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Rex C. Reeve Jr.

The Book of Mormon: A Book Written for Our Day

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Summary:

The Book of Mormon teaches faith in Christ, a message relevant for our time or any time. Believers progress from knowing the Savior, to loving and being obedient to him, and ultimately desiring to share the message about him. Our commitment to the gospel is reflected in our ability to be obedient.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Teachings

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The Book of Mormon: A Book Written for Our Day

Rex C. Reeve Jr.

I'm grateful today for the opportunity to discuss with you the teachings of the Book of Mormon that will apply to our lives. President Benson has told us that the Book of Mormon is written for our day, and that the ancient prophets who wrote the Book of Mormon saw our day and were able to write those things that would be for our good, for our benefit, and would help us in building faith and in coming back to our Father in Heaven. Today we'll look at a couple of those teachings and see if we can see how they apply in our everyday lives.

To begin with, let's define some of the Book of Mormon terms we'll use that come up a lot, and that will give us a base for our discussion. The first term we'll define today is the term *deceived*. A number of times in the Book of Mormon, individuals are said to be "deceived." Our definition for *deceived* is that you think you're right, but you're really wrong. Corihor is probably the best example of being deceived in the Book of Mormon. He was teaching that there was no Christ. He said he had taught it so much that he actually believed it, but when the confrontation with Alma came, he found out that he remembered that he was wrong and said that he had been deceived. So remember now, our definition for *deceived* is you think you're right, but you're really wrong.

Now, a little longer definition—and maybe the most important definition—is our definition of "faith in Christ." I've taken from the Book of Mormon and paraphrased some of the teachings. Faith is a difficult subject. You can talk about faith for hours. You can see examples of people who have been faithful. You can see people who have exercised great faith. But it's still difficult, when you're finished, to understand what faith is and how it applies and how you can strengthen your faith if that was your goal. So, in order to try to understand a little better what it means to have faith in Christ, let's use a little definition that may help us. First of all, paraphrasing Alma, "faith in Christ" is when you come to know the true Christ,

having never seen him. It's important to know the true Christ, having never seen him. Now, I guess technically, we really have seen him. We used to know him before we came. We just can't remember.

Another question that arises is, is it possible to know somebody that you've never seen? The answer is, yes, it is. We may feel we know pen pals or our ancestors. Yes, it is possible. I feel like I know my great grandfather. I've never met him. He died long before I was born. But I've read his journal, and I've talked to people who knew him. I've heard about him, and I feel like I know him well, even though we never met. It's the same way with knowing the Savior. If you come to know the true Christ, having never met him, you talk to people who know him, you read the things that people who have seen him have written, you read the things that he has written himself, and you come to know the true Christ, having never seen him.

Now, that leads to the next logical step, as you come to know the Savior—and this next is automatic; it's a given—you love him more, that is, your love for him increases. I guess it's possible that there are people who, the more, or the better, you know them, the less you like them. But in the case of the Savior, as you come to know him and understand him, your love for him increases. Now, the thing that makes that so powerful is that as I make the effort, or as an individual makes the effort to come to know the Savior by study and reading and obedience, he or she has the help of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost can open up moments and times of revelation to our minds so that we can really know the Savior on a personal level.

Now, as I come to know the Savior, I love him. The next step is, as I love him, I begin to want to do things his way. What he wants and what I want become the same in any situation. I want to be obedient to him. It's just a natural. The more I know him, the better I love him; the more I love him, the more I want to do things his way. Let me give you a couple of examples of what I mean, from my own experience. Not long back, I was standing at the video shelves in a video store trying

to select a movie for my family. I was interested in the Clint Eastwood movies. I kind of like *The Big Gun* and *Make My Day*, and I was thinking that I ought to find one of those to take home. It dawned on my mind that if the Savior were there in front of those videos, he would probably not take one of those R-rated movies home to his family. The problem was, I still wanted to, and so what we've got here is what the Savior would do and what I would do. There was a gap between us.

Now, another example: A couple of years ago, I went to a golf banquet. I was sitting there, and after the meal a fellow that I had just met that night for the first time took out of his pocket a package of cigarettes and offered me one. The question is—and this is almost sacrilegious, but it's still a question—if Christ were at the banquet, would he accept one of those cigarettes? The answer is certainly no, but the good news is, I didn't want one either. The Savior and I were so close on that point that it was just scary. We were just right together. But on the other hand, with the Clint Eastwood movies, we're separated. Now, the principle is: If I have faith in Christ, and as my faith develops, I will close this gap so that I'm as close to him on this matter as I was at the golf banquet on the cigarette matter, and so that what he wants and what I want become the same. It's a given that as I get to know him and love him, I'll want to be obedient.

The fourth point is: As I know him and love him, and as I experience the joys of obedience, I'll want to help other people come to him, I'll do my very best to lift and help and encourage the Lord's children that I associate with to be closer to the Savior. Now, look what this does. Suppose I say to myself, "I want to increase my faith." What I'm really saying is that I want to get to know the Savior better. I can do that. I know how to do that. It's not confusing. It's not hard to understand. I know how to get to know him better. What I'm really saying is I'd like to love him more, I'd like to be more obedient. And I can do those things. I'm also saying that when I say I want to increase my faith, I'd like to be more of an influence in the lives of the Lord's other children. So, our definition of faith is, you come to know the true

Christ, having never seen him; as you do that, you love him; and as you love him, you want to be obedient; and as you be obedient, you want to help others be obedient. That's our definition of "faith in Christ."

Now, let's take a couple of examples from the Book of Mormon to see how this applies and how the Lord has placed in the book. These are some everyday kinds of examples of how we can live and how we can function so that we'll exercise faith, and grow, and come to know the Savior better. The first example that we'll use is right in the front of the book. Shortly after father Lehi was commanded of the Lord to warn the people and to announce his testimony of the destruction of Jerusalem, Lehi was commanded by the Lord to take his family and leave Jerusalem, and he did. The scripture says in 1 Nephi 2:5-6: "He came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness . . . [a little ways and] pitched his tent in a valley [near the Red Sea]." And there they camped. The best guess we have is that that would have been about a two hundred-mile journey south and a little bit east of Jerusalem. And it's desert country. It's hot; it's quite a desolate place.

Father Lehi camped in a valley near a stream, a river, and received word from the Lord that his family, his sons particularly, should return back to Jerusalem to get the Old Testament, the scriptures, the brass plates, that were there so that he and his family did not leave Jerusalem and begin their long journey without the scriptures in their possession. Father Lehi announced to his four sons that the Lord had asked them to return to Jerusalem. Sam and Nephi said, "Yes, we'll return"; Laman and Lemuel said, "Yes, we'll return." All four returned. The difference was in the size of the *yes* that Nephi and Sam said in comparison to Laman and Lemuel's *yes*. The latter was very small; Nephi and Sam's *yes* was very large. Maybe the most powerful scripture in the Book of Mormon is the scripture where Nephi said, "Yes, I will go," found in 1 Nephi 3:7: "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded." That's a big "yes, I will go." Then he adds: "For I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the

children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7). So, remember that father Lehi commands all four of the boys to go, but two say a big *yes* and two say a little *yes*.

Now, the first obstacle that they run into as they return to Jerusalem is just the travel itself. It's long. It's hot. It's uphill. It's a struggle. When they arrive in Jerusalem, they decide that they'll go and just ask Laban for the plates. They draw lots. Laman, the older brother is asked to go. It's his turn to go to see if he can get the plates from the man named Laban. Laban refuses, and Laman has to flee for his life. He returns to his brothers. Now, the important part is what happens next. They've had a long struggle, and they've been rejected. And what happens to the *yes* of each pair of boys? The *yes* that Laman and Lemuel said was small to begin with, and it even gets smaller now. The *yes* that Nephi and Sam said gets bigger, even though they've run into difficulty. Look at 1 Nephi 3:15. Nephi reiterates his *yes*—in fact, he even strengthens his *yes*. Let's read verse 15: "But behold I said unto them that: As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us." Now, what has happened here is that Nephi, even in the face of opposition, has strengthened his *yes*. In fact, he's taken an oath. When he says "as the Lord liveth," he's added an oath to his *yes*, so his *yes* is bigger. Laman and Lemuel's *yes* gets smaller.

Now, the next plan is for them to go and gather together some of their father's possessions, their inheritance, to see if they can buy the plates. They do that. They get the gold and silver and other treasures that they have and take them in. They're rejected. In fact, they have to flee again for their lives. Now, the important thing here is what happens to the *yes*. Laman and Lemuel's *yes* has turned into a *no*. They want to go home. In fact, they take a stick and beat Nephi, and an angel of the Lord has to stop them. Nephi's *yes* has stayed big. Nephi's *yes* is just as big as or bigger now than it's ever been. And in 1 Nephi 4:1, in answer to their worry that Laban

may slay them, Nephi says, "Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban?"

So you see, what happens here is Nephi's *yes* doesn't diminish; in fact, it stays big—and it even gets stronger. Now, Nephi has said "yes" two or three times. He's run into opposition two or three times. He's still committed to getting the plates, but at this point, he still doesn't know how he's going to get the plates. The scripture in 1 Nephi 4:6 says: "I was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do." The point is that Nephi had been able to keep his *yes* alive. He knew he was going to get the plates, but even at this point, he didn't know how. It wasn't clear to him yet how to do it, except he knew the Lord would help him. And as he went forth, the opportunity arose, and he approached the home of Laban and found Laban there. He was commanded by the Spirit of the Lord that he should kill Laban.

Now, the point here is that the biggest test that Nephi ever faces is at the end. The test of getting back to Jerusalem, the test of being rejected several times and fleeing for his life, and the test of being beaten by his brothers were all tests, but the biggest test comes near the end. It's the opportunity to get the plates, but he has to pass the final test, and the final test is to be obedient to the Spirit, the word of the Lord, and to slay Laban. Nephi wrestles with that test, but he wins. He's obedient to the Lord. He's able to slay Laban, put on his clothes, get the plates, have the servant of Laban help him, and return to his brethren.

We're familiar with that story. It's an important story. I used to wonder why the Lord would have the prophet Nephi put that story in. Space at this point in the Book of Mormon was a problem with Nephi's writing on small plates. There's not a lot of room. Why he would take two chapters—two fairly long chapters—to tell the story of their getting the plates, I used to wonder. He could have said the same thing in just a few paragraphs: "We went back, got the plates, the Lord blessed us, and we're grateful for the blessings." It dawned on me one day that maybe what Nephi is

doing here is giving us a pattern that would apply to anyone's life in almost anything he or she is doing. Remember, the Book of Mormon was written for our day, and since it was, we should be able to apply it.

Now, let's just take a look at a couple of examples of how this pattern works. Students come to Brigham Young University. Every year, there're thousands of new students who arrive for the first time. All of them are there saying, "Yes, yes, I will graduate." Before very long, when obstacles arise, some of those *yesses* turn to *maybes*, and some to *nos*, and some turn into great big *nos*, and these students don't pursue the courses that they've set for themselves. The secret is, how do you say a big *yes*, or make a big *yes*-type commitment, to a worthy and worthwhile project (such as attending college and completing your studies), and then keep the big *yes* alive? There's lots of discouragement along the way. There are challenges. There's loneliness. There are frustrations and disappointments. How do you keep the big *yes* alive, as Nephi did?

Another example comes to my mind. In the Church we have many young men and women serving missions. Most missionaries arrive in the mission field having said quite a fairly good-sized *yes*—"Yes, I will be a good missionary" and "Yes, I will serve." How do you keep that *yes* alive? Sometimes that *yes* turns into a *no*, or a smaller *yes*, or a small *no*, or a big *no*. Many times missionaries are not able to keep the big *yes* alive. It seems as if the ability in this life to say "yes"—especially to the Lord in spiritual things—and to keep that big *yes* alive may be the secret of how to make it back to the presence of the Lord.

Now, in both of these examples, quite often the biggest test comes at the end. In the mission, it's a big adjustment to go out, but the biggest test is the last part of a mission. How you stay in the field and work hard and don't not quit before you come home sometimes is the biggest test. So, the pattern there in 1 Nephi is how to say "yes" to the Lord, how to keep the big *yes* alive, and how to make it through a commitment that we've made.

As I was studying this, my mind also went to another situation—life itself, or to be even more specific, marriage. Most people enter the marriage relationship with a fairly big *yes*—“Yes, I’ll be true” and “Yes, I want to do this.” Before long, that big *yes* has turned into a *no*—and in fact, it turned into a great big *no*—and people are mad at one another and shooting one another and divorcing one another and fighting one another. Somehow, that big *yes* that they started out with in their marriage has turned into a *no*. In fact, if they could figure out how to say, “Yes, I want to be married” and “Yes, I will do that” and keep that *yes* alive, their marriages could be sweet and wonderful and good.

In life itself—we’ve all watched it—sometimes the greatest tests are at the end. You see people at the end of their lives struggling as they lose a companion or as their health fails, and things come upon them that are very difficult to endure without getting mad at the Lord.

And so, it seems to me, at least one of the reasons Nephi included this in the Book of Mormon and took so much time is that there’s a real lesson here for us. The lesson here is for us to figure out how to make a commitment to the Lord, to school, to a mission, to marriage, and to any other endeavor, and then to figure out how to keep that big *yes* alive. You can learn to say “Yes, I’ll do it” and not get discouraged. There’s going to be challenge after challenge after challenge, and many times the challenges will be the biggest at the end. If we can figure out how to keep that *yes* alive, we’ll be able to gain, from the Book of Mormon, strength to make it through this life. The secret is probably in our definition of faith. As an individual comes to know the Savior and comes to love the Savior and wants to be obedient to him, his or her big *yes* automatically stays alive, and those two tie tightly together. Well, maybe Nephi included that account for more than one reason, but at least he’s given us a pattern to follow in all of the commitments we make.

Now, let’s turn to another example of how the Book of Mormon can apply directly to our lives. Let’s take a look at Jacob chapter 2. Jacob has gathered the saints

around the temple. He's giving them the talk that the Lord has asked him to give. He's teaching them things that they need to know. One of the things that's happened to the people in the time of Jacob is mentioned in Jacob 2:13:

And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

So, here's a problem that Jacob was faced with: Through their hard work, some had obtained more money and more riches than others. The problem was that with some having more and some having less, those that had more began to be proud and to think they were better, and there began to be conflict because of that. In the world today we see the same thing happening. We see people who have a lot of money and people who don't have a lot, and sometimes there's pride, and sometimes there's persecution even, and there are problems in that regard. How do you deal with that? What do you do to deal with that problem? It seems like every time in the scriptures that the Lord has an opportunity to set up his kingdom—like in the days of Enoch or in the righteous time in the Book of Mormon—we find out that there were no rich and no poor among them (see Moses 7:18), that they all had according to their needs and their wants. The inequities of rich and poor that Jacob faced and that we face are done away with when the Lord's system is in place.

This is a subject that is talked about a lot in all the scriptures, and it seems that it's almost impossible to find scriptures that would help individuals deal with money and rich people getting into the kingdom. Jacob here, in dealing with the problem, gives us the best answer in all of the scripture of how to deal with this and not offend the Lord, of how to handle the money and the earning of money and all that that implies. First of all, Jacob is going to tell us the pattern in Jacob 2:17. He says: "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.”

That is kind of the goal. Remember, the problem is that you have some people with this much money and some people with more or less, but in the Lord’s system everybody has the same. There’s no rich. There’s no poor. Everybody has what they want and what they need. In verse 18 he adds the next step: “But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.” What does it mean to seek for the kingdom of God? And what does it mean to find the kingdom of God? Well, the seeking pattern is to develop faith in Christ, to come to know him, to come to love him, and to be obedient to him. Faith leads to repenting of all sins, and to baptism, and to receiving the holy ghost.

So, Jacob says, the foundation principle is to seek the kingdom of God first. Verse 19 adds a little bit of dimension to that idea: “And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ. . . .” The word *hope* here means that you’ve come to Christ, and you have hope that you will be forgiven of your sins, you have hope that the system will work, that your repentance is sincere, that the Savior’s atonement works, and that your record is clean and pure before the Lord. So, the first step, then, is to come to Christ, develop faith, repent of sins, and become clean and pure before the Lord. Now Jacob adds the next thing there in verse 19: “After ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them.”

Now, there are two words in that scripture that are important. The first word is *if*. Not everybody wants great riches. Not everybody wants the responsibility and the hassle of great riches. But once people are grounded in the Savior and have had their sins forgiven and are clean and pure before the Lord—that is, the Savior has taken upon him their sins—and their faith in him is strong, if they want riches, Jacob says, it’ll be okay. They can handle it then. Riches won’t hurt them, if they want them.

The second important word there is *seek*. The question arises, if you have faith in Christ and if you are clean and pure before the Lord and you want riches, how do

you seek riches? How do you earn the wealth that you desire? Well, there are a lot of words that would fit: *work* is one of them; *honesty* is another; *faithfulness*, *diligence*, *fairness*, *keep the commandments*. The principle is that you first come to the Savior and get rid of your sins so you have no sins. Then, in simple terms, what you do is, while you are seeking the money—if you want the money—you get no new sins on your record. You don't commit any sins while you're earning the money. You stay righteous before the Lord. Now, is it easy to get sin on your record when you are earning money? The answer is, yes, it is. In fact, you earn more money usually through sin than if you'd just worked for it. But if you want to have money and not be offensive to the Lord, then you get yourself "square" with the Lord. If you desire the money and seek it properly, and in the seeking process you don't pick up any new sins, you'll be okay. It is a blessing. The Lord is happy with that.

Jacob adds a third dimension in the last part of verse 19. When you seek riches, he said, "ye will seek them for the intent to do good—" and then he outlines what good is: "to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted." Now, let me back up. Here's the principle: You first come to the Savior; you get square with him; you develop faith; you're cleaned; you have no new sins develop while you're earning the money; you stay clean while you're earning the money; then you spend the money. When you spend the money, you don't get any new sins. You don't do anything that would add sin to your record. In fact, you use that money to do good in the eyes of the Lord. You see, what happens is, if I'm clean before the Lord, and if I don't get any sins on my record when I earn the money, and if I don't get any new sins on my record when I spend the money, money is going to be a blessing—especially if I use it for good, in doing good in the eyes of the Lord.

Jacob mentions here what he things he believes are good, and one of them is to clothe the naked and to feed the hungry. Now, if I have earned this money, and I've

kept myself clean in the earning process, and I haven't picked up any new sins in the spending process, what could I do to clothe the naked and feed the hungry. Well, there's probably lots of things that would fit in that category. Within the Church, there are places to donate—fast offerings, missionary funds—that would take care of the poor and the needy.

Another way I could feed the hungry and clothe the naked if I've sought the money and I have the money that has accumulated is if I have one hundred employees, I pay them a fair wage. I give them benefits. I don't try to cheat them out of their retirement. If I have one hundred employees and I'm paying them a fair wage, I'm feeding and clothing hundreds of people. I'm giving them the opportunity to work. I'm giving them a fair place to earn and to grow and to expand their talents. This is an area that the Lord talks about a lot. If I have this money and I'm feeding and clothing those that I employ, I can either be a good employer or a bad employer. I'm aware of a company who had the policy that when a man or a woman got to be fifty-five years old, the management tried to get them out of the company so that they could keep their retirement money. But if I'm doing this right, I don't do that. I be a fair employer.

What does it mean to "liberate the captive"? Who are "the captive"? Well, there are a lot of people who are captive. People who can't read and write are captive. People who don't have the gospel are captive. So, what am I going to spend my money for? Well, I'm going to spend it for things that will liberate the captives. On the campus of BYU, and on the campus of the University of Utah, and on the campus of Utah State University, there are buildings that are named "Marriott." For instance, at the University of Utah, they have the Marriott library. Why is it called the Marriott library? Well, money from the Marriott family was used to build the library. In a sense, that's what you call liberating the captives. Because of that money, the school, when they built the library, was able to build a bigger library with more facilities, better facilities than they would have otherwise built. And over the next

twenty-five or fifty years, hundreds and hundreds of students will be able to go there and learn and have a better learning facility. In a sense, that's liberating those who are captive—that is, uneducated. So, you are generous in helping liberate those who are captive in one way or another.

Now, let's rehearse it one more time. First of all, we get ourselves square with the Lord. We get free from sin. When we earn the money, we don't pick up any new sins. When we spend the money, we don't pick up any new sins, and when we spend the money, we spend it to do good. We take care of our family. We provide for those who work for us. We give as generously to the poor and needy as we can. We give money to liberate the captives, or we give opportunities to those who have needs.

Jacob adds one last thing that really is the capstone. Remember, our problem is that you have two levels of people—those who have a lot and those who don't have a lot. Most of the time, we try—well, most of the time the government tries—to even this out by taking from the “haves” and giving to the “have-nots.” In fact, that's the way we do it. We take from the rich and give to the poor to try to even it out. That's probably why the government systems don't work very well. How do you solve the problem of the inequality? Jacob tells us how the Lord would do it. Let's go back to Jacob 2:17 and see what the Lord says: “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.” Now, if you stop and think about that, what does that mean? Here you have those who have and those who haven't. How can this individual that doesn't have the money be rich like unto you? It doesn't say the rich man takes his own money, or is forced to take his money, and gives it to the poor. That doesn't work.

But what it does mean is that the poor man can have the money like you've got the money, if he wants it. That means he can come to the Lord and be cleansed of his sins. If he wants it, he can work. He can use it to do good, and the money then

will do him good. Now, if I'm the one who has the money, I can help that individual who is trying to make a go at it, but it doesn't help him if I just give him the money, or if I'm forced to give him the money. So, the key here is to let them be rich like unto you, which means you can tell them how you did it, you can help people do it the same way you did it. Well, there's another example of how the Book of Mormon fits in an everyday situation, of how we can have money—and we all need money—how we can earn it, how we can spend it and not be offensive to the Lord. In fact, we can do much good in the kingdom if we are willing to do it his way.

Now, we'll look at one more example. If you have your Book of Mormon, turn to Alma 39. Alma 39 is the chapter where Alma is talking to his son Corianton. Now, Corianton has been on a mission to the Zoramites with Alma and his companions. Corianton didn't do very good on his mission. Corianton left the mission. He went over with the harlot Isabel (Alma 39:3), and his father is chastising him. Now, here again, we're looking for ways that the Book of Mormon could help us in an everyday situation. Here we have a young man who didn't follow counsel and has gotten himself into trouble. What we're looking for here are ways that Corianton could have protected himself. They would apply to Corianton, but lo and behold, they also apply to you and me and to others. As we read the Book of Mormon, we figure out how we can protect ourselves from some kind of a sin, especially, in this case, a moral sin.

How do you protect yourself? Well, let's look at a couple of verses and see what father Alma had to say to his son about ways he could have protected himself—or how he could have avoided the sin in the first place. First of all, in Alma 39:1, Alma says to his son: "My son, I have somewhat more to say unto thee than what I said unto thy brother; for behold, have ye not observed the steadiness of thy brother, his faithfulness, and his diligence in keeping the commandments of God? Behold, has he not set a good example for thee?"

We're looking for ways that individuals could be protected from a problem.

Alma says to his son, "You could have followed the example of a righteous brother." Now, that sounds good, and it would have helped him because he had plenty of righteous brothers, but in practical terms, I guess we could ask the question, "Is it practical that an individual could follow a righteous brother or sister and be protected?" The answer is, certainly. Righteous brothers and sisters set examples; they give encouragement; they help us. If a person could follow a righteous brother or sister, he or she would avoid the problem. But the problem here, though, is that following a righteous brother or sister is really difficult sometimes. We don't want to be compared to a brother or a sister, so it takes kind of a mature person, especially for a young person, to be able to follow a brother or sister. But Alma's counsel is, "Follow your brother, your righteous brother. He set a good example, and he will lead you."

Now look at Alma 39:2: "For thou didst not give so much heed unto my words"—meaning, "Corianton, if you would have listened to your father and your mother, you would have been protected." But here again is a simple but profound statement. Most people, if they would listen to their fathers and mothers, would be protected. They would not be led into any kind of a trap. I suppose there are parents who haven't learned the gospel who might not lead their children in righteousness, but in most cases, he should have followed the example of his father, for fathers lead their children in righteousness.

Look at the rest of verse 2. Alma is telling Corianton that he had gone about boasting in his own strength. Now, it seems to me that what he's talking about here is that Corianton had the feeling that he was strong, that he could avoid temptation. He was boasting in his own strength and in his own ability to not fall or be trapped. Alma says, "One of your problems, son, is that you went about boasting in your own strength." Here's another great principle of protection: when individuals mature spiritually, one of the signs of maturity is they recognize their own weaknesses and that they are vulnerable, and that they do need the Lord's help. One of the danger

signals is when individuals think they don't need the Lord's help. In this case Alma says Corianton was boasting in his own strength.

As a father, or as a parent, watching the children mature spiritually, it's scary when you hear them saying, "Oh, I can handle this. I can handle it. I'm strong" and kind of a boasting in their own strength. It's a comforting feeling when you hear the children realize the necessity of being humble and run a little scared, not boasting in their own strength.

In Alma 39:3 Alma says to Corianton: "This is not all, my son. Thou didst do that which was grievous unto me; for thou didst forsake the ministry, and did go over into the land of Siron among the borders of the Lamanites, after the harlot Isabel." Here's another great secret. Corianton was in the wrong place. Corianton had left his mission, and he had gone over in the borders of the Lamanites. His father is saying to him, "Corianton, if you would've stayed in your missionary apartment with your missionary companion, you would have been protected, you would have been able to resist the temptations." Corianton didn't. He went to the wrong place. He was in the wrong place. Now, here's the protection—and you don't have to be very old to understand this—but the place where we are, the place that we put ourselves in, makes a big difference in whether we're able to resist temptations or not.

And so, again, we follow a righteous brother, we follow the counsel of parents, we recognize our own weaknesses and don't become boastful, and we work hard to stay in the right place so that we might be protected. If we're where we're supposed to be doing what we're supposed to be doing, we'll be protected.

The last one is kind of cute. Alma 39:4 says: "But this was no excuse for thee, my son." I think Corianton must have said to his Dad, "But there were lots of people over there. There were hundreds of guys over there." And Alma says, "That doesn't matter. The fact that she stole away the hearts of many is no excuse for you." Now, here's another principle. I remember when I wanted to drive the car. I was only fourteen, and my dad wouldn't let me drive. I kept telling him I had a long list of

people who were only fourteen or fifteen who could drive. I named Jim and Bob and Sara—and I had about ten people. But my dad kept telling me, “I don’t care how many people drive. You’re not going to drive.” This is the principle: Numbers don’t make it right. Alma says, “If a thousand people are over there and doing wrong, it’s no excuse for you, Corianton. You could have been protected had you realized that.”

Now, let me just rehearse those again. Follow the example of a righteous brother, listen to parents and follow parents, don’t boast in one’s own strength, be in the right place at the right time, don’t make excuses, and don’t think that just because many people are doing it, it’s okay to do it. Herein you have protection. Again, we have an example of the Book of Mormon giving some very, very specific details of how individuals can protect themselves from transgression. These are things that we can use everyday in our family members’ lives.

I’m grateful that the Lord has provided for us the Book of Mormon. I’m grateful that he showed Mormon and Moroni and Nephi, in visions, our day. I love the simple and sweet teachings of the Book of Mormon. I know that if we’ll follow them and look for them and search them out to see how they apply, our lives will be protected, we will have faith in Christ, and our faith will increase. We won’t be deceived. We’ll know the true Christ, and we’ll follow him, and we’ll keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world so that we can return again to our Father in Heaven. I know that Joseph Smith didn’t make the book up, but that real prophets wrote these things under the inspiration of the Lord. I pray that we’ll follow those prophets and listen to their counsel. I pray that we’ll search out the guidance and direction available to us in the Book of Mormon. I leave you my testimony that the book is true, that the Lord expects us to follow it, and that if we’ll do it, we’ll one day be true and faithful and clean and pure and acceptable to the Savior. I say this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.