

**Introduction to Alma 48**

- 1 We must realize that we are at war. The war began before the world was, and it will continue. The forces of the adversary are extant upon the earth. All of our virtuous motives, if transmitted only by inertia and timidity, are no match for the resolute wickedness of those who oppose us.

Russell M. Nelson, *The Power within Us* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 99

**Alma 48:1-7**

- 2 *2 different approaches of leadership*

**PRINCIPLES OF UNINSPIRED LEADERSHIP – Amalickiah**

1. Flattery – Alma 45:23-46:8
2. Dissents from known truth – Alma 46:29-35
3. Stir up to anger-rebellion – Alma 46:30;47:1
4. Power hungry-hidden agenda – Alma 47:4-16
5. Makes secret deals – Alma 47:13
6. Poisons by degrees – Alma 47:18
7. Fraud and deceit – Alma 47:222-30
8. False Witnesses – Alma 47:33-35
9. Trained spokesmen to accuse and control – Alma 48:1-5

**PRINCIPLES OF INSPIRED LEADERSHIP – Captain Moroni**

1. Raises the standard for freedom – Alma 46:11-22
2. Applies the scriptures to his people – Alma 46:23-28
3. Prepares the minds of the people – Alma 48:7
4. Fortifies them physically (and spiritually, emotionally, and mentally) – Alma 48:8-9
5. Perfect understanding through revelation – Alma 48:11, 15-16
6. Does not delight in the shedding of blood – Alma 48:11
7. Recognizes and gives thanks to God – Alma 48:12
8. Labors exceedingly for the welfare of his people – Alma 48:12
9. Firm in the faith of Christ – Alma 48:13-16

Monte S. Nyman, *The Record of Helaman*

**Alma 48:7-8**

- 3 *Fortification*

1. Dedicate your home
2. FHE
3. Family prayer
4. Family scripture study
5. Family PPI's – worthiness interviews

- 4 **Dedicating One's Home**

Next to the Lord's temples, our homes stand as the most sacred buildings on earth. Think about it, the second most sacred place on the earth is your home. It's no wonder that throughout the ages, prophets and apostles have admonished the saints to dedicate their homes. President Spencer W. Kimball taught, I remember from my

infancy that the Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, when they came to our stake, they would say... *dedicate your own homes*" (10/9/76).

In the Old Testament Joshua of old admonished the saints to "choose ye this day whom ye will serve...but for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Joshua had dedicated his house and his life unto the Lord.

In the Book of Mormon the Prophet Alma exhorted members "to humble yourselves in prayer...and cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household... yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies. Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness" (Alma 34:19-23).

In modern times, President Spencer W. Kimball asked, "I was just wondering, how many of you folks have your homes dedicated? I remember when... we called all the family together and invited the youngest son who had just filled his mission to offer the *dedicatory prayer on our home*. So we feel that home is blessed, and it has a special significance. It belongs to the Lord, and we have the opportunity of using it" (10/9/76).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie instructs us that "the essential part of any dedication service is the formal prayer of dedication. In general the purpose is to hallow and consecrate the building for the particular purpose for which it was constructed. Dedication of private homes normally includes petitions for special blessing upon the members of the family and covenants on their part to serve toe Lord and use the means at their disposal fir the rolling forth of his work" (*Mormon Doctrine*, pg. 188).

It is our prayer that each household might evaluate the purpose for which it was built and then dedicate it to that purpose. Such purpose may include a place for teaching and preparation for the Lord's service and a shield against evil. It would be appropriate to dedicate our homes to prayer, learning, obedience and against any evil influence such as inappropriate TV, music, videos, or internet. Our homes should be dedicated as a haven of peace, love and refuge for our children and all that enter therein. At the same time, we should dedicate our lives to the Lord and promise the Lord that we will do all in our power to serve Him and keep evil from our homes and from our lives.

As your Bishopric, we too are "*just wondering*, how many of you folks have your homes dedicated?" We would encourage fathers to gather your families around you and kneel in prayer in dedicating your home. If some are single-parent households it would be appropriate to invite your home teachers and/or family members to participate.

We promise you, that if you'll prayerfully dedicate your homes and lives, that you'll feel the Spirit of the Lord come into your homes like never before. Also, we promise you that more love and peace will abide in your homes and in your lives than has been before. Lastly, a guard against evil will be set to protect the second most sacred place on earth—your home.

The Alpine Cove Ward Bishopric, Oct. 2001

5

But no child in this Church should be left with uncertainty about his or her parents' devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Restoration of His Church, and the reality of living prophets and apostles who, now as in earlier days, lead that Church according to the will of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, the word of the Lord and the power of God unto salvation. In such basic matters of faith, prophets do not apologize for requesting unity, indeed conformity, in the eloquent sense that the Prophet Joseph Smith used that latter word. In any case, as Elder Neal Maxwell once said to me in a hallway conversation, "There didn't seem to be any problem with conformity the day the Red Sea opened."

Parents simply cannot flirt with skepticism or cynicism, then be surprised when their children expand that flirtation into full-blown romance. If in matters of faith and belief children are at risk of being swept downstream by this intellectual current or that cultural rapid, we as their parents must be more certain than ever to hold to anchored, unmistakable moorings clearly recognizable to those of our own household. It won't help anyone if we go over the edge with them, explaining through the roar of the falls all the way down that we really did know the Church was true

and that the keys of the priesthood really were lodged there but we just didn't want to stifle anyone's freedom to think otherwise. No, we can hardly expect the children to get to shore safely if the parents don't seem to know where to anchor their own boat. Isaiah once used a variation on such imagery when he said of unbelievers, [Their] tacklings are loosed; they could not strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail.

Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can. Keep the covenants your children know you have made. Give priesthood blessings. And bear your testimony! Don't just assume your children will somehow get the drift of your beliefs on their own. The prophet Nephi said near the end of his life that they had written their record of Christ and preserved their convictions regarding His gospel in order to persuade our children that our children may know and believe the right way.

Nephi-like, might we ask ourselves what our children know? From us? Personally? Do our children know that we love the scriptures? Do they see us reading them and marking them and clinging to them in daily life? Have our children ever unexpectedly opened a closed door and found us on our knees in prayer? Have they heard us not only pray with them but also pray for them out of nothing more than sheer parental love? Do our children know we believe in fasting as something more than an obligatory first-Sunday-of-the-month hardship? Do they know that we have fasted for them and for their future on days about which they knew nothing? Do they know we love being in the temple, not least because it provides a bond to them that neither death nor the legions of hell can break? Do they know we love and sustain local and general leaders, imperfect as they are, for their willingness to accept callings they did not seek in order to preserve a standard of righteousness they did not create? Do those children know that we love God with all our heart and that we long to see the face and fall at the feet of His Only Begotten Son? I pray that they know this.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *A Prayer for the Children*, *Ensign*, (CR), May 2003, p. 85.

6 Now I have one more suggestion, and it's very important for you to know that some parents feel they don't have the right to ask worthiness questions of their children. They think that that is the prevue of the bishop alone. Allow me to dispel that myth once and for all. Not only do you as mothers along with your husbands as fathers have the right to know the worthiness of your children, you have the responsibility. It is your duty to know how your children are doing with regards to their spiritual well-being and progression. You need to monitor carefully the issues and concerns they share with you. Ask specific questions of your children regarding their worthiness and refuse to settle for anything less than specific answers. Do not slip Sisters, into the mistaken idea that you need to be just a best friend or a pal. You need to be a mother or a church leader who teaches God's commandments for His children and the expectations God has for His children. And that means that you will need to be firm yet loving in expecting your children and your youth to be obedient. There are far too many of our youth who are living by their own rules rather than the rules set by God

M. Russell Ballard, *Raising Greatest Generation of Missionaries*, 2003.

## 7 Alma 48: 10

There are times when we must stand up for right and decency, for freedom and civilization, just as Moroni rallied his people in his day to the defense of their wives, their children, and the cause of liberty (see Alma 48:10). Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 72.

**Alma 48:11**8 *A Man of Perfect Understanding*

The heart is often employed in the scriptures as a symbolic expression of spiritual receptivity or the lack of it, such as hardening of a heart as well as the place of true gospel understanding.

Joseph Fielding McConkie

- 9
1. Understanding is centered in the heart
    - 2 Nephi 16:10
    - Mosiah 2:19
  2. Understanding comes when you learn the will of God and keep your covenants
    - Deut. 4:5-6
    - Alma 17:2
    - 2 Nephi 32:1-5
    - 2 Nephi 33:1
    - Psalms 111:10
    - Alma 44:4-5

Taken from *The Captain and the Covenant*, Thomas R. Vallei, p. 230-232

**Alma 48: 11**10 *Did not delight in bloodshed*

Brother Hugh Nibley insightfully records: The idea of total victory was alien to him—no revenge, no punishment, no reprisals, no reparations, even for an aggressor who had ravaged his country. He would send the beaten enemy home after the battle, accepting their word for good behavior or inviting them to settle on Nephite lands, even when he knew he was taking a risk. Even his countrymen who fought against him lost their lives only while opposing him on the field of battle: There were no firing squads, and conspirators and traitors had only to agree to support his popular army to be reinstated....

... By all means, let us take Captain Moroni for our model and never forget what he fought for—the poor, outcast and despised; and what he fought against—pride, power, wealth, and ambition; or how he fought—as the generous, considerate and magnanimous foe, a leader in every sense.

Hugh Nibley, "Leadership Versus Management," *BYU Today*, February 1984, pp. 16-19, 45,46.

## 11 The Book of Mormon provides a classic example of one who in large part bound Satan in his life. In Alma 48: 11-13 we read:

"And Moroni was a [1] strong and a mighty man; he was a man of [2] a perfect understanding; yea, a man that [3] did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did [4] joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery; yea, a man whose [5] heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people, a man who did[6] labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people. Yea, and he was a man who was [7] firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an [8] oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood."

The qualities of Captain Moroni... all contributed to his ability to bind Satan in his life.

Clyde J. Williams, *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, 1991 Sperry Symposium, ed. by Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992], 254.

12 **Alma 48: 12***Swell with Thanksgiving*

"Thank you" frequently expressed will cheer your spirit, broaden your friendships, and lift your lives to a higher pathway as you journey toward perfection.

Thomas S. Monson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1998 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998], 17.

13

We ought to express our gratitude daily in countless ways—to each other....

Gratitude is a sign of maturity. It is an indication of sincere humility. It is a hallmark of civility. And most of all, it is a divine principle. I doubt there is anything in which we more offend the Almighty than in our tendency to forget His mercies and to be ungrateful for that which He has given us....

Where there is gratitude, there is humility instead of pride, generosity rather than selfishness...

We would do well, also, to cultivate within ourselves a spirit of thanksgiving for the blessing of life itself and for the marvelous gifts and privileges we enjoy.

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something* [New York: Times Books, 2000], 89-90.

14

[Luke 17:11-19.] Through divine intervention, those who were lepers were spared from a cruel, lingering death and given a new lease on life. The expressed gratitude by one merited the Master's blessing, the ingratitude shown by the nine, His disappointment.

Like the leprosy of yesteryear are the plagues of today. They are found everywhere. Their pervasiveness knows no boundaries. We know them as selfishness, greed, indulgence, cruelty, and crime, to identify but a few. Surfeited with their poison, we tend to criticize, to complain, to blame, and slowly but surely, to abandon the positives and adopt the negatives of life.

A popular refrain from the 1940s captured the thought:

Accentuate the positive;

Eliminate the negative.

Latch on to the affirmative:

Don't mess with Mr. In-between.

Good advice then. Good advice now....

If ingratitude be numbered among the serious sins, then gratitude takes its place among the noblest of virtues.

Thomas S. Monson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1992 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], 79-80.

**Alma 48: 13**15 *Firm faith in Christ*

When obedience to the Gospel ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power.

President Ezra Taft Benson as quoted by Elder Donald Staheli Conference April 1998.

16

What is the cost of discipleship? It is primarily obedience. It is the forsaking of many things. But since everything in life has a price, it is a price worth paying, considering that the great promise of the Savior is for peace in this life and eternal life in the life to come. It is a price we cannot afford not to pay. Jesus is the head of this Church. It is His work, and He is watching over it. It knows that God speaks; He has spoken to me, and He will speak to you, for He is no respecter of persons. May we live so that this will be possible, and may we render obedience and faithfulness unto His commandments and this living prophets, so that we fully and willingly pay the price required of His disciples and moved forward his work in all the world.

James E. Faust, "The Price of Discipleship."

- 17 Elder James E. Faust said: "Private choices are not private; they all have public consequences.... Our society is the sum total of what millions of individuals do in their private lives. That sum total of private behavior has worldwide public consequences of enormous magnitude. There are no completely private choices."

Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 101; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 80.

- 18 "Always live in such a way that when you need the Lord's blessings, you can call upon Him and receive them because you are worthy." He said: "There will come times in your life when you will need immediate blessings. You will need to live in such a way that they will be granted—not out of mercy but because you are worthy."

Elaine S. Dalton, *Ensign*, Nov. 2006

#### **Alma 48:14**

- 19 *Even to the shedding of blood*

The Church membership are citizens or subjects of sovereignties over which the Church has no control. The Lord Himself has told us to "befriend that law which is the constitutional law of the land.[D&C 98:4-7].

...When, therefore, constitutional law, obedient to these principles, calls the manhood of the Church into the armed service of any country to which they owe allegiance, their highest civic duty requires that they meet that call. If, harkening to that call and obeying those in command over them, they shall take the lives of those who fight against them, that will not make of them murderers, nor subject them to the penalty that God has prescribed for those who kill.... For it would be a cruel Gods that would punish His children as moral sinners for acts done by them as the innocent instrumentalities of a sovereign whom He had told them to obey and whose will they were powerless to resist.

Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1942, pp. 94-95.

#### **Alma 48:15**

- 20 *Nephi's freedom thesis (1 Nephi 1:20)*

I do not believe the greatest to our future is from bombs or guided missiles. I do not think our civilization will die that way. I think it will die when we no longer care—when the spiritual forces that make us wish to be right and noble die in the heart of men.

Ezra Taft Benson, Annual Boy Scouts Banquet, Commerce Texas, 13 May 1968.

- 21 Despite the world's crises... the greater crisis by far is that we might forget the Lord. How much protection would our missiles and nuclear weapons prove to be if we did not take at face value the Lord's injunction: "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27)?

Ezra Taft Benson, *Crossfire: The Eight Years with Eisenhower* [Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1962], 441.

- 22 We are a warlike people easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods or stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior's teaching: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45). We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will

either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas (see 2 Ne. 1:7) –or he will fight our battles for us (Exodus 14:14; D&C 98:37, to name only two references of many).

Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, 1976 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976], 6

### 23 Alma 48: 17-18

Men and women who turn their lives over to God will discover that He can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Ezra Tart Benson, *Teachings*, 361.

### 24

Now, part of the reason we may not have sufficient priesthood bearers to save the Constitution, let alone to shake the powers of hell, is because unlike Moroni, I fear, our souls do not joy in keeping our country free, and we are not firm in the faith of Christ, nor have we sworn with an oath to defend our rights and the liberty of our country.

Moroni raised a title of liberty and wrote upon it these words: “In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children: Why didn’t he write upon it: “Just live your religion; there’s no need to concern yourselves about your freedom, your peace, your wives, or your children”? The reason he didn’t do this was because all these things were a part of his religion, as they are of our religion today.

Should we counsel people, “Just live your religion. There’s no need to get involved in the fight for freedom”? No, we should not, because our stand for freedom is a most basic part of our religion; this stand helped get us to this earth, and our reaction to freedom in this life will have eternal consequences. Man has many duties, but he has no excuse that can compensate for his loss of liberty.

As members of the church we have some close quarters to pass through if we are going to get home safely. We will be given a chance to choose between conflicting counsel given by some. That’s why we must learn—and the sooner we learn, the better—to keep our eye on the Prophet, the President of the Church.

Ezra Taft Benson, CR, Oct. 1966, 122.

### 25

I had the privilege of being in a training meeting with Elder Richard G. Scott a short time ago where he taught this marvelous principle. His insights taught me to look at this passage in ways I had never considered. Here, Mormon likens Captain Moroni to Ammon and the sons of Mosiah, as well as to Alma and his sons. Many of us are familiar with verse 17, where Mormon writes of Captain Moroni, “If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.”

Then he says, “Behold, he was a man like unto Ammon, the son of Mosiah. . .” Well, what do we know about Ammon? In the book of Mosiah, we learn that he was one of the “vilest of sinners” (Mosiah 28:4), but now he’s being compared to Captain Moroni! Mormon continues, “. . . yea, and even the other sons of Mosiah.” What do we know about them? Again, “they were the very vilest of sinners.” (Mosiah 28:4.) “. . . yea, and also Alma and his sons.” And what do we know about Alma the younger? He was the worst of the lot! What about Corianton, the immoral missionary? He too is included with the group described by Mormon as being “all men of God.” (Alma 48:18.) How could that be? When the atoning blood of Christ, the blood of the Lamb, cleanses us, we are no longer, as Elder Scott says, “second-class

citizen[s] in the kingdom of God." (*Ensign*, Nov. 2000, p. 26.) We are cleansed and made whole through the holy blood of the Lamb. This is one of the greatest passages in all of holy writ about the atonement of Christ.

Jack R. Christensen, *Life Lessons from the Book of Mormon*, p. 21-22

### Alma 48:19

#### 26 *No less serviceable*

Even though Helaman was not as noticeable or conspicuous as Moroni, he was as serviceable; that is, he was as helpful or useful as Moroni...

Not all of us are going to be like Moroni, catching the acclaim of our colleagues all day every day. Most of us will be quiet, relatively unknown folks who come and go and do our work without fanfare. To those of you who may find that lonely or frightening or just unspectacular, I say, you are "no less serviceable" than the most spectacular of your associates. You, too, are part of God's army.

Consider, for example, the profound service a mother or father gives in the quiet anonymity of a worthy Latter-day Saint home. Think of the Gospel Doctrine teachers and Primary choristers and Scoutmasters and Relief Society visiting teachers who serve and bless millions but whose names will never be publicly applauded or featured in the nation's media.

Tens of thousands of unseen people make possible our opportunities and happiness every day. As the scriptures state, they are "no less serviceable" than those whose lives are on the front pages of newspapers.

The limelight of history and contemporary attention so often focuses on the *one* rather than on *many*.  
Howard W. Hunter, "No Less Serviceable," *Ensign*, Apr. 1992, 64.

#### 27 Not everyone at school is going to be the student body president or the Relief Society president, or the teacher of the elders quorum. Not all of you are going to be like Moroni, catching the acclaim of your colleagues all day every day. No, most will be quiet, relatively unknown folks who come and go and do their work without fanfare. To those of you who may find that lonely or frightening or just unspectacular, I say you are "no less serviceable" than the most spectacular of your associates. You, too, are part of God's army.

Howard W. Hunter, *Brigham Young University 1990-91 Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, p.2.

### Alma 48:21

#### 28 His magnanimous nature as a lover of peace and fair play always prevailed. . . . You cannot ask for a less warlike spirit than that of an army who "were compelled reluctantly to contend with their brethren . . ." who were "sorry to take up arms . . . because they did not delight in the shedding of blood" (Alma 48:21-23). In battle Moroni . . . refused to take advantage of an enemy . . . (Alma 55:19). . . . With never a thought of punishing a beaten foe, . . . he was satisfied to take his defeated adversaries at their word and trust them to return to their homes.

Hugh Nibley, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, 353

### Alma 48: 11-25

#### 29 *Moroni's greatness*

The contrast between Moroni and men like Zerahemnah and Amalickiah is dramatic. Moroni had exhibited leadership qualities throughout his life and was appointed to lead the Nephite armies when he was only twenty-five.

The following are some of the keys to Moroni's greatness:

He sought for, obtained, and heeded the word of the Lord given through the living prophet (see Alma 43:27-35).

He was vitally concerned for the welfare of those who served under his command (see vv. 18-21, 48:7-10, 49:18-20, 50:1-4).

He used strategy to overcome his enemies (see Alma 43:27-35).

He was firm for the right, yet quick to forgive (see Alma 44:1-20).

He was patriotic in spirit and prayerful in attitude (see Alma 46:11-20).

He was a noble man, a man of God (see Alma 48:11-18).

*BYU Book of Mormon Student Manual,*

30 The idea of total victory was alien to him—no revenge, no punishment, no reprisals, no reparations, even for an aggressor who had ravaged his country. He would send the beaten enemy home after the battle, accepting their word for good behavior or inviting them to settle on Nephite lands, even when he knew he was taking a risk. Even his countrymen who fought against him lost their lives only while opposing him on the field of battle: There were no firing squads, and conspirators and traitors had only to agree to support his popular army to be reinstated. . . .

. . . By all means, let us take Captain Moroni for our model and never forget what he fought for—the poor, outcast and despised; and what he fought against—pride, power, wealth and ambition; or how he fought—as the generous, considerate and magnanimous foe, a leader in every sense.

Hugh Nibley, *Leadership Versus Management*, *BYU Today*, February 1984, pp. 16-19, 45, 46

31 Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country [and let Latter-day Saints include in that the laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ], and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of '76 did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and the laws [of God], let every American pledge his life, his property and his sacred honour; let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample upon the blood of his fathers and to tear the charter of his own and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges. Let it be written in primers, spelling books, and almanacs. Let it be preached from the pulpits, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. In short, let it become the political religion of the nation.

John Wesley Hill, *Abraham Lincoln—Man of God*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Putnam, 1930), p. 73

### **Conclusion to Alma 48**

#### *Heroes*

32 It is of interest to note that approximately one out of every ten pages of the Book of Mormon deals with the life and times of Captain Moroni, which we read in Alma chapters 43-63. Given the number of people and events described in the Nephite writings, have you ever wondered why so much of what we have in the Book of Mormon is dedicated to this individual and the experiences that surrounded his life?

Apparently, the prophet Mormon had many of the Nephite records available to him from which he made his abridgment. With divine guidance he selected and included those portions of the records that would be most

valuable to us in our day. What are the messages from Captain Moroni and his time that have applicability to us at the present time?

First, in Captain Moroni we are provided with an authentic hero....

Our young people today need heroes who do beyond the popular musicians, comedians, great athletes, the rich, and the famous. They... need to know of people like Captain Moroni, whose influence will live long after the applause of those who are currently popular has faded away.

Joe J. Christensen, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 133.

33

In a recent survey of 1,200 junior-high-school children, the most popular response to the question: "Who is your hero?" was "None." Nobody. Other answers far down the line in this and other polls have revealed the devaluation of the hero, at least. Students today cite rock musicians, Evel Knievel and the bionic man and woman. This suggests—and my own informal poll and the reports of friends of mine who are teachers have confirmed my suspicion—that heroes are out of fashion. For some reason, perhaps for no reason, many of us think it is not proper to have heroes; or worse, that there aren't any—or only shabby ones.

Such a fad is dangerous because it puts children's ideals, aspirations and their notions of self-worth in jeopardy. Children need to know what deserves to be emulated and loved and nurtured, but knowing these things is not transmitted by their genes; these things must pass, through education, from generation to generation. . . .

. . . It's possible that if we don't take the time, our children, taught as they have been to doubt, will live the consequences of not knowing what they may safely believe.

William J. Bennett, "Let's Bring Back Heroes," *Newsweek*, 15 August 1977, p. 3

34

Hero = One who lives for something other than himself or herself  
Joseph Campbell

35

President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "The righteous woman's strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times. She has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard the home—which is society's basic and most noble institution. Other institutions in society may falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife."

*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* [1982], 326-27

36

Over the weekend I made a short list of heroes. Not sport heroes—though I have a bunch of those—but the type of hero you could pattern your entire life after.

I came up with:

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. William Stafford, poet      | 4. Dag Hammarskjold, diplomat |
| 2. Mother Teresa, humanitarian | 5. Dorothy Day, philosopher   |
| 3. St. Augustine, saint        |                               |

To borrow an idea from Tolstoy, bad people are bad in hundreds of ways, but good people are good in all the same ways.

As I reviewed my list, it occurred to me that one "good" thing about these people was a total lack of pretension. They never acted superior.

They didn't act superior because they didn't feel superior.

And they didn't feel superior because they had found true perspective.

They'd come to see that one human being is pretty puny in the grand design.

They didn't feel insignificant because they were "insecure" or lacked "self-esteem." Those are pop, psychobabble "self"-oriented notions. They felt insignificant because they were "other" oriented, they focused on things and people outside of themselves and stood in awe of it all.

Newspaper Editorial by Jerry Johnston

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There is a person who has profoundly disturbed my peace of mind for a long time. She doesn't even know me, but she continually goes around minding my business. We have very little in common. She is an old woman, an Albanian who grew up in Yugoslavia; she is a Roman Catholic nun who lives in poverty in India. I disagree with her on fundamental issues of population control, the place of women in the world and in the church, and I am turned off by her naive statements about "what God wants." She stands at the center of great contradictory notions and strong forces that shape human destiny. She drives me crazy. I get upset every time I hear her name or read her words or see her face. I don't even want to talk about her.

In the studio where I work, there is a wash basin. Above the wash basin is a mirror. I stop at this place several times each day to tidy up and look at myself in the mirror. Alongside the mirror is a photograph of the troublesome woman. Each time I look in the mirror at myself, I also look at her face. In it I have seen more than I can tell; and from what I see, I understand more than I can say.

The photograph was taken in Oslo, Norway, on the tenth of December, in 1980. This is what happened there:

A small, stooped woman in a faded blue sari and worn sandals received an award. From the hand of a king. An award funded from the will of an inventor of dynamite. In a great glittering hall of velvet and gold and crystal. Surrounded by the noble and famous in formal black and in elegant gowns. The rich, the powerful, the brilliant, the talented of the world in attendance. And there at the center of it all—a little old lady in sari and sandals. Mother Teresa, of India. Servant of the poor and sick and dying. To her, the Nobel Peace Prize.

No shah or president or king or general or scientist or pope; no banker or merchant or cartel or oil company or ayatollah holds the key to as much power as she has. None is as rich. For hers is the invincible weapon against the evils of this earth: the caring heart. And hers are the everlasting riches of this life: the wealth of the compassionate spirit.

To cut through the smog of helpless cynicism, to take only the tool of uncompromising love; to make manifest the capacity for healing humanity's wounds; to make the story of the Good Samaritan a living reality; and to live so true a life as to shine out from the back streets of Calcutta takes courage and faith we cannot admit in ourselves and cannot be without.

I do not speak her language. Yet the eloquence of her life speaks to me. And I am chastised and blessed at the same time. I do not believe one person can do much in this world. Yet there she stood, in Oslo, affecting the world around. I do not believe in her version of God. But the power of her faith shames me. And I believe in Mother Teresa.

December in Oslo. The message for the world at Christmastide is one of peace. Not the peace of a child asleep in the manger of long ago. Nor the peace of a full dinner and a nap by the fire on December 25. But a tough, vibrant, vital peace that comes from the extraordinary gesture one simple woman in a faded sari and worn sandals makes this night. A peace of mind that comes from a piece of work.

Some years later, at a grand conference of quantum physicists and religious mystics at the Oberoi Towers Hotel in Bombay, I saw that face again. Standing by the door at the rear of the hall, I sensed a presence beside me. And there she was. Alone. Come to speak to the conference as its guest. She looked at me and smiled. I see her face still.

She strode to the rostrum and changed the agenda of the conference from intellectual inquiry to moral activism. She said, in a firm voice to the awed assembly: "We can do no great things; only small things with great love."

The contradictions of her life and faith are nothing compared to my own. And while I wrestle with frustration about the impotence of the individual, she goes right on changing the world. While I wish for more power and resources, she uses her power and resources to do what she can do at the moment.

She upsets me, disturbs me, shames me. What does she have that I do not?

If ever there is truly peace on earth. Goodwill to men, it will be because of women like Mother Teresa. Peace is not something you wish for; it's something you make, something you do, something you are, and something you give away!

Taken from *All I need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, by Robert Fulghum, p.189-192.

### MEDITATING ON THE MEDITATIONS

38 Every time I visit Rome I pay respect to Marcus. There is a bronze equestrian statue of him that graces the center of Michelangelo's square on the top of the Capitoline Hill. There he sits in majestic benevolence overseeing the city as he oversaw the Roman Empire almost two thousand years ago. Marcus Aurelius was the last of the "five good emperors," a gracious thinking, Stoic king who ruled during the second century after Christ at the height of the Empire. After Marcus it was essentially all downhill for Rome. He was a humane, philosophical man who wrote a classic of world literature titled *The Meditations*. He begins this work by allowing his mind to remember all the people who had influenced his life for good and lists the qualities and life-changing values they instilled within him. They are beautiful tributes offered in praise and gratitude to others—a memorial of the mind.

I was impressed by Marcus's thoughts when I first came upon them and was at an age when impressions can chart life courses. I sat down those many years ago and began to reflect on people in my own life who had blessed me in a similar manner. It was an instructive, grace-filling, and humbling experience and I recommend it to the highest degree. My thoughts instinctively went, as did his, to family members: my mother, sisters, grandfather, my uncle at the ranch, special teachers. Just recognizing and writing down their contributions drew them deeper into my soul and made me even more desirous to graft their qualities into the tree trunk of my own growing life.

Having finished, however, the list seemed incomplete. So I added those I consider heroes and heroines from the scriptures. These were souls I had never met who were yet so much a part of my being. They were friends whom God himself wanted me to know; he was the mediator of our acquaintance. Having allowed my mind to peruse the scriptural past, however, other personalities began to surface, the non-scriptural breed of men and women. I realized how very many lives had touched mine. Perhaps more important, I understood how magnificent humanity was and how widespread God's involvement has been in the affairs of his children. He has many voices with which he speaks to bring truth and goodness and beauty into the world. These he has used at all times and in multiple places around the earth. This discovery had profound implications in my life, and I thank God for Marcus Aurelius meditating in Rome.

Over the years since that first moment of enlightenment, I have added dozens of men and women to the population of my mental city. I am at ease with them and enjoy our conversations across the ages. I feel that I am rich and prosperous in lives! We can all enjoy the vast wealth of wondrously lived lives and make such lovely friends. We are openly invited to explore and draw upon those personal, yet universally overflowing accounts of human

experience as need arises. These singular people of the past move within my mind offering counsel, encouragement, comfort, and insight.

S. Michael Wilcox, *10 Great Souls I want to Meet in Heaven*, pp. xi-xii.