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## Literature of the Gospel Restoration, Lesson 3: Gospel Messages from the Book of Mormon

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**Abstract:** Treasures of wisdom comparable to the biblical book of Proverbs may be found scattered throughout the Book of Mormon. The author presents many Book of Mormon examples of proverbial sayings.

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# Literature—Literature of the Latter-day Saints

## Literature of the Gospel Restoration

### Lesson 3—Gospel Messages from the Book of Mormon

Elder Howard R. Driggs

For Tuesday, December 21, 1948

**M**AIN emphasis is given in the Book of Mormon to the “things of God.” As a result, in every book of this scripture will be found wise counsel, principles of the gospel impressively and plainly stated, and prophetic literature of soul-stirring quality. All of these spiritual expressions are in accord with the Bible, whose divine lessons of life are amplified and clarified by this other “Book of Books.”

Our readers may recall that in the study of the Bible from the literary viewpoint, we dealt with what Dr. Moulton calls *Wisdom Literature*. The book of “Proverbs” is made up of such literature—sayings of practical worth and uplift, pointing the way of righteousness. In the Book of Mormon, there is no such book, gathering together the bits of wisdom; but similar gems of distinctive literary quality are to be found in many of the chapters of the book. Following are examples of these treasures of wisdom:

Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things (I Nephi 11:22).

The guilty taketh the truth to be hard; for it cutteth them to the very center (I Nephi 16:2).

Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy (II Nephi 2:25).

See that ye have faith, hope and char-

ity, and then ye will always abound in good works (Alma 7:24).<sup>23</sup>

This is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and is my joy (Alma 29:9).

Do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only? . . . do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week? (Alma 32:10, 11).

Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble (Alma 32:16).

Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek (Ether 12:26).<sup>4 2.7</sup>

For the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled (Mormon 8:22).

I love little children with a perfect love; and they are all alike and partakers of salvation (Moroni 8:17),<sup>1.7 2.0</sup>

We have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness (Moroni 9:6).

Many, as they read these gems of spiritual thought, will recall others they have found in the Book of Mormon. A search for such treasures will bring true riches. What may be found of appeal to each one who seeks, will be more deeply impressed if the choice saying is written and kept in a little book of reference. This practice is commended.

Vitality will also be given to this search for precious lines if the gems are studied in their settings. For example, after the soul-testing strug-

gles on the part of Lehi and Nephi to get to the borders of the sea, and build the ship for the great voyage, the "ball" was given for their help and guidance. And Nephi with appreciative heart says, "Thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (I Nephi 16:29).

Again when Alma admonishes his erring son Corianton—as quoted in part in our previous lesson, the sorrowful father says, "Do not suppose . . . ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Some of these profound lines of wisdom sprinkled through the pages of the Book of Mormon, lay emphasis on certain basic themes. For example, *liberty, equality, and human welfare* are given repeated attention in such passages as the following:

Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land (America) unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord . . . And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them (From the words of Lehi: II Nephi 1:5, 7).

And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes . . . If I whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another?" (From words of King Benjamin: Mosiah 2:14, 18).

And he also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained should labor with their own hands . . . And the priests were not to depend upon the people for their support . . . And again Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had . . . And they did walk uprightly before God, imparting to one another both temporally

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and spiritually according to their needs and their wants (From story of Alma and the Church of Christ: Mosiah 18:24 ff.).

*Joy in Righteous Living* is another theme echoed in varied effective expressions throughout the Book of Mormon. For example:

O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever (Jacob 3:2).

Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil (Alma 5:40).

In the moving story that Alma the younger tells to his son Helaman, of his being redeemed from sin and turned to the joy of active goodness, we have an effective example of stirring literature. Writes Alma:

And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul. And . . . while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death . . . .

When I thought this, I could remember my pains no more . . . . yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

Yea, and from that time . . . I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost (Alma 36:16 ff.).

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In this study one is reminded of the admonition from John (5:39): "search the scriptures." Certainly in the Book of Mormon there is a wealth of *Wisdom Literature* of practical, sterling worth.

Added to this there are many places where the prophets of long ago days on our American continent made plain the divine principles of the gospel. As a striking example take the masterful interpretation of the resurrection and the restoration by the prophet Alma, as recorded in chapters 40 and 41 of the book of Alma, or from the same book in chapter 42, the exposition of justice and mercy. This represents really great religious literature. It is worth reading and re-reading; indeed one must read it often—grow up with it, to grasp its deep import.

A few concluding paragraphs from these splendid chapters will serve here to illustrate the profound thought, the high literary quality of the whole portrayal of divine truth:

But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus none but the truly penitent are saved . . .

Therefore, O my son, whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds.

If he has desired to do evil, and has not

repented in his days, behold, evil shall be done unto him, according to the restoration of God.

And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance (Alma 42:23 ff.).

Only a few hints of the richness of the gospel messages, with some suggestions of their distinctive literary quality—their sincerity and clarity in revealing saving truths—could be given in this brief lesson. Our hope, however, is that it will prove an “open sesame” for teachers and class members to the treasure within this *Book of Books* brought forth with divine help by the Prophet of these latter days. The Book of Mormon contains a wealth of wisdom and truth—of gospel literature impressively expressed for those who read with appreciative hearts.

### *Studies and Activities*

Reference: Book of Mormon. Each member of the class should provide herself with this book.

1. What is one essential difference between the presentation of Wisdom Literature, as represented by “Proverbs” and such literature in the Book of Mormon? b. In what respect is there a similarity? Give, for example, one of the proverbs and some like gem from the Book of Mormon.
2. Make a study in class of some good example of an exposition of basic gospel principles found in the Book of Mormon. Take, if you will, one of the following or some other of your own selection:
  - a. II Nephi 26:23 to end of chapter;
  - b. Mosiah 4:21 to end of chapter;
  - c. Alma 18:10-35; d. Helaman 13:1-3

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and continue with 30 to end of chapter; e. III Nephi 1 to 17.

3. Caution: In making any of the foregoing studies keep attention not alone on the doctrine—but also upon the effective expression of the principles of life and salvation so well portrayed. The Book of Mormon—while in consonance with the Old and the New Testament in the presentation of gospel truth—has a distinctive style or way of presenting old truths. This is but natural, because of the different authors who have made the record—and it adds to the charm of this “Book of Books.” One good way to enhance the appreciation of this “New Witness for Christ” is to have some of its fine passages voiced or read aloud expressively.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

No lessons are planned for December in the Social Science and Optional departments, due to the holiday season.

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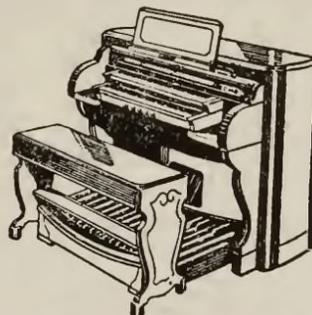
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