

Book of Mormon Class Summary
1 Ne 6-11; Manual, Lesson 3; Nibley, Lesson 12
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Living with Vision

Nephi's Vision: Come unto Christ through the scriptures...

Why does any author write a book? To entertain, to teach, to inspire, to uplift? To come unto Christ? Nephi wrote to persuade men to come unto Jesus Christ.

“And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon these plates, for I desire the room that I may write of the things of God. For the fullness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.” (1 Ne 6:3-4)

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) explained how the Book of Mormon accomplishes this important purpose:

“The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ. ... It tells in a plain manner of Christ and His gospel. It testifies of His divinity and of the necessity for a Redeemer and the need of our putting trust in Him. It bears witness of the Fall and the Atonement and the first principles of the gospel, including our need of a broken heart and a contrite spirit and a spiritual rebirth. It proclaims we must endure to the end in righteousness and live the moral life of a Saint” (“We Add Our Witness,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1989, 5).

Your Vision

What is your vision? What do you most desire? Vision is a key element of personal, spiritual growth. *Living with vision means creating a clear image of what you desire out of life, then remembering and working toward that image.*

Having a vision includes seeing the best possible outcomes for work, family, relationships, personal development, faith, and anything else that matters to you. As we work on creating a life's vision, we force ourselves to imagine the future. We begin to practice seeing who and what we hope to become. In seeing our hoped-for future, we are better prepared to set goals and take the necessary measures to get us there. We are also better prepared to correct the habits that may be leading us off-course.

What do you Desire?

What are your true desires? Are they in line with what the Lord desires for you? Sometimes, we may doubt our desires, feeling insecure in our hopes, like the 3 Nephites did as they longed to not taste of death yet felt ashamed in their hearts. Yet the Lord assured them, “I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John my beloved desired of me...therefore more blessed are ye...” (3Ne 28: 6-7).

The Lord wants us to desire. If you're in any way doubting the purpose and power of desire, then read D&C 6:25, 27 & 11:8, 17. We are asked, even commanded, to desire.

We will only receive according to our desires. Nephi received a personal witness of his father's vision because of his desire. (1Ne 10-17).

Read the second half of D&C 88:32. This scripture speaks so powerfully to me. It's saying that only we prevent the incredible blessings, experiences, and rewards the Lord stands ready to offer. What are we *willing* to receive? What are we willing to do to receive these things? Read this verse again and ask yourself, "What am I willing to receive?" Then, ask yourself again, "What do *I desire*?"

Lehi's Vision: The Tree of Life

Lehi's vision is more than just a dream. It is a guide, for us, for how we can return to the presence of our Savior. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the tree of life represents the Savior and His Atonement: "The Spirit made explicit that the Tree of Life and its precious fruit are symbols of Christ's redemption" (*Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [1997], 160).

The tree represents the Savior, and the fruit represents His love. We learn through this vision that, as we come to the tree and fall down, we can partake of the fruit of His love and be filled. This love is charity. Ether 12:34 sheds important light on charity—that it is Christ's love for *us*. Unless we "shall have charity, we cannot inherit that place which" the Father prepared for us. This means that, unless we allow and feel and are possessed of Christ's love for us, we cannot be where He is.

Think of the power of this! Charity, Christ's love, can fill us, and as it fills us, we can't help but love Him with all our might, mind and strength in return, and if we love Him, then we will serve and love His children. As He told Peter, "Feed my sheep."

Elder Bruce R. McConkie put it this way: "Charity is more than love, far more; it is everlasting love, perfect love, the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. It is love so centered in righteousness that the possessor has no aim or desire except for the eternal welfare of his own soul and for the souls of those around him." (McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:378)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles further emphasized that partaking of the love of God means partaking of the blessings of the Atonement. The tree of life is a symbol of God's love and Christ's Atonement: "The tree of life ... is the love of God (see [1 Nephi 11:25](#)). The love of God for His children is most profoundly expressed in His gift of Jesus as our Redeemer: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son' ([John 3:16](#)). To partake of the love of God is to partake of Jesus' Atonement and the emancipations and joys which it can bring" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 6; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 8). (From BOM Student Manual)

The Rod of Iron

What allows us to come to Christ and partake of his love and atoning sacrifice? The iron rod. What is the iron rod? The word of God. We first think of the scriptures as the

primary source of God’s word. We study and “feast upon the words of Christ” and this brings us closer to the Savior. It teaches us “all things” we need to know, and it brings His spirit more fully.

The words of modern day prophets are another source of “the word of God.” We must study and follow their words even as we do the scriptures.

But there is another source of “God’s word,” another meaning for the Iron Rod, that many fail to grasp. That is personal revelation. “Personal revelation (among other things) is the divine witness whereby we are able to recognize the truth of all things (Moro. 10:5).” (Pontius, *Following the light of Christ*, p. 11). Think about it. The iron rod will always lead to Christ and his love. Yet, how many have read the bible and failed to grasp the true meaning of the tree of life? Even the Book of Mormon doesn’t pass the test completely, for many have read, even believed, the Book of Mormon and yet they have failed to pluck the precious fruits of the tree of life. As brother John Pontius says, “They simply do not guide all of the people who use them to the promised blessings...In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we are blessed with multiple sources of truth...The scriptures...voice of the living prophets...and...personal revelation...Any person who achieves a full and profound measure of personal revelation will be in full harmony with the brethren, and with the scriptures.” (Pontius, *Following the Light of Christ*, p. 10-11)

Are we seeking, knocking, asking, and receiving personal revelation? Is it a main focus of our life—our “iron rod?” It is my testimony that personal revelation is the way to Christ. It will never lead us astray, but we must practice and listen and obey for this revelation to work in our lives.

Following are some more of the interpretations of the Tree of Life, from the Student Manual, for your reference.

1 Nephi 8:4–35. Vision of the Tree of Life

•The following chart identifies some of what Nephi learned about his father’s dream:

SYMBOL FROM LEHI’S DREAM (1 NEPHI 8)	INTERPRETATION GIVEN TO NEPHI (1 NEPHI 11–12)
The tree with white fruit (see verses 10–11)	The love of God, which He showed by giving His Son to be our Savior (see 11:21–25 ; called “the tree of life” in 15:22)
The river of filthy water (see verse 13 ; 12:16)	The depths of hell into which the wicked fall (see 12:16 ; called “filthiness” in 15:27)
The rod of iron (see verse 19)	The word of God, which leads to the tree of life (see 11:25)
The mist of	The temptations of the

darkness (see verse 23)	devil, which blind people so they lose their way and cannot find the tree (see 12:17)
The great and spacious building in the air (see verse 26)	The pride and vain imaginations of the world (see 11:36 ; 12:18)
People who start on the path to the tree but are lost in the mist (see verses 21–23)	<p>Nephi saw the following kinds of people in the dream:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Multitudes who heard Jesus but “cast him out” (11:28) •People who crucified Jesus even after He healed the sick and cast out devils (see 11:31–33) •Multitudes who gathered together in a large and spacious building to fight against the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb (see 11:34–36) •Nephites and Lamanites who were gathered together to battle and were slaughtered in war (see 12:1–4, 13–15) •Nephites who, because of pride, were destroyed by the Lamanites and dwindled in unbelief (see 12:19–23)
People who make it to the tree (and taste the fruit) by holding onto the rod but fall away when they are mocked (see verses 24–25, 28)	
People who desire the great and spacious building more than the tree (see verses 26–27, 31–33)	
People who held onto the rod and partook of the fruit; they ignored the mockers and did not fall away (see verses 30, 33)	Those who partake of the greatest of all of God’s gifts—eternal life (see 15:36)

Comment on the “Mists of Darkness...”

What are your mists? What clouds your ability to find your way to the Savior? In 1Ne 8:31, it says many were “feeling their way” to the large and spacious building. Are we so caught up in our feelings that we let them lead us astray? In this world of “do what feels good,” do we let feelings of heartache or depression or anxiety or grief cloud us? Often,

mental illness or distress can dampen our ability to feel the spirit. It's not that we sinned, but rather that our bodies aren't well. We must nourish our physical and emotional wellbeing if we want to be clear and able to see the "tree" and follow the rod.

Will we, too, "Go & do?" Live with vision?

In 1 Ne 3:7, Nephi sets the example, "I will go and do the things the Lord has commanded..." All of these chapters teach us how we, too, can "go and do," how we, too, can come unto Christ, know him, and better love Him.

Our "I will go and do list," from class, included the following:

- Remember
- Seek, knock, ask
- Have and exercise faith
- Endure
- Practice humility
- Pray
- Focus on strengthening our relationship with Christ
- Listen for and receive personal revelation
- Obey

What would you add to this list? What do you most need to work on?

Next Week's Reading:

1Ne 12-16; Manual Lesson 4

Questions to Ponder:

1. Lehi's dream sets the stage for the entire Book of Mormon narrative. It is also a model for how we, too, can "live with vision." Write about a spiritual experience that has changed/guided/directed/inspired the direction of your life.\
2. Read the parable of the sower and compare the types of believers there to the ones described in Lehi's dream. (Luke 8 and 1 Nephi 8)
3. What would you say is your Liahona? Is it working? If so, what helps it work? If not, what is standing in the way?
4. Think of the many individuals presented in Lehi's vision of the tree of life. How can you emulate those who reached the tree, partook of it, and remained faithful?
5. How has scripture study and following the words of the prophets helped you stay on the straight and narrow path, despite the mists of darkness?
6. How can you improve your ability to receive and follow personal revelation?
7. What steps could you take to more "diligently seek" to understand the "mysteries of God ... by the power of the Holy Ghost"? (1 Nephi 10:19).

Bonus: How to create your life's vision

(from my "This is How We Grow" 30-Day Growth Plan)

Your vision may involve a meaningful phrase, quote, or words to inspire you, or it may simply be closing your eyes and seeing those clear images you've imagined, over and over again. I have found the following steps particularly helpful in creating a life vision. I hope they inspire you, too.

1) Set aside some quiet time and space to work on creating your life's vision. When you're ready, relax, breathe, close your eyes. Begin to let yourself imagine your best possible future. What do you envision for yourself, your family, friends, work, future, and for your own growth and development? What traits would you most like to possess? Who would you like to be? What do you envision for your calling and purpose in this life? What do you see for your spiritual potential and eternal path? Write it all down.

2) Add to your list of what you envisioned. Write down all the things that are most important to you. What values, characteristics, and experiences matter most? Create a list as long as you'd like, and continue adding to it as more things come. (When I first did this, I had an entire page *covered* in words describing what matters most to me.)

3) When you're ready, revisit your lists. Group like things together—for instance “compassion,” “kindness,” and “giving,” could all be grouped under “love.” Group together as many traits/items as possible, making sure each group has one word/phrase as its title.

4) Circle those words/phrases from your grouped list that feel most important to you. Circle as many as you'd like.

5) From the grouped list with circled items, choose *three* words/phrases that feel most important to you at this time. Write them down. For example, my three words are “Faith, Love, Joy.” These words encompass many other important aspects of my life, including family, contribution, spirituality, and yes, growth. These three words express my life's vision. A simple, effective way to remind me of the meaning, purpose, and direction I desire my life to take each day. This exercise can give you the vision you are seeking, too.

Additional materials for this semester:

- 1) *The Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122*. You can access this online at:
<https://www.lds.org/manual/book-of-mormon-student-manual?lang=eng>
You may also choose to purchase a copy of this manual, through Deseret Book or online.
- 2) *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1, Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University*, by Dr. Hugh Nibley
<http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/book/teachings-of-the-book-of-mormon-semester-1/>

- 3) Visit: <http://www.likeawateredgarden.com> for Like a Watered Garden Podcast episodes, study guides, handouts, powerpoints, and to join our email list.
- 4) Find out more about Dr. Christina Hibbert on her award-winning website/blog: <http://www.DrChristinaHibbert.com>