Lesson 34
Helaman 6–12

Helaman 6

**Verse 3:** How does the attitude of the members of the church compare here with Moroni’s attitude?

**Verse 9:** Given what we’ve seen so far in the Book of Mormon, as soon as we read that the Nephites and Lamanites “became exceedingly rich,” what do we expect to read about soon? Has Mormon written this to elicit that expectation from us?

**Verse 17:** Why do they want gain? What does it mean to be lifted up above another? What’s wrong with it? How do we lift ourselves above others?

**Verse 27:** Why is the comparison of the Gadianton robbers to Cain an important one for us? What does it tell us?

**Verse 30:** What does it mean to say that Satan is the author of all sin? Does that mean I am not the author of any sins? If he is the author of sin, how can I be held responsible?

**Verse 37:** This verse contains surprises. The first surprise is that the Lamanites hunted down the Gadianton robbers. The second surprise is that we expect to read about how the Lamanites killed them. Instead, however, we read that “they did preach the word of God among the more wicked part of them, insomuch that this band of robbers was utterly
destroyed.” They destroyed them by preaching to them! Are there situations in our own experience where this might also work? Why didn’t it work for Alma the Younger?

**Verse 38:** When they were seduced, the previously righteous Nephites believed in the works of the Gadiantons, partook of their spoils, and joined them in their secret murders. The last of these is easiest to understand. It means that, whether or not they committed murder themselves, they joined in the oaths that protected the secret murderers. It is also easy to understand what it means to say that the Nephites partook of their spoils. But what does it mean to say that they believed in the Gadiantons’ works?

**Verse 39:** What are the signs of Gadianton rule? Notice the progression of ideas. It seems to move up in increasing violence—trample under feet, smite, tear apart—but then the last of the series is “turn their backs upon.” What might that series say to us?

What are the two groups against whom the Gadiantons act?

**Helaman 7**

**Verse 7:** Is Nephi being realistic about what it was like at the time of Lehi, or is he thinking about “the good old days”? (How, for example, does this compare to what the earlier Nephi says about life then?—Compare verse 8, where this Nephi says that “in those days” he could have had joy in the righteousness of his brethren.) If he is being realistic, what might this say about how things are at the time he speaks?
What does *entreated* mean? What does it mean to be easy to be entreated?

Why speak of them as “firm to keep the commandments”?

**Verse 16:** Here Nephi speaks of the devil as enticing them. Is there a difference between *entreat* and *entice*? What might that difference signify?

**Verse 20:** What day is Nephi referring to?

**Verse 21:** When Nephi says they sin to get gain, to be praised of men, and to get gold and silver, do you think that being praised and getting gold and silver are two ways of getting gain, or is he naming three different reasons for their sins? If he’s naming three different reasons, what does it mean to get gain? What are the riches of this world? What are the vain things? What does it mean to have one’s heart set on these things?

**Verse 23:** What does the Lord mean when he says, “I will not show unto the wicked of my strength, to one more than the other”? Can you write out an English sentence that has an equivalent meaning?

**Verse 24:** Notice that the degree of one’s righteousness is a matter of one’s knowledge, so that a person with less knowledge could be more righteous than one with more knowledge, even if the one with less knowledge were obedient to fewer commandments. What might this say to us about deciding the righteousness of others? Of ourselves?

**Verse 25:** In what ways might members of the church have united with Gadianton robbers? Obviously, some might simply have joined. But that seems less likely than that
they associated themselves in other ways, ways that allowed them to continue to think of themselves as “good people.” What other ways might they have joined themselves? In what ways might we join with today’s Gadianton robbers?

_Verse 26:_ Why is pride such a terrible sin? The Book of Mormon condemns pride consistently, but what is wrong with pride?

How do riches cause pride?

**Helaman 8**

_Verse 3:_ Speaking by the commandments isn’t the same as not speaking what is contrary to them. What is the difference? What might the writer be indicating by saying that nothing Nephi said was contrary to the commandments?

_Verse 4ff.:_ How do these judges’ motives and methods compare to the motives and methods of the priests of Noah?

_Verse 6:_ What danger is run by those who are prosperous and who have military power?

_Verses 11–13:_ Why would the story of Moses and Israel be such a powerful example for Nephi? Why might the accusation that they deny Moses’s words be such a powerful accusation?

_Verses 14–15:_ We don’t use the symbol of the cross very much, if at all, but Nephi makes reference to that symbolism here, so it is certainly worth thinking about. What kinds of similarities are there between Christ’s crucifixion and the brass serpent on a staff lifted up by Moses? Why, for example, is the serpent used to symbolize Christ rather than Satan? In
what senses was Christ lifted up? What might we learn from the symbol of Christ being “lifted up”? What does it mean to “look to” Christ, especially in the context of looking to his crucifixion, the context implied by the metaphor?

**Verse 16:** To what does the phrase “these things” refer?

**Verses 16–22:** Why does Nephi mention all these prophets? How will that be convincing? *Who* would be convinced by such evidence?

**Verse 24:** Nephi says they have received “all things” as a witness that “they” are true. First, what does the word *they* refer to? That is, what is it that they know to be true? Second, how do all things, both in heaven and earth, stand as a witness that they are true?

**Helaman 9**

**Verse 21:** What does it mean to be circumcised of heart? What does it mean to be blind? What does it mean to be stiff-necked? In addition to such things as “stubborn” and “inflexible” (things *stiff-necked* has meant for centuries), during the early nineteenth century, when Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, *stiff-necked* was used to describe a horse that wouldn’t obey the rein. Against what is Nephi warning his people?

Against what does he warn us? Can you be specific about that warning? In other words, in what specific ways might we be uncircumcised, blind, or stiff-necked?

**Verse 41:** In the last chapter we saw that the Nephites remembered Moses and seemed to honor him. However,
given the remark they make here, how well did they understand the gospel?

Helaman 10

Verses 4–5: What does it mean to declare the word with unweariness? Does that mean Nephi didn’t get tired? He also has “not sought [his] own life.” What does that mean?

Verse 5: Why won’t Nephi ask that which is contrary to the Lord’s will?

Verse 6: Why might the Lord begin as he does, saying, “Thou art Nephi, and I am God”?

Verse 7: We usually think of the sealing power in connection with such things as eternal marriage. Here we see that it goes beyond that. Can you explain how and what that might mean to us?

Verses 10–14: What does it mean to say that God smites people? Literally, smite means “hit.” How do we explain what seems here to be vengefulness on the part of the Lord, as if he is saying, “Do what I say, or else”? Is destruction something the Lord brings on the wicked, or is it something he will save them from if they repent? Whatever your answer, how do you justify this portrayal of God?

Helaman 11

Verse 7: What does this verse tell us about Nephite righteousness? If we are righteous because we have been humbled by circumstances and finally see the need for the Lord, how righteous are we?
Verses 9–17: If Nephi has already been given the authority that whatever he says will come to pass, why does he pray to the Lord here, asking that the famine be stopped? Why not just command it to stop?

Verse 19: If Lehi wasn’t a whit behind Nephi in righteousness, can we assume that he too had the sealing power? If not, why not? In either case, why don’t we hear more about Lehi?

Verses 22–23: What points of doctrine do you think they might have disputed? Is there anything we’ve read or that you know is coming up that might suggest an answer to this question?

Verse 24: Notice that Helaman distinguishes between the Lamanites who are descendants of the Lamanites and those who have taken the name Lamanite because they are dissenters. The distinction between Lamanite and Nephite is becoming more and more a political, cultural, and religious distinction rather than a genealogical one.

Verses 26–33: Notice too that though we think of the wars in the Book of Mormon as wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites (and for the most part they are), we see here that the Gadianton robbers are neither Lamanite nor Nephite: both nations send armies out against them, and both nations are under siege from them. Why is this—and the point about verse 24—important to our understanding of the Book of Mormon? How might it help us teach that book more accurately?

Verse 34: In verse 7 they repented because of the famine (which replaced a war); then in verse 23 (four years later)
they began to strive with each other again, but Nephi and Lehi were able to bring the strife under control, so there is relatively little strife among them. The next year the Gadianton robbers reorganized themselves and began to attack the people. This verse tells us that the attacks of the Gadianton robbers were because of the people’s wickedness. What wickedness do you suppose the verse is referring to?

**Verse 36:** The eighty-first year ended with the Nephites remembering the Lord because of their afflictions. Now we see that the very next year they began to forget him again. There seems to be less and less time between each period of wickedness and each period of repentance. What’s going on?

**Helaman 12**

**Verse 1:** The phrase “and thus we see” is one of Mormon’s favorite phrases. This verse begins with a variation of it, so it may well be a section written by Mormon—his commentary on what he is reading. The record of the Nephites is titled the Book of Mormon not only because it is Mormon’s abridgment, but also because it is his prophetic response to his people’s history.

We see that the Lord blesses and prospers those who trust him. In fact, we have seen him bless and prosper those who only “trusted” him because they were forced to it by their suffering. What does this tell us about the Lord?

**Verse 2:** Do we have ease and prosperity? If so, Mormon seems to feel that what he has seen describes us as well as the people he is reading about. How might this verse apply
to us? How has the Lord increased our fields, flocks, and herds? Our silver, gold, and other precious things? How has he spared our lives? How has he delivered us from our enemies? How has he softened their hearts not to declare war against us? How do we harden our hearts? How do we forget the Lord? How do we trample him under our feet? (Think about the power and the horror of that image—we trample our God as a mob might trample someone else, perhaps not even noticing he is there in our rush to get something or somewhere.)

Verses 3–6: Mormon gives his description of the Lord’s people, not just of some of those people. Is he just a pessimist because of the hard life he has led, or is what he is saying here prophetic? If the latter, these verses describe us as well as the people of the Book of Mormon. How do such things fit in with the message of the Book of Mormon for the latter days? What do they mean to us? What do they say about us?

Verse 7: When we read verses like this (e.g., Mosiah 4:5, 11) we almost always add, “But...” Then we explain all the ways that we aren’t nothing. In the scriptures, however, we don’t find any such addition. Why not? What are we supposed to learn from this verse and others that say we are nothing?

Verses 8–22: What is the point of these verses? In context, what are they to teach us?


Verse 24: What does he mean by God’s “great fulness”?
What does the phrase “restored unto grace for grace” mean?
Can there be good works without repentance? Repentance without good works?

**Verse 26:** How do we square scriptures such as this with those such as Romans 3:12: “There is none that doeth good, no, not one”? That scripture is a quotation of Psalms 14:3 and 53:3 and is a common theme in the scriptures. See, for example, Psalms 14:1; 36:3; 53:1; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Jeremiah 13:23; Romans 3:12; 3 John 1:11; Helaman 12:4; Moroni 10:25; and D&C 33:4; 35:12; 82:6. What makes it possible to do good works?