Lesson 33
Helaman 1–5

Helaman 1

Verses 7–8: How do we understand a righteous person like Pahoran the elder having a child who was so unrighteous? For what did the Nephites condemn Paanchi to death? Why was his crime so terrible that it deserved death?

Verse 11: Why do you suppose these people swore by their Maker? It seems very strange to swear by him that you will cover up murder. What is going on?

Verse 13: Why was it Pacumeni’s right to be the next judge? We don’t know what kind of government the Nephites had, but we do know that the people had a voice in choosing their leaders. How can someone have the right to an office if the people have a voice? Might their voice not have been definitive?

Verse 18: What causes the eventual defeat of the Nephites? Does this mean anything for us?

Helaman 2

The Gadianton robbers appear for the first time in this chapter. The Old Testament distinguishes between a thief and a robber, a thief being someone from within the community who stole property, a robber being someone from...
outside of the community and its law—an “outlaw.” Robbers came in gangs, plundering and killing. Because robbers were so much more dangerous than were thieves, they were punished much more severely. (For examples of both terms, see Exodus 22:2, 7, 8; Proverbs 6:30; Ezekiel 18:10; Matthew 24:43; John 10:1; 18:40; and Helaman 2:10.) The Book of Mormon seems to use this distinction too, but Book of Mormon robbers go further in their crimes than did Old Testament robbers, not only plundering and murdering in gangs but also plotting to take over the rule of the country.

**Verse 4:** What was Gadianton’s craft? Why is it important that he was expert not only in that craft but also “in many words”?

**Verse 5:** Why do people seek power and authority? How do they do so?

How does priestcraft (see 2 Nephi 26:29) differ from Gadianton robbery? How is it the same? Which is more important for us to recognize, the similarity or the difference?

When do we see people practicing the kind of robbery that the Gadiantons did?

When do we see people (including ourselves?) practicing priestcraft?

**Helaman 3**

**Verse 1:** What little thing do we see here that will bring down the Nephites? Why do pride and contention go together? (Compare Helaman 3:33–34.)
Verse 3: What caused the dissensions mentioned? Does the migration of Lehi’s family (and others) parallel this migration, or is this a group of dissidents leaving?

Verses 22–23: Is the decrease in contention perhaps related to the fact that Helaman is a righteous man? How does having a righteous leader effect such a change in the people? Anciently it was common to believe that the righteousness of a leader was correlated to the righteousness of the people and that righteousness meant peace and prosperity. Do we believe in such a correlation? Is the righteousness of our leaders today relevant to whether they can lead us well? How?

Verse 24: Helaman says “there was . . . prosperity in the church, insomuch that there were thousands who did join.” Does this mean that they joined because the church was prosperous? Isn’t that a bad thing? What is prosperity in the church? Does verse 26 answer this question?

Verse 27: What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? How is the Lord merciful to those who call on his name?

Verses 29–30: What is the word of God? How do we lay hold on it?

What does it mean to say that God’s word is quick and powerful?

What is the significance of cutting in two all of the devil’s wiles and snares? Explore that metaphor: what is the point of the metaphor as a whole? The sword? The snare? Cutting a snare?

How does the word lead us along the narrow way or course?
When Mormon says that the gulf is prepared to engulf the wicked, is he personifying it (as if to say the gulf is waiting to do this), or is he saying it has been prepared to engulf them?

What does it mean to land souls? Why use the word soul rather than something else, such as people?

What does sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob signify? Why them in particular?

What does it mean to go no more out? Out of where? When did we go out the first time?

Verses 33–34: We see here what the Book of Mormon shows us over and over again. If we are to understand its message for us and to avoid the fate of the Nephites, we must think about how we duplicate the pride mentioned here and how we imitate the persecution of our brethren. In what ways might we be guilty of the sins of the Nephites?

Verse 35: How do the righteous among the Nephites handle the persecutions? What might that say to us?

Helaman 4

Verse 1: Once again we see among the Nephites the direct correlation between dissensions in the church and war. What kinds of dissensions do we face today? Are those comparable to the Nephites’ dissensions in the church?

Verses 11–12: Here we are told what caused those dissensions. How might we might be guilty of each of these today?

Verse 13: And here we see the result of the wickedness described: the people are left to their own strength. The
implication is that when left to our own strength, we discover that our strength isn’t sufficient to even save us temporally, much less spiritually. Compare what is said here with what King Benjamin taught.

**Verse 14:** Lehi was Nephi’s father, but Helaman seems to have named his first son Nephi and his second son Lehi. What might this say about how the Nephites think of Lehi and Nephi?

**Verse 15:** We have been told that the people were rich, but wicked. Now we see that when they repented they prospered. If they were already rich, in what sense might they have prospered? There are hundreds of scriptural references to prospering. It might be interesting to read many of them to get an idea of what the Lord promises the righteous. If you have computer access, you can use the Church’s scripture-search program to find them. Go to www.lds.org /scriptures and type the word *prosper* in the search box to see all the uses of that word in the scriptures.

**Verse 22:** They have trampled under foot the laws of Mosiah. What were those laws? Where do we find them? How do you think they have trampled them under foot?

**Verse 23:** To “dwindle” is to shrink, to become smaller. Here it seems to be used in opposition to “prosper.” What might it mean?

Is the description that follows (“they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation”) something that happened in addition to dwindling, or does it repeat that they dwindled, using different words?
Helaman 5

**Verse 2:** What does it mean to say that the laws became corrupted?

“They who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good” and “the laws had become corrupted” are both given as causes of “their ripening for destruction.” How are these things related?

**Verse 9:** Why are King Benjamin’s words so important to the people of the Book of Mormon? What value should they have to us? What would show that they have that value in our lives?

**Verse 11:** What are the conditions of repentance? Where can you find them in the Book of Mormon?

What does it mean that repentance “bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer”? Can you explain the literal meaning of that phrase?

**Verse 12:** What kinds of ideas might we infer from Helaman’s metaphor of a foundation built on rock? Do you see any meaning in the contrast between the Lord as a rock and Satan as a storm?

**Verse 14:** Notice that Helaman’s sons “went forth, keeping the commandments” *because* they remembered what he had said. Does that mean children who don’t do what their parents tell them have forgotten? In what sense might that be true?

**Verses 17–19:** What gave Nephi and Lehi such power in preaching?
Verses 30–31: We often imagine the Lord’s voice as a deep, booming voice, but here we see it quite differently. What does the description of his voice as being “of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul” tell us?

Verse 32: What does it mean to say that the kingdom of God is at hand? Does it refer only to Christ’s first or second comings? Could it have more than one meaning?

Verse 41: What does it mean to “cry . . . until ye shall have faith”? Do we see anything like this earlier in the Book of Mormon? What would such a cry require?

Verses 46–47: What is the difference in the voice now? Is that difference a difference of the voice itself or a difference in its hearers?

Verse 47: Why does the voice mention that the Savior “was from the foundation of the world?” (Does this use of the word foundation have anything to do with the use in verse 12?) What was he from the foundation of the world?

Verses 50–52: What do these verses tell us about the Lamanites’ wars against the Nephites? What was the root cause of those wars? Was it the personal wickedness of the Lamanites? Might this explain something of how Moroni could wage war against the Lamanites in the way he did?

Does Moroni’s way of fighting war teach us anything about our own wars? What?