

**Lesson Highlights**

- The people are righteous and are blessed with peace and prosperity.
- The Nephites become proud and wicked. Nephi calls them to repentance.
- The Lord gives Nephi the sealing power. The unrepentant Nephites face warfare and famine.
- The Nephites humble themselves and repent.

A study of this lesson will help us recognize the cycle that leads from righteousness to wickedness and back to righteousness.

**Next Week:**

Lesson 35:

*"Repent and Return unto the Lord", Helaman 13-16*

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**Introduction**

Look at the following sequence of numbers:

**2, 3, 5, 8, 12...**

What would the next three numbers in that sequence be (\*see answer-bottom Page 3)?

In the Book of Mormon there is a pattern that is almost as predictable as this sequence. The pattern is repeated many times. It is a cycle that leads from righteousness to wickedness and back to righteousness. By recognizing this pattern, we can avoid the Pride Cycle that led to the destruction of the Nephites.

**The people were righteous and were blessed with peace and prosperity.**

Nephi and Lehi had been missionaries to the Lamanites and had helped many of them repent and be baptized. The Lamanites soon became more righteous than the Nephites.

**Helaman 6:1** The characteristics the Lamanites had that helped them become more righteous than many of the Nephites were firmness and steadiness in the faith.

**Helaman 6:4-6** The converted Lamanites tried to help the Nephites by journeying to Zarahemla where they told of their conversions, exhorted the Nephites to faith and repentance, and diligently exemplified and preached humility.

**The Nephites became proud and wicked. Nephi called them to repentance.**

After the Nephites became prosperous, many of them began to forget God and seek after riches and other worldly things.

We now enter the part of the Pride Cycle where **Pride and Wickedness** take over:



**Helaman 6:17; Helaman 7:20-21** Prosperity often leads to wickedness because the riches of the world cause some to forget the God who blessed them and instead, they seek to be richer and "better" than others.

**Helaman 6:21-24; Helaman 7:4-5**

Characteristics of the Gadianton robbers are evident here as they embrace the temptations of Satan, enter into evil covenants and take upon them unholy oaths, protect and preserve the wicked, agree to thwart justice and the law, foster secret societies for the purpose of doing evil, commit immoral acts of all kinds, and administer their own perverted system of punishment. Of course, many of these elements exist today in one form or another. Consider how you can appropriately fight evil influences in your community.

**Helaman 6:25-30** Satan, the author of sin, was the source of the secret combinations.

**Helaman 6:7-14** The result was that peace came in the land and among the peoples, trade and associated wealth increased, precious metals were found and refined, crops flourished, the people multiplied and became strong, their flocks and herds were plentiful, the women made textiles for clothing, they experienced joy and peace, and preaching and prophecies abounded.

This part of the Pride cycle includes:

**Righteousness & Prosperity**

**Helaman 6:31** As Satan "got great hold upon [their] hearts", the Nephites became exceedingly wicked, turned from righteousness, trampled the commandments of God under their feet, substituted their own wisdom for the counsel of God, and built up idols of gold and silver.

**Helaman 6:34-38** In these verses, we can identify the contrasts between the Nephites and the Lamanites:

Nephites	Lamanites
Dwindling in unbelief (v34)	Grew in the knowledge of God (v34)
Grew in wickedness and sin (v34)	Walked in truth and righteousness before God (v34)
Lost the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord (v35)	Received the Spirit (v36)
Built up and supported the Gadianton robbers (v38)	Preached the word of God to the Gadianton robbers (v37)

**Helaman 6:35** The Spirit of the Lord "[withdrew] from the Nephites" because of their wickedness and hard-heartedness.

**Helaman 6:36** The Lord began to "pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites" because they easily accepted his teachings and were willing to believe in his words.

This teaches us that we can receive the influence of the Holy Ghost only with faith, humility, and a willingness to be obedient to the commandments.

Dallin Oaks:

*“Pride must be a special challenge in this dispensation, because the Book of Mormon, which was written to the people of our day, contains the most intensive and repetitive teachings about the evils of pride. It identifies pride as the cause of the spiritual and temporal downfall of the people of God.”* (Pure in Heart [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 104)

When the Nephites continued in their wickedness, the Lord sent Helaman’s son Nephi to call them to repentance. When Nephi saw the wickedness of the people, *“his heart was swollen with sorrow”* (Helaman 7:6). He knelt on his garden tower to pray. As he poured out his soul to God, a group of people gathered, curious to know why he mourned for the wickedness of the people (Helaman 7:11).

Review **Helaman 7:13-29**; **Helaman 8**; and **Helaman 9**. (Note: The Church’s video presentation “The Pride Cycle”, dramatizes the events described in these scriptures.)

**Helaman 8:1-10** When Nephi rebuked them for their wickedness, many spoke out against him and stirred up the people to anger against Nephi. However, others recognized the truth of his condemnation and caused the judges and their followers to fear so that they did not seize Nephi. Ponder why so many remained unrepentant.

***The Lord gave Nephi the sealing power. The unrepentant Nephites faced warfare and famine.***

The Nephites forgot the Lord and continued in wickedness. Because of their wickedness, the people experienced devastating destruction and suffering.

**Helaman 10:5-10** The Lord gave Nephi the sealing power, saying that *“all things [would] be done according to [Nephi’s] word”*

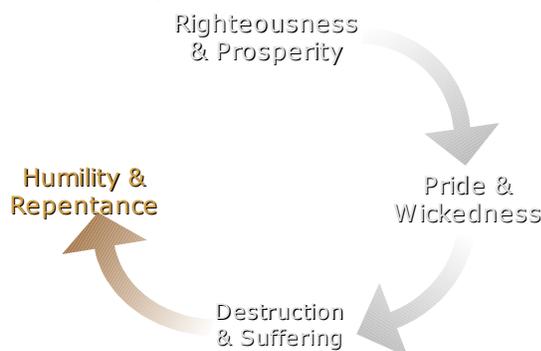
**Helaman 10:4-5** The Lord entrusted Nephi with such great power because he had been a faithful, diligent, courageous, selfless, righteous, and untiring servant.

**Helaman 10:18-11:2** After the people rejected Nephi and disobeyed God, contentions and divisions arose, multiplied, and grew into wars throughout the land as the Gadianton robbers carried on their evil works.

**Helaman 11:4** Nephi prayed for a famine in order to help the people remember the Lord and repent.

***The Nephites humbled themselves and repented.***

The destruction and suffering from the famine influenced the Nephites to turn to the Lord for relief. They humbled themselves and repented. Now a hopeful portion of the Pride Cycle begins with **Humility and Repentance**:



**Helaman 9:39-10:1** When Nephi told them of the murder of their chief judge and Seantum confessed to murdering his brother, the chief judge, some believed Nephi’s words. After the people debated whether Nephi was a prophet or a god, they left him standing alone. Keeping this situation in mind, think about what can keep us from listening to latter-day prophets.

**President Ezra Taft Benson** said: *“The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich. The learned may feel the prophet is only inspired when he agrees with them; otherwise, the prophet is just giving his opinion - speaking as a man. The rich may feel they have no need to take counsel of a lowly prophet”* (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], 138).

**Helaman 11:4-6** Nephi prayed for famine instead of war because war would result in the people’s destruction while in their sins. Nephi’s prayer was answered with a great famine.

We now see The Pride Cycle enter the **Destruction and Suffering** phase:



**Helaman 11:10-17** We learn from the Lord’s answer to Nephi’s prayer to end the famine that the Lord desires to forgive the repentant and honors the humble requests of his prophets.

**Helaman 11:14-15** The Lord required complete repentance of the people before He would end the famine.

**Helaman 11:20-21** The people were once again blessed for their faithfulness by having rains, which allowed them to begin a season of prosperity, building, increased population, territorial expansion, peace, and increased church membership.

**Helaman 11:22** Contention over points of doctrine was the first sign that the short-lived period of humility and righteousness was ending.

## Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the principles recorded in these chapters.

- Consider—we don't use the symbol of the cross very much, if at all, but Nephi makes reference to that symbolism here so it is certainly worth thinking about. What kinds of similarities are there between Christ's crucifixion and the brass serpent on a staff lifted up by Moses?
- Why, for example, is the serpent used to symbolize Christ rather than Satan?
- In what senses was Christ lifted up? What might we learn from the symbol of Christ being "lifted up"? What does it mean to "look to"?

**Helaman 11:23** Nephi, Lehi, and their brethren put an end to this contention by their inspired teaching of the true doctrines.

**Helaman 11:28-34** Following another period of wickedness and destruction by warfare, the fear of continued destruction and captivity helped the people repent and turn to the Lord.

**Helaman 11:36** Two years later, the Nephites "began again to forget the Lord their God". Think about why people are so quick to forget the Lord. Then, consider how we may be forgetting the Lord today.

**Helaman 12:7** Mormon said that "the children of men...are less than the dust of the earth".

**Helaman 12:1-6, 8** shows that he made this statement based on the fact that the elements obey God while men often do not. We have the freedom to obey or disobey God's commandments but not to choose the consequences of our actions.

**Helaman 12:25-26** Mormon said that the fate of those who disobey will be eternal damnation.

### Conclusion

In the following statement, **Elder Gordon B. Hinckley** spoke of the Book of Mormon: "*No other written testament so clearly illustrates the fact that when men and nations walk in the fear of God and in obedience to his commandments, they prosper and grow, but when they disregard him and his word, there comes a decay that, unless arrested by righteousness, leads to impotence and death*" (Ensign, Nov. 1979, 8).

*"Righteousness brings blessings of peace and prosperity, while pride, as it cycles through the human condition, unleashes the forces of destruction. Hence there is the need for enduring vigilance and repentance. Impenitence is the primary source of suffering, while humility is the gateway to redemption and inner peace. In the face of such manifest truths, there always remains the question why we sometimes forget our God and need to be reminded, often in forceful ways.*

*These lessons in Helaman give us direction as to what is expected of us to remember our God, to overcome pride, and to keep our hearts steady concerning the things pertaining to eternal life. We simply cannot allow ourselves to forget the goodness of God in our lives at any time. Let us always remember Him—just as we have covenanted to do—and keep His commandments."*

(Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon, Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, 2003, Covenant Communications, Inc., Ch. 34)

**Helaman 12:23-24, 26** Those who repent and obey the Lord will have everlasting life.



**Alma 62:48-51; Helaman 12:23-24** these verses teach us that people can break away from this Pride Cycle if they are willing to repent and hearken to the Lord.

**President Gordon B. Hinckley** said: "*Seek for the real things, not the artificial. Seek for the everlasting truths, not the passing whim. Seek for the eternal things of God, not for that which is here today and gone tomorrow. Look to God and live*" (Teachings of **Gordon B. Hinckley** [1997], 494).

\*The correct answer to the question on Page 1 is 17, 23, and 30 because the pattern is formed by adding 1 to the first number, 2 to the second number, 3 to the third number, and so on.