

3 Nephi 6: 10-13*Pride*

- 1 Pride is the great stumbling block of Zion.... Pride is ugly; it says if you succeed I am a failure.... Pride is basically competitive in nature, when competition ends, pride ends.
Ezra Taft Benson, Conference Report, Apr. 1989, pp. 3-7.
- 2 The two groups who seem to have the greatest difficulty with pride are the learned and the rich.
Ezra Taft Benson, Conference Report, Apr. 1986, p. 6.
- 3 Social commentators almost unanimously refer to the 1980's as "America's Age of Greed."
... The Census Bureau reports that the richest one-fifth of American households now receive almost 10 times the average income of the poorest one-fifth, which is the highest ratio of inequality since they began keeping records following World War II... How can anyone in a position to help simply sit back and enjoy a life of ease? Is not the lack of social action in this regard an indictment of American society? ... It is not impossible for the recipient of a high income to live a modest lifestyle and use the money to benefit others. But as the scriptures repeatedly remind us, a high income represents a temptation that very few can withstand.... How long will Church members join mainstream America in not only condoning, but promoting and admiring materialistic self-aggrandizement?
Richard E. Johnson, *BYU Today*, Sept. 1990, pp. 47-58.
- 4 And what has this to do with the environment? That whole economy was based on seizing and selling the treasures of the earth beyond one's own personal needs—the land itself, the minerals, water, soil, forests, grass; all are converted into means of making or purchasing the long list of unnecessary wares.... In the process, their beauty and value are destroyed, the short-lived finished product soon joining the earlier industrial wastes to cumber the earth with refuse. Why are we so foolish? For the same reason the Nephites were, because "Satan had great power, ...tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world" (3 Nephi 6:15). The "love of this world" is not an appreciation of the wonderful things that are in it but the desire to possess it here and now, before we have shown that we can deal lovingly and wisely. The voice of Brother Brigham [Young, *Journal of Discourses* 8:125] still pleads: "Do not obey the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the groveling grasping after property."
Hugh Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, p. 48.
- 5 How did education enter into this negative scenario? Education to the Nephites brought wealth, and wealth was needed to obtain an education. This process created an inner circle that allowed the upper class to serve itself while at the same time separating it by a wall of pride from those who had little hope of obtaining "the good life." Mormon described that wall well: "Some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches" (3 Nephi 6:12). Wealth was the key to education, and education was the key to wealth.

The lower classes never held either of the keys. It is amazing to think that education could have proven so destructive to their society.

K. Douglas Bassett, *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, 1991 Sperry Symposium, p. 20.

Material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction.

6 Thomas Jefferson, quoted by Ezra Taft Benson, *A Nation Asleep*, p. 45.

7 What we read about in the Book of Mormon is the “Nephite Disease”—and we have it!... We can be most grateful, therefore, regardless of how sick others may be, that God in the Book of Mormon has diagnosed our sickness for our special benefit, and prescribed a cure for us... Plainly it is meant for us, as it reminds us many times; it is the story of what happened to the Nephites—and we are the Nephites: ‘... it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give; but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old.’ (D&C 38:39.) There it is in a nutshell: it is the fate of the Nephites, not of the Lamanites, Greeks, or Chinese, that concerns us; and that doom was brought on them by pride which in turn was engendered by the riches of the earth.

Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, pp. 390-91.

3 Nephi 6: 12

Distinguished by ranks—“learning”

8 How did education enter into this negative scenario? Education to the Nephites brought wealth, and wealth was needed to obtain an education. This process created an inner circle that allowed the upper class to serve itself while at the same time separating it by a wall of pride from those who had little hope of obtaining “the good life.” Mormon described that wall very well: “Some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches” (3 Nephi 6:12). Wealth was the key to education, and education was the key to wealth. The lower classes never held either of the keys. It is amazing to think that education could have proven so destructive to their society.

Jacob qualified his condemnation of learning and riches and suggested a solution to both concerns. In addressing the educated he counseled, “But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29). He then addressed the management of wealth: “Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God” (Jacob 2:17-18).

Jacob’s counsel, however, is at variance with most worldly philosophies. The world would have us believe that the Lord helps those who help themselves. Jacob seems to be saying that the Lord helps those who help others. That places wealth and education in a different light. When we use wealth and education to serve our fellow beings, we are placing ourselves in a better position to gain the Lord’s approval. In this way a person uses wealth and education not as weapons to separate himself from others in a vain attempt to rise above the rest but as tools to serve and lift his fellow man.

K. Douglas Bassett, *Four Faces of Pride in the Book of Mormon*.

9 The spirit and warning of this verse is distinctly relevant to our day. Education, like the priesthood, is a blessing of God given to his servants that they might reach out and lift and exalt others. It is no less congruent for the educated to despise the unlearned than it is for those who hold the priesthood to spurn and disdain those who do not hold that sacred authority. The priesthood can be magnified only as it is used to lift and bless others. To attempt to hoard the blessings of the priesthood or to revel in an office or calling is to lose the authority and power of the priesthood. So it is with education. To fail to use it properly and providently, to the edification and blessing of others, is to become narrow and ignorant.

Millet and McConkie, *Book of Mormon Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 27.

10 You who find schooling easily available must remember this: “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35; see also Moro. 8:12; D&C 1:35; 38:16). The Lord does not, and the Church cannot, admit to favoritism toward those who are able to obtain professional degrees as compared to those who seek training in a practical field or those who have little or no schooling at all.

Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, Nov. 1992 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992], 72.

11 The two groups who seem to have the greatest difficulty with pride are the learned and the rich.

Ezra Taft Benson, Conference Report, Apr. 1986 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1986], 6.

3 Nephi 6:13

12 “*Some lifted up in pride*” others were exceedingly humble

Material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction.

Thomas Jefferson; as quoted in Ezra Taft Benson, *A Nation Asleep* [Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1963], 45.

13 We would do well to remember the prosperity cycle found in the Book of Mormon when those persons blessed for their righteousness became wealthy and then forgot the Lord. Let us not forget the Lord in our day of prosperity. Let us maintain the spirit of the law of sacrifice and always thank Him for what we have, even if it is not as much as some others have...

If I have a fear, it is that the principle of sacrifice may be slipping away from us. This principle is a law of God. We are obliged to understand it and practice it. If being a member of this Church becomes too easy, testimonies will become shallow, and the roots of testimony will not go down into the soil of faith as they did with our pioneer forefathers. May God grant each of us an understanding of the law of sacrifice and a conviction that it is necessary today. It is vitally important that we understand this law and live it.

M. Russell Ballard, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 11, 13.

14 Certainly one of our God given privileges is the right to choose what our attitude will be in any given set of circumstances. We can let the events that surround us determine our actions—or we can personally take charge and rule our lives, using as guidelines the principles or pure religion. Pure religion is learning the gospel of Jesus Christ and then putting it into action. Nothing will ever be of real benefit to us until it is incorporated into our own lives.

Marvin J. Ashton, Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 63.

15 A little prosperity and peace, or even a turn slightly for the better, can bring us feelings of self-sufficiency. We can feel quickly that we are in control of our lives, that the change for the better is our own doing, not that of a God who communicates to us through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Pride creates a noise within us which makes the quiet voice of the Spirit hard to hear. And soon, in our vanity, we no longer even listen for it. We can come quickly to think we don't need it.

Henry B. Eyring, Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 16.

16 My brethren, what a wonderful thing is the priesthood of God. There is nothing to compare with it....

It is classless. Every worthy man, regardless of nationality, ethnic background, or any other factor, is eligible to receive the priesthood. His obedience to the commandments of God becomes the determining factor. Its bestowal is based only on worthiness before the Lord...

Such is the wonder of this priesthood. Wealth is not a factor. Education is not a factor. The honors of men are not a factor. The controlling factor is acceptability unto the Lord.

Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Apr. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 63.

3 Nephi 6: 15

17 *Vanity*

Every temptation that comes to you and me comes in one of three forms:

- (1) A temptation of the appetite or passion;
- (2) A yielding to pride, fashion, or vanity;
- (3) A desire for worldly riches or power and dominion over lands or earthly possessions of men.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church—David O. McKay [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 82

3 Nephi 6:17

18 *State of awful wickedness*

Times have not changed. Less than two months ago, most of you read the disturbing article in our newspapers about a group of individuals who have established a so-called Satanic church, with the sole purpose to participate only in the realms of evil and darkness. They are in open defiance of and diametrically opposed to all of His holy purposes that bring us together in this

great conference. Without a goodly number of God-fearing men committed to the cause of truth, these societies of evil could well take over our society.

The only effective tool against evil and darkness is truth and light, particularly truth and light held in the hands of those bearing God's Holy Priesthood; worthy, dedicated men such as I see before me here today.

No man or boy who has accepted the commitment of priesthood can stand idly by, for if we do not abide in this covenant with the Lord, if we are less than anxiously engaged in doing something about it, he says: "... ye are not worthy of me." (D&C 98:15.)

Robert L. Simpson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1967, p. 69.

3 Nephi 6: 18

Willful rebellion

- 19 There is a big difference between an honest mistake made in a moment of spiritual weakness and a willful decision to disobey persistently the commandments of God. Those who deliberately choose to violate God's commandments or ignore the standards of the Church, even when promising themselves and others that someday they will be strong enough to repent are stepping onto a dangerously slippery slope upon which many have lost their spiritual footing. M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, p. 40.

- 20 In the premortal world before we left the presence of Heavenly Father, He warned and cautioned us about new experiences we would have in mortality. We knew that we each would have a physical body of flesh and bones. Never having been mortal before, we had no experience dealing with the temptations of mortality. But Heavenly Father knew and understood. He charged us to control our mortal bodies and to make them subject to our spirits. Our spirits would have to master the physical temptations that our bodies would encounter in a temporal world. Spiritual power over the influence of Satan comes to us by keeping the commandments of our Lord, Jesus Christ....

Satan will seek to tempt us at times and in ways that exploit our greatest weaknesses or destroy our strengths. But his promises of pleasure are short-lived deceptions. His evil design is to tempt us into sinning, knowing that when we sin we separate ourselves from our Heavenly Father and the Savior, Jesus Christ. We begin to move away from Heavenly Father's promised blessings toward the misery and anguish in which Satan and his followers languish. By sinning we put ourselves in Satan's power.

Now, my dear young friends, I understand the struggles you face every day in keeping the commandments of the Lord. The battle for your souls is increasingly fierce. The adversary is strong and cunning. However, you have within your physical body the powerful spirit of a son or daughter of God. Because He loves you and wants you to come home to Him, our Father in Heaven has given you a conscience that tells your spirit when you are keeping the Lord's commandments and when you are not. If you will pay more attention to your spiritual self, which is eternal, than to your mortal self, which is temporary, you can always resist the temptations of Satan and conquer his efforts to take you into his power.

M. Russell Ballard, Conference Report, Apr. 1993, 5-6; or *Ensign*, May 1993, 6-7.

21 Surely it should give us more pause than it does to think of how casually we sometimes give to [Satan] who could not control his own ego in the premortal world such awful control over our egos. Here. We often let the adversary do *indirectly* now what we refused to let him do *directly* then.

Neal A. Maxwell, *We will Prove Them Herewith* [1982], 45.

3 Nephi 6: 20

22 *Inspired from Heaven*

Sister Gayle Clegg of the Primary general presidency and her husband lived for a number of years in Brazil. Recently she had a Primary assignment in Japan. As she came into the chapel on Sunday, she noticed among the Japanese Saints a Brazilian family. “They just looked Brazilian,” she said. She only had a minute to greet them and found the mother and children very enthusiastic but noticed that the father was rather quiet. “I’ll have a chance to talk with them after the meeting,” she thought as she was quickly ushered to the stand.

She delivered her message in English, which was translated into Japanese, and then she felt impressed to bear her testimony in Portuguese and 98 per-cent of the people would not understand what she said.

After the meeting the Brazilian father came up to her and said, “Sister, the customs are so different ere, and I have been lonely. It is difficult to come to church and not understand anything. Sometimes I wonder if I would be better off just reading my scriptures at home. I told my wife, ‘I’ll give it one more chance,’ and I came today for what I thought would be the last time. When you bore your testimony in Portuguese, the Spirit touched my heart, and I knew that this was where I belonged. God knows I am here, and He will help me.” And he joined the others in putting away the chairs.

Was it a coincidence that the only Portuguese-speaking member of the Primary presidency was sent to Japan instead of to Portugal? Or was it because the Lord knew someone there needed what only she could give—and she had the courage to follow a prompting of the Spirit? One of the great blessings of having a calling in the Church is that the Lord, through His Spirit, will inspire us to help those we are called to serve.

Sydney S. Reynolds, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 79.

23 Sometimes we define the communication of God’s will as revelation. Sometimes we refer to such communication as inspiration. Revelation, however, is a much broader term. While inspiration can properly be considered as revelation, revelation can also include visions, dreams, the spoken word, or other spiritual manifestations. Elder Talmage explained:...

“The word *inspiration* is sometimes invested with a [significance] almost identical with that of *revelation*... To inspire is literally to animate with the spirit... Divine inspiration may be regarded as a lower or less directly intensive operation of spiritual influence upon man that is... revelation. The difference therefore is rather one of degree than of kind.

L. Tom Perry, Conference Report, Oct. 2003 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 90

3 Nephi 6:21*Anger*

24 Letting off steam produces more heat than light.

Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, Nov. 1989 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989], 82-84,

25 Most of us recognize a fool when we see one but, few of us recognize a fool when we are one. Often it is anger which blurs vision.

Letting off steam produces more heat than light.

Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, pp. 82-84.

3 Nephi 6: 28

26 That covenant... administrated by the devil.

Cain, who became Master Mahan, was the first to enter into such a covenant. "Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shall surely die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands. And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret. And Cain said: "Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain. Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness." (Moses 5:29-31; see also Helaman6:26-27; 3 Nephi 3:9.)

Hugh Nibley has spoken of the great secret involved in "converting life into property. Cain got the degree of Master Mahan, tried the system out on his brother, and gloried in its brilliant success, declaring that at last he could be free, as only property makes free, and that Abel had been a loser in a free competition." (Approaching Zion, p. 166.)

Millett and McConkie, *Book of Mormon Commentary*, Vol 4, pp. 29-30.

3 Nephi 6:30*Government destroyed?*

27 Even this nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground, and when the Constitution is upon the brink of ruin, this people will be the staff upon which the nation shall lean, and they shall bear the Constitution away from the very verge of destruction.

Joseph Smith, quoted in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:15

28 But whatever may be our fate, be assured that this [Constitution] will stand. We ... face difficult days in this beloved land... It may cost us blood before we are through. It is my conviction, however, that when the Lord comes, the Stars and Stripes will be floating on the breeze over this people.

Ezra Taft Benson, *The Constitution, A Heavenly Banner*, Sept. 17, 1987.

29 Now I tell you it is time the people of the United States were waking up with the understanding that if they don't save the Constitution from the dangers that threaten it, we will have a change of government.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Conference Report, Apr. 1950 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1950], 159.

30 Yes, it was here under a free government, and a strong nation that protection was provided for his restored Church. Now God will not permit his base of operations—America—to be destroyed. He has promised protection to this land if we will but serve the God of the land. He has also promised protection to the righteous even, if necessary, to send fire from heaven to destroy their enemies (Ether 2:12; 1 Ne. 22:17).

No, God's base of operations will not be destroyed. But it may be weakened and made less effective.

Ezra Taft Benson, Conference Report, Apr. 1962 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962], 104.

31 Men may fail in this country, earthquakes may come, seas may heave beyond their bounds, there may be great drought, disaster, and hardship, but this nation, founded on principles laid down by men whom God raised up, will never fail... Yes, I repeat, men may fail, but this nation won't fail...

I plead with you not to preach pessimism... It is the nation that will stand despite whatever trials or crises it may yet have to pass through.

Harold B. Lee, *Ye Are the Light of the World* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974], 350-351.

32 The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith there would be an attempt to overthrow the country by destroying the Constitution. Joseph Smith predicted that the time would come when the Constitution would hang, as it were, by a thread, and at that time "this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction" (*Journals History*, Brigham Young's Speech, 4 July 1854).

It is my conviction that the elders of Israel, widely spread over the nation, will at that crucial time successfully rally the righteous of our country and provide the necessary balance of strength to save the institutions of constitutional government.

Ezra Taft Benson, Conference Report, Oct. 1961 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961], 70.

34 Will the Constitution be destroyed? No: it will be held inviolate by this people; and, as Joseph Smith said, "The time will come when the destiny of the nation will hang upon a single thread. At that critical juncture, this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction." It will be so.

Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1860], 7:15

Conclusion 3 Nephi 6

The record of the Nephite history just before the Savior's visit reveals many parallels to our own day as we anticipate the Savior's second coming.

Ezra Taft Benson, "The Savior's Visit to America," *Ensign*, May 1987, p.4.