we see that the one and only way that Nephi could have pacified the struggling Zoram in an instant was to utter the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: "as the Lord liveth, and as I live...." (4:32).

Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaradites* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952], 117-118.

7 In those days, no man would dream of breaking such an oath. It would be the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: "As the Lord liveth, and as I live!" Nephi swore that oath in order to pacify the struggling Zoram in an instant. Russell M. Nelson, *Heroes From the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 6.

8 What astonishes the western reader is the miraculous effect of Nephi's oath on Zoram, who upon hearing a few conventional words promptly becomes tractable, while as for the brothers, as soon as Zoram "made an oath unto us that he would tarry with us from that time forth... our fears did cease concerning him" (1 Nephi 4:35, 37).

The reaction of both parties makes sense when one realizes that the oath is the one thing that is most sacred and inviolable among the desert people and their descendants...

But not every oath will do. To be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the *life* of something, even if it be but a blade of grass. The only oath more awful than "by my life" or (less commonly) "by the life of my head," is the *wa hayat Allah* "by the life of God," or "as the Lord Liveth,"...

So we see that the only way that Nephi could possibly have pacified the struggling Zoram in an instant was to utter the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite: "As the Lord liveth, and as I live!" (1 Nephi 4:32).

Hugh Nibley, *An approach to the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1957], 110-111.

9 A young man came to me not long ago and said, "I made an agreement with a man that requires me to make certain payments each year. I am in arrears, and I can't make those payments, for if I do, it is going to cause me to lose my home. What shall I do?"

I looked at him and said, "Keep your agreement."

"Even if it costs me my home?"

I said, "I am not talking about your home. I am talking about your agreement; and I think your wife would rather have a husband who would keep his word, meet his obligations, keep his pledges or his covenants, and have to rent a home than to have a home with a husband who will not keep his covenants and his pledges."

N. Eldon Tanner, in Conference Report, October 1966, 99.

### Alma 44

#### *Conclusion*

...war [deceptively] settles everything by a neat polarization: everything evil on one side and everything good on the other. No problem remains for anybody on either side but to kill people on the other side. . . . The most significant thing about this polarization, of course, is that it puts an end once and for all to any thought of repentance, in which lies the only hope for survival and peace.

Hugh Nibley