

Helaman

According to President Benson, the Book of Mormon contains a pattern for those of us in the latter-days to follow. In the 1986 October general conference he stated: “In the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ’s coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.”

... Then, alluding to the Book of Mormon, President Benson said that modern society’s problems are “more highly organized, more cleverly disguised, and more powerfully promoted than ever before,” including secret combinations which flourish because of lust for power and gain.

President Ezra T. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*

Helaman 1:11

1 *Why do wicked prefer to “tell no man” of their deeds?*

When you have the Spirit,... you don’t mind others seeing what you are doing.... When you do not have the Spirit,... you may become secretive, evasive.

Adapted from John H. Groberg, *Ensign*, April 1986, 70 (See also D&C 121:37)

Helaman 1:18

2 *Contention*

If Satan can succeed in creating in us the pastime of arguing, quarreling, and contention, it is easier for him to bind us with heavier sins which can destroy our eternal lives.

Marvin J. Ashton, Conference Report, October 1991, p. 99.

3 “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” This important principle not only has application to governmental or national security but it also significant in the institutional Church and in our individual homes. Contention and dissension are a tool of the adversary (see 3 Nephi 11:28-29) that weakens the institution and makes it vulnerable to “attacks” from destructive outside influences.

Marvin J. Ashton, CR, April 1978, pp. 9-12.

4 “When there is contention, the Spirit of the Lord will depart, regardless of who is at fault.” James E. Faust, Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 41.

5 The sins of corruption, dishonesty, strife, contention, and other evils in this world are not here by chance. They are evidences of the relentless campaign of Satan and those who follow him. He uses every tool and device available to him to deceive, confuse, and mislead.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 100; or *Ensign*, Nov 1994, 76.

6 Where people have that Spirit with them, we may expect harmony. The Spirit puts the testimony of truth in our hearts, which unifies those who share that testimony. The Spirit of God never generates contention (see 3 Nephi 11:29). It never generates the feelings of distinctions between people which lead to strife (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 131). It leads to personal peace and a feeling of union with others. It unifies souls. A unified family, a unified Church, and a world at peace depend on unified souls. Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 86; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 67.

7 What do we do if we feel that our Relief Society president or our bishop or a General Authority is in transgression or pursuing a policy of which we disapprove? Is there no remedy?...

There are remedies, but they are not the same remedies or procedures that are used with leaders in other organizations.

Our Father in Heaven has not compelled us to think the same way on every subject or procedure. As we seek to accomplish our life's purposes, we will inevitably have differences with those around us—including some of those we sustain as our leaders. The question is not *whether* we have such differences, but *how we manage them...* We should conduct ourselves in such a way that our thoughts and actions do not cause us to lose the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord.

The first principle in the gospel procedure for managing differences is to keep our personal differences private and not allow them to be a source of contention. In this we have worthy examples to follow. Every student of Church history knows that these have been differences of opinion among Church leaders since the Church was organized. Each of us has experienced such differences in our work in auxiliaries, quorums, wards, stakes, and missions of the Church. We know that such differences are discussed, but they are not discussed in public.... Counselors acquiesce in the decisions of their president. Teachers follow the direction of their presidency. Members are loyal to the counsel of their bishop. All of this is done quietly and loyally, even by members who would have adopted a different policy if they had been in the position of authority.

Why aren't these differences discussed in public? Public debate—the means of resolving differences in a democratic government—is not appropriate in the government of the Church. We are subject to the authority of the called and sustained servants of the Lord. They and we are all governed by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, and that Spirit functions only in an atmosphere of unity. That is why personal differences about Church doctrine, policy, or procedure need to be worked privately. There is nothing inappropriate about private communications concerning such differences, provided they are carried on in a spirit of love. Dallin H. Oaks, *The Lord's Way*, pp. 200-201.

8 President Ezra Taft Benson stated, "Pride is essentially competitive in nature... In the words of C. S. Lewis: 'Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.... Once the element of competition is gone, pride has gone.'" "Another face of pride is contention. Arguments, fights, unrighteous dominion, generation gaps, divorces, spouse abuse, riots, and disturbances all fall into this category of pride. Contention in our families drives the Spirit of the Lord away. It also drives many of our family members away.

Contention ranges from a hostile spoken word to worldwide conflicts. The scriptures tell us that ‘only by pride cometh contention’ (Proverbs 13:10; see also Proverbs 28:25).”

Conference Report, Apr. 1989, pp. 4-5.

9 Ours is to conscientiously avoid being abrasive in our presentations and declarations. We need constantly to remind ourselves that when we are unable to change the conduct of others, we will go about the task of properly governing ourselves.

Certain people and organizations are trying to provoke us into contention with slander, innuendos, and improper classifications. How unwise we are in today’s society to allow ourselves to become irritated, dismayed, or offended because others seem to enjoy the role of misstating our position or involvement. Our principles or standards will not be less than they are because of the statements of the contentious. Ours is to explain our position through reason, friendly persuasion, and accurate facts. Ours is to stand firm and unyielding on the moral issues of the day and the eternal principles of the gospel, but to contend with no man or organization. Contention builds walls and puts up barriers. Love opens doors. Ours is to be heard and teach. Ours is not only to avoid contention, but to see that such things are done away.

Let me share with you some suggestions for alleviating contention:

1. Pray to have the love of God in your heart. Sometimes this is a struggle, but the Spirit of the Lord can soften hard feelings and mellow a callous spirit.
2. Learn to control your tongue. There is an old maxim and an excellent one: “Think twice before you speak and three times before you act.”
3. Don’t allow emotions to take over; rather, reason together.
4. Refuse to get embroiled in the same old patterns of argument and confrontation.
5. Practice speaking in a soft, calm voice. The peaceful life can best be attained not by those who speak with a voice of “great tumultuous noise” but by those who follow the Savior’s example and speak with “a still voice of perfect mildness.” (Hel. 5:30.)

There is no time for contention. We must have the will and discipline in our daily lives to fight contention. I promise the valiant God’s help in their efforts to conquer this horrendous foe. Let us “Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one or another.” (D&C 136:23.) We only have time to be about our Father’s business. To these truths I leave my testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Marvin J. Ashton, “No Time for Contention,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 7.