

## Book of Mormon Class Summary

1 Ne 12-22

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### *Finding & Following the “Light in the Wilderness” (Being Led)*

#### **The Wilderness (1 Ne 17:13)**

*What are some of the “wildernesses” of life? What, in particular, have been some of your “wilderness” experiences?* Your list may include things like: raising children, being single, school, work, financial stress, or just life stress. It may include illness, opposition from others, mental illness, or just trying to live “in the world but not of the world” as the “great and spacious building” seems ever more present.

Sister M. Catherine Thomas explains another element I believe is a huge part of our “wilderness” experience. She calls this “the wilderness mind:”

“And so it is that Man, trailing glory into a darker sphere, commences a course in deep impact training. The memory of his premortal powers and glories tucked away, he begins to interact with his new surroundings through a veiled consciousness. As he grows in his new world, his consciousness begins to develop anew, influenced now primarily by his fallen environment. His mind is shaped by both accurate and inaccurate interpretations of the nature of things. With now memory of who he really is, he fixes on his emotional and physical survival, thus fostering self-absorption and anxiety. Flawed ideas take root in his mind, which cause him to react to life in unconscious, negative patterns. Conditional love and even hatred dog him. His perception is clouded by vain imaginings and faulty interpretations. He relates to the world through the lens of his own self-talk instead of perceiving reality directly. He sins and is sinned against. Fear threads its way through his life. His confused mind fashions his perception of a confused world. That is, the Natural Man suffers from a degree of insanity.” (*Light in the Wilderness*, p. 66)

*Do you ever feel you “suffer from a degree of insanity?” Does your mind ever feel like it has a mind of its own?* It does. And, bringing our minds and bodies into line with the Spirit is one of the biggest aspects of this wilderness life. As President Brigham Young said, “Until you can govern and control the mind and the body, and bring all into subjection to the law of Christ, you have a work to perform touching yourselves.”

We each have a work to perform touching ourselves, and these chapters shed great light on how we can “be led” in our wilderness of life.

#### **“Ask and ye shall receive...” (1 Ne 10:17) (1 Ne 12-14)**

President Boyd K. Packer taught, “No message appears in scripture more times, in more ways, than ‘Ask and ye shall receive’” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 21). Why is this phrase so common? In 1 Nephi chapters 12-14, Nephi sees, in vision, the things his father saw because he “was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the

power of the Holy Ghost..." (1 Ne 10:17). Could it be that we are so often taught to "ask" because we, too, have the potential to see, hear, and know great things by the power of the Holy Ghost? Could it be that we're so often taught to "ask," because we too easily forget to do so each and every day? The answer to both, I believe, is, "Yes." *How can you better remember to "ask and receive?"*

### **"Inquire of the Lord..." (1 Ne 15: 3, 8)**

As soon as Nephi has seen these visions, he returns to find his brothers disputing the things he and his father had seen. Here we learn a valuable lesson. How often do we learn some gospel principle or hear a gospel-related story, and then toss it around in our "wilderness mind," attempting to come to a deeper understanding on our own? Nephi teaches that the only way for these things to "be understood" is for us to "inquire of the Lord" (v.3). Later, he even asks his brothers, "Have you inquired of the Lord?" (v.8). They admit they had not. *How can we expect to learn the "mysteries" of the gospel unless we ask the Lord? Remember, "Ask and [we] shall receive."*

### **"The guilty taketh the truth to be hard..." (1 Ne 16:1-2)**

As chapter 16 opens, Nephi has interpreted the Tree of Life vision, and his brothers are once again complaining. *First of all, do we ever complain? Do we ever feel we've been given too much to do, or that the way is too hard? Do we focus too much on "Why me?" instead of "Lord, whither shall I go?" (16:23)* Nephi's brothers felt exactly that way, saying, "Thou has declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear" (v.1). Nephi remarks, in reply, "...the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center" (v.2).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell sheds a little more light on this: "God is not only there in the mildest expressions of his presence, but also in those seemingly harsh expressions. For example, when truth 'cutteth...to the very center,' this may signal that spiritual surgery is underway, painfully severing pride from the soul" (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 31). *Have you ever experienced the need for "spiritual surgery?"* I believe we all have, and it isn't easy. In fact, it's painful. Still, as we put our faith in the Lord and let him "lead [us] toward the promised land," (17:13), we will one day know He truly was cutting the cancer from our soul. He truly was preparing a better way.

### **Liahona & Faith (1 Ne 16)**

The people of Nephi were given the Liahona to lead them through the wilderness. This "round ball of curious workmanship" (v. 10) worked according to their faith (v.28) and led them "in the more fertile parts of the wilderness" (v. 16). *What is our personal Liahona and how can we increase the power of the "Liahona" in our life?* Elder Bednar offers this advice:

"...The primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide both direction and instruction during a long and demanding journey. The director was a physical instrument that served as an outward indicator of their inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according to the principles of faith and diligence. Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The Holy Ghost

was conferred upon you and me as we came out of the world and into the Savior's Church through baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church and admonished to seek for the constant companionship of 'the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you' (John 14:17). As we each press forward along the pathway of life, we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. 'For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do' (2 Nephi 32:5). The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 31; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 30–31).

*What is your personal Liahona? (The Holy Ghost, personal revelation, following the scriptures and the words of the prophets, etc?) What are the "more fertile parts of the wilderness" through which it leads you, when you are faithful? Is your Liahona working? Why or why not?*

### **Our broken bows...(1 Ne 16: 18-32)**

In verse 18, Nephi breaks his bow, which was made of fine steel, which could not be replaced, and which was their primary means of obtaining food. His brothers, the sons of Ishmael, and even Lehi began to "murmur against the Lord his God" (v. 20). This goes to show that severe stress (like being unable to feed your family) can lead to spiritual distress, and even the prophets are not immune.

Yet, what does Nephi do? First, he gets to work. He made a bow of wood and an arrow of a stick (v. 23) and then, asked his father, "Whither shall I go to obtain food?" Think about what Nephi did here. He was surely a righteous man, a leader in the gospel, a prophet; he had even seen Christ. Yet, he asked his father what to do. Why?

This experience demonstrates Nephi's true strength, humility, and character, once again. He could have asked the Lord himself, but he turned to his father, and in so doing, he provided his father with the opportunity to repent and become the spiritual leader once more. "And the voice of the Lord came unto my father; and he was truly chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord" (v. 27). Nevertheless, Lehi was humbled and did repent, and not only was Lehi shown where Nephi should go to find food (to the mountain, or the "temple"); a new writing also appeared on the Liahona, giving them "understanding concerning the ways of the Lord" (v.29). Essentially, they received even greater knowledge as a result of this experience. "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things."

*What are our "broken bows"? Do we inquire of the Lord, "Whither shall I go?" Do we turn to our parents and leaders and let them lead and guide us? Do we repent when we murmur? Do we have enough faith to learn the "ways of the Lord," and to obey?*

### **What is your "promised land," and how long will it take to reach it?**

How many years did it take the people of Nephi to reach the land of Bountiful? We learn in verse 4 it took 8 years! Imagine wandering through the wilderness, the desert even, for 8 long years, and finally reaching this beautiful land, with water and fruit, and thinking, “finally, we are here!” Little did they know Bountiful was only a pit stop.

Why did it take the Nephites so long to reach Bountiful? In short, it was because of their lack of faith. They obviously needed those years of learning to overcome their shortcomings. Ask yourself, “*How long will it take me?*” Will we ‘wander’ for 8 years, or longer? Or will we let the Lord lead us, through faith and obedience?

### **“Your light in the wilderness” and being “led towards the promised land...” (17:13)**

Just when the people of Nephi had reached what they thought was the promised land, they learned the Lord had another plan in store. He called Nephi to the mountain (the temple) and told him to “construct a ship.” Nephi hadn’t ever built a ship. He had no idea how to build a ship, but did he doubt? No. He responded, once more, by asking, “Lord, whither shall I go...that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner thou hast shown me?” (v.9). He basically says, “Okay, Lord, show me *how*.”

*Do you ever feel like you’ve reached your promised land only to discover you’ve still got to build a ship, sail across oceans for a year, and start all over? What are your “promised lands?”* I believe we have thousands of them in our lives. Some may be daily, some monthly, yearly, and of course, there is the ultimate “promised land of eternal life. What are the “ships” we’re asked to construct? When faced with a new challenge, or trial, do we sit and ask, “Why?” or do we act with faith and focus instead on “How?” Do we rely upon the Lord to be our “light,” to “prepare the way,” and lead us “toward the promised land?” Do we “know it is by [Him] that we are led?” (v.13)

### **“Look and live!” (17:41)**

Nephi recounts the experience of the Israelites, in their own wilderness, when they were faced with “fiery flying serpents,” biting and killing them (v.41). The people would not “look ...because of the simpleness of the way...” and as a result, “many perished.” The serpents could represent many things, but ultimately, they represent the *commandments*, which we’ve been given to make us look to Christ so we can live. We continually fail to keep the commandments, and when we make a mistake, the *only* way is through Christ. As we look to Him, we will be blessed with repentance, and we will “live.” *Do we ever fail to “look” and live because the way is too simple? Are we using the atonement to heal us? To guide us? To be our light, our salvation, our “way?”*

### **Nephi writes to persuade us to “Come Unto Christ...”**

Nephi clearly states his purposes in writing these scriptures: “that perhaps I might persuade them that they would remember the Lord their redeemer” (19:18). This is his main goal—to come unto Christ and help others come, too. This is, likewise, my personal mission statement: “Come unto Christ and bring others with me.” *Are we, first of all, allowing ourselves to be “persuaded” by Nephi’s words? Are we seeking to come unto Christ? Are we sharing the words of Christ to help others find their “light in the wilderness?”*

Nephi shares many words of Isaiah, and he does so for a couple of reasons. First, Isaiah saw Christ, as Nephi and his brother Jacob did (2 Ne 11:2-3). Second, Isaiah writes almost exclusively of Jesus Christ. He and Nephi share the same purpose in their writing. Jesus Christ likewise commands us to study the words of Isaiah (3 Ne 23:1-3)!

Isaiah truly saw marvelous things. In chapter 20, the prophecies of the Jews, speaking the loving words of Christ to “Come ye near unto me,” (20:16) and reminding them, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments-then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (20:18). Such love the Savior has for his people! Isaiah’s poetic writing may be difficult to understand, especially since he references so many things not of our day, but the love of the Savior is rich and present in his words. Chapter 21 shares prophecies about the Nephites and the house of Israel, and includes the powerful promise, “...I will contend with them that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children...and all flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (22:25-26).

Truly, the words of Isaiah bring us closer to Christ and help us feel His great love and know the promises He has made to one and all. *Do we search the words of Isaiah? Do we seek the Lord in these verses? Are we following His light through these chapters and “being led?”*

### **Conclusion:**

I testify that the Lord *is* our light. He *does* prepare the way, and He *will* lead us to the promised lands of this life and the next. But, we have to *let* him be our light, prepare our way, and lead us. All he asks is that we “keep [His] commandments” (17:13). Do we ask, “Lord, whither shall I go?” and obey? Do we seek Him daily? Do we let Him lead us? It is my prayer that we will search these words, letting them lead us unto Christ, and that we will “find and follow the light in the wilderness.”

### **Things to Ponder...**

- 1) Revisit each question in this summary. (They are all italicized.) Set aside time to write in your journal honestly, answering each one.
- 2) What can you do to “find and follow” the light? What is one thing you can do to “be led” through your wilderness, to your promised land?
- 3) Ask yourself, “Can I feel the love of Christ as I study these chapters?” If not, what is standing in your way? If so, what does it feel like? Write about it in your journal.

### **Next Week’s Reading:**

2 Ne 1-10, Student Manual chapters 7-9

Question: “What would your ‘psalm’ sound like?”