

Lesson Highlights

- *Alma teaches the people how they can experience a "mighty change" of heart.*
- *Alma and the people establish the order of the Church in Zarahemla.*
- *Alma testifies of Jesus Christ. He encourages the people in Gideon to follow the Savior.*

A study of this lesson will help us understand what it means to experience a change of heart and continue in the process of conversion.

Next Week:

Lesson 23:

"More Than One Witness",

Alma 8-12

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Introduction



What do proud people set their hearts on?

The heart is often used as a symbol of our desires and affections. Think about what proud people set their hearts on. According to Alma 4:8 and Alma 5:53, they desire riches and "vain things of the world". Now think about what humble people desire. When we humble ourselves before God, we are prepared to be "born of God" and experience a "mighty change in [our] hearts" (Alma 5:14).

This lesson discusses the conditions under which the Lord can change our hearts.



What do humble people set their hearts on?

Alma taught the people how they could experience a "mighty change" of heart.

Alma was the chief judge in the people's government. As chief judge, he had the authority to enforce the laws of the land. He was also the presiding high priest in the Church. As high priest, he had the responsibility to preach the word of God. When he saw the wickedness of the members of the Church, he resigned as chief judge and "confined himself wholly to the high priesthood, ... to the testimony of the word" (Alma 4:11-20).

President Ezra Taft Benson taught why it became important for Alma to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ rather than serve as chief judge: *"The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature"* (Ensign, Nov. 1985, 6).

Alma 5:3-9 At the beginning of his address, Alma spoke of the previous generation, who had been delivered from physical and spiritual bondage.

Alma 5:5-7 Alma thought that it was important for the people to remember their fathers' captivity and deliverance.

Alma 5:7-9 Alma described their fathers after the Lord "changed their hearts" as being awakened to God, illuminated by the light of the everlasting word, and expanded in their souls after their release from bondage.

Alma 5:10 asks three questions. 1) On what conditions are they saved? 2) What are the grounds for their hope for salvation? and 3) What is the cause for their being loosed from the bands of death and hell?

Alma 5:11-13 answers the questions, teaching that they gained hope and were saved by believing the word of God as delivered by the prophets, humbling themselves and putting their trust in God, and enduring to the end.

Mosiah 16:13-15 The message that led to "a mighty change [being] wrought" in the heart of Alma's father was that redemption would come for the repentant through Christ.

Alma 5:13; see also **Mosiah 18:1-11** The people who believed Alma the Elder when he taught them the gospel were changed, humbled, and put their trust in God. Others' testimonies of the Savior help us experience a change of heart if we ponder the testimony and pray to receive a witness through the Spirit of the truths in those testimonies.

Alma 5:14 Throughout his address to the people in Zarahemla, Alma spoke of experiencing a "mighty change" of heart and being "born of God". We often use the word conversion when we speak of this experience.

Mosiah 5:2; Mosiah 27:24-26 The meaning of being converted includes having no desire to do evil but having a great desire to do good.

Is conversion a single event or a process?

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: *"Except in...unusual circumstances, as with Alma (Mosiah 27), spiritual rebirth is a process. It does not occur instantaneously. It comes to pass by degrees. Repentant persons become alive to one spiritual reality after another, until they are wholly alive in Christ and are qualified to dwell in his presence forever"* (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966-73], 3:401).

Alma 5:45-46 Even Alma, who had experienced a miraculous conversion, had "fasted and prayed many days that [he] might know these things."

As Alma preached to the people in Zarahemla, he asked them a series of questions. We can use these questions to examine ourselves as we continue in the conversion process.

Alma 5:14-21, 26-31 provide guidance in how to continue in the conversion process.

Alma 5:19 Alma spoke of having "the image of God engraven upon [our] countenances". The word *countenance* refers to a person's behavior or to the way a person's face expresses his or her character. Consider how you would answer Alma's question: "Have ye received his image in your countenances?"

Brother Andrew Skinner: . . .to receive Christ's image in one's countenance means to acquire the Savior's likeness in behavior, to be a copy or reflection of the Master's life. This is not possible without a mighty change in one's pattern of living. It requires, too, a change in feelings, attitudes, desires, and spiritual commitment. This involves the heart." (Studies In Scripture, 7:301)

Alma 5:15-19 It can be helpful to imagine ourselves being judged by the Lord so that we always remember our responsibility to live up to our covenants.

Alma 5:26 here Alma asked, "If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, ...can ye feel so now?". Consider how you would answer this question. Once a person has "felt to sing the song of redeeming love," involving yourself in sin and transgression will cause that feeling to diminish. To continue in the process of conversion, we need to avoid sin and concentrate on keeping the commandments.

Alma 5:27, 50-51 We keep ourselves "blameless before God" by developing and maintaining humility and repenting of all our sins.

Alma 5:28-29 Here, we are reminded that pride and envy make us unprepared to meet God. We are also unprepared to meet God if we mock or persecute others, as recorded in verses 30 and 31. We must always remember that we are all children of God and we are here to help each other regain entrance into our Father's realm.

Alma 5:31-32 After Alma asked his questions, he urged the people to repent of their sins.

Alma 5:33-35 Then he reassured them that they could be forgiven through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Alma 5:37 To the unrighteous people in Zarahemla, Alma said, "A shepherd hath called after you and is still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice!" .

Alma and the people established the order of the Church in Zarahemla.

Alma 6:1-2 After Alma's discourse, many people repented of their sins and humbled themselves before God.

Alma 6:3 Why were other people unwilling to repent of their sins? Because they were "lifted up in the pride of their hearts." Pride prevents people from repenting because repentance requires sincere humility.

How can we overcome pride in our hearts?

President Ezra Taft Benson said: *"The antidote for pride is humility, ... meekness, submissiveness (see Alma 7:23). Let us choose to be humble. We can choose to humble ourselves by conquering enmity toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are. We can choose to humble ourselves by receiving counsel and chastisement. We can choose to humble ourselves by forgiving those who have offended us. We can choose to humble ourselves by rendering selfless service. We can choose to humble ourselves by going on missions and preaching the word that can humble others. We can*

Alma 5:38 The shepherd Alma referred to is Christ. The Savior calls after us through our Church leaders and fellow members as they teach us, give us opportunities for service in the kingdom, and serve us as home and visiting teachers. He also calls us through the promptings of the Holy Ghost in our daily lives. Ponder what you can do to hearken to His voice.

Alma 5:43-49 These verses teach us about the calling of a prophet: 1) they speak plainly so that we cannot err, 2) they speak as inspired by the Spirit, 3) they speak of prophecies to be fulfilled, 4) their knowledge comes from God after fasting and prayer, 5) they receive revelation, 6) they know that the prophecies are true, 7) they have a testimony of Christ as the Redeemer of those who will follow him, and 8) their message to everyone is simple--repent and be baptized.

Alma 5:53-56 Alma warned the people that they should not persist, or continue, in their wickedness. Note that Alma asked the question "Will ye persist?" four times.

Alma 5:56; see also Mosiah 16:5; D&C 58:42-43 Forsaking sin is a necessary part of repenting because choosing to sin is rebelling against God and we cannot be forgiven while we are still indulging in sin.

Alma 5:57 Alma commanded his people, "Come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate" . We separate ourselves from wickedness while living in the world by setting an example of righteousness and avoiding places and situations that offer temptation or opportunity for sin.

choose to humble ourselves by getting to the temple more frequently. We can choose to humble ourselves by confessing and forsaking our sins and being born of God. We can choose to humble ourselves by loving God, submitting our will to His, and putting Him first in our lives" (Ensign, May 1989, 6-7).

Alma 6:1-6 Alma and the people in Zarahemla "began to establish the order of the church" by ordaining priests and elders, baptizing new converts, and gathering together often in fasting and prayer. Order in the Church helps us continue in the conversion process as those called to serve teach and encourage us and help us back onto the strait and narrow path if we commit sins and need help to repent and obtain forgiveness.

Alma testified of Jesus Christ. He encouraged the people in Gideon to follow the Savior.

Alma 6:8 After Alma taught in Zarahemla, he went to preach to the people in the valley of Gideon.

Alma 7:7 Alma told the people in Gideon that there were *"many things to come"* but that the coming of Jesus Christ was of the greatest importance.

Alma 7:10-13 About the Savior's mission on earth, Alma taught that he would be the Begotten Son of God; suffer pain, afflictions, and temptations; take upon himself the sins of others; overcome death; know how to succor his people; and that He would deliver his people from their sins.

Alma 7:11-14 The Savior took upon Himself our pains, afflictions, sicknesses, and sins so that we may be forgiven and saved.

Alma 7:9, 14-16, 22, 26 Alma's message to the people in Gideon was different from his message in Zarahemla, but in some ways the messages were similar because Alma preached repentance to the people in Gideon even though they were striving to live righteously.

Conclusion

Alma 7:23-25. These verses describe a person who has experienced the change of heart spoken of by Alma and who continues to *"sing the song of redeeming love"* (Alma 5:26). As we continue in the conversion process, we will be able to look forward to the day when we are received *"in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out"* (Alma 7:25).

23 *And now I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering; being temperate in all things; being diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times; asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive.*

24 *And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works.*

25 *And may the Lord bless you, and keep your garments spotless, that ye may at last be brought to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy prophets who have been ever since the world began, having your garments spotless even as their garments are spotless, in the kingdom of heaven to go no more out.*

*Gospel Doctrine
Notebook*

Record your thoughts on Alma's great sermon. How would you respond to Alma's questions to the people?

Consider:

- What difference will it make as we teach our children if we have truly received the Lord's image in our countenances?
- How will we conduct our daily lives, at work, in civic affairs, at home, if we have truly received his image in our countenance?

*Have you
received
His image
in your
countenance?*

