

### **383: August 16; Alma (Come Follow Me Catch Up!)**

30: July 20-26 Alma 36-38

31: \*July 27-**Aug 2** Alma 39-42:

32: Aug 3-9 Alma 43-52

33: \*Aug 10-**16** Alma 53-63

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So as a reminder, the three levels of podcasting that I'll put out based on levels of support:

- 1) Reissue old episodes (as I've been doing the past two months)
- 2) Putting out new episodes (my preferred minimum)
- 3) New episodes with additional content such as discussions

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#### **Alma outline:**

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/book-of-mormon-seminary-teacher-manual-2017/introduction-to-the-book-of-alma?lang=eng>

Alma 1-3: Alma engages in spiritual and physical conflict (Nehor and Amlici)

Alma 4-16: Alma resigns as chief judge and preaches to the Nephites. Amulek joins him and the his fellow citizens kill women and children, probably including Amulek's family.

Alma 17-28: Sons of Mosiah minister to the Lamanites, many of whom set down their weapons and join the Nephites

Alma 29-38: Alma and Amulek minister to Nephite dissenters

39-42: Alma's last testament and teachings to his sons

Alma 43-45: Lamanites attack Nephites; Moroni leads Nephite armies; Alma disappears

Alma 46-63: Nephite generals fight Lamanites and Nephite dissenters both within and without Nephite society

Alma musings: I think Nephite leadership was “kept in the family” more than the narrative explicitly states. Note similarities in names and who communicates with whom. I’m quite confident that Nephiah is Alma the Younger’s brother, for example. Reading more deeply and carefully really pays off in the Book of Mormon.

As I shared in the podcast group: One of the craziest things I learned while teaching World Religions was that Sikhs, whose ENTIRE RELIGION IS BASED ON EQUALITY, follow the caste system when the consequences are high, like in marriage. So they celebrate equality every week, and then follow the caste system they claim to have abolished when it comes to marriage, inheritance, etc.

I wonder whether the Nephite "equality" was similar to that. At the least, the lines of descent and classes were close enough to the surface that they snapped back quickly after periods of greater equality and justice.

## Outline

**Alma 1–3** Nehor introduces priestcraft among the Nephites. Alma leads righteous Nephites in defending themselves against Amlici and his followers, who have combined with a Lamanite army. After thwarting Amlici’s attempt to become a king and destroy the Church, the Nephites defeat another Lamanite army.

**Alma 4–16** Alma resigns as chief judge. He travels throughout the land of the Nephites to combat pride and wickedness by preaching the word of God. Amulek joins Alma, and they teach of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Resurrection, and the need for faith in the Lord and repentance. Zeezrom is converted and baptized.

**Alma 17–28** The sons of Mosiah and others preach the word of God among the Lamanites in the land of Nephi. Thousands are converted to the Lord. The converts forsake their weapons of war and go to dwell among the Nephites. Many people die in a great battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites.

**Alma 29–42** Alma desires to bring souls to repentance. He confounds Korihor, an anti-Christ. While teaching the Zoramites, a group of Nephite dissenters, Alma compares the word of God to a seed that must be nourished by faith. Amulek testifies of the Atonement and teaches the Zoramites to exercise faith unto repentance. Alma provides individual counsel and testimony to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton. Alma entrusts the sacred records to Helaman. He teaches about the postmortal spirit world, resurrection, and the roles of justice and mercy in God's plan.

**Alma 43–45** Stirred to anger by Nephite dissenters, the Lamanites come to war against the Nephites. Moroni leads the Nephites to victory over the army of Zerahemnah. Alma interviews and blesses Helaman, prophesies the destruction of the Nephites, and departs out of the land.

**Alma 46–63** Moroni, Lehi, Teancum, Helaman, and Pahoran lead the Nephites to victory against Lamanite armies controlled by Amalickiah and Ammoron. Moroni and Pahoran also quell the rebellion of Nephite dissenters known as king-men. Shiblon receives the Nephite records and later gives them to Helaman's son Helaman. The army of Moronihah defeats the Lamanites in another battle.

Scriptures: I did some classes in metaphysical Bible interpretation which I really enjoyed. Levels of interpretation:

Historical Critical: What did the scriptures mean to the original author and audience?

Devotional: What do the scriptures mean in my life?

Metaphysical: What do the scriptures mean about my own soul and spiritual journey? (It's a fun exercise) These are just two levels of "likening the scriptures to ourselves"

Here's how it works. Let's take the Exodus:

Historical Critical: Moses might not have even been an Israelite. The plagues and miracles were added later. Those who escaped Egypt were probably a small group who

learned about Yahweh as they traveled to Canaan, then they integrated with the Canaanites. Exodus 15 is the oldest and most realistic account. Etc.

Devotional: This story inspires us to see the ways we are in bondage and seek God's help to deliver us.

Metaphysical: Egypt represents a limited way of thinking that puts us in bondage, and we can focus on God and our better selves to liberate ourselves. We can move through obstacles in ways that seem impossible to us right now.

We are going to work through all of Alma, so buckle up!

## Alma 5

Living well: The equation is this: Our actions should be defensible to the ideal version of all those impacted by those actions. We should treat ourselves and others as whole people, not objects (there's some Kant for you). So here's a guide for Alma 5ing yourself.

### Past:

Why did I do what I did?

What were the consequences for myself?

What were the consequences for others? (REALLY think about this. As The Good Place points out, all of us live within and benefit from systems based on exploitation and injustice)

### Present:

You literally could not be better

In what areas of my life am I not fully honest?

What am I not telling myself?

What do my actions tell me my priorities are?

What do I value?

What do I really want, deep down? (I want control, all of us

Forgiveness: Is a cleansing. Invest in what is. Don't waste energy on what was, what could have been. Live your life in reality (I resisted this most of my life)

### Future:

How do you want to feel day to day?

How do you want to feel and think about yourself?  
What do you want your relationships to be like?

Come back to the present: What daily and weekly choices and practices will align you with your values and goals?

Alma 6

Set community in order (Make sure we are where we need to be, really showing up)

Alma 7 (One of my favorite of all chapters of scripture)

7:5 my joy cometh over them after wading through much affliction and sorrow.

8: One of my favorite things about Alma the Younger is he's so clear about what he knows and what he doesn't

\*Such\* an important passage for all of us. There is nothing more precious than experiential knowledge. "This is hard but I can get through it" might be the most valuable knowledge you'll ever have. We can know something, but it doesn't make a meaningful difference until we "know it according to the flesh", especially with the goal of supporting ourselves and others

11 And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

12 And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

13 Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.

Repent. Be born again. Covenant to live in a new way. Live in a new way.

Beautiful summary:

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.

#### Alma 8

Pacing, discouragement, encouragement. Trust the flow of life. Note the references to resting and “tarrying” in this chapter. The fact the angel who appears to Alma was the same one who appeared to him at his conversion is one of my favorite details from the Book of Mormon. This chapter is more poignant when you realize that Alma coming back to Ammonihah resulted in the tragic murder of women and children, including Amulek’s family.

#### Alma 9

First person record of Alma. Look at the rhetorical approach and themes: Alma first tries to emphasize gratitude, memory, perspective, repentance, but when the people refuse to react, he emphasizes consequences and the potential for destruction. Love based motivation is more effective, but fear based motivation is more potent. I think about this all the time.

#### Alma 10

Amulek preaches, again a first person account. This chapter really teaches the power of an insider voice. This is SUCH an important principle of ministry. We often don’t listen to people until we trust that they ‘get us’ or at least care about us. In fact, tribal in-group/out-group psychology functions to facilitate efficient trust and cooperation. Working hospice and prison has motivated given me opportunity to reach to a range of people, while remaining aware of my own limits. Do as much as you can, then refer out when you can’t is a basic principle of ministry.

#### Alma 11

This money system is one of the stranger inclusions in the Book of Mormon. I think it’s in there to give a feel for the details of Nephite society. We have testimony in the midst of a theological debate; note how Amulek focuses on personal experience and spiritual truth. “Deep truth” is a healthy target in discussions. Ironically, picking apart someone’s wording makes arguments worse, as most of us know! We have to ask what someone is really saying. “Help me understand what this means for you and why it is important” is a great approach.

### Alma 12

Zeezrom is very intelligent and high caliber, if antagonistic at first. It seems that the people of Ammonihah have a great deal of gospel knowledge in general. This results in profound and sophisticated preaching. Note that Zeezrom has a fear based “come to himself” moment, and then he shifts to sincere engagement. Fear based vs. authenticity based engagement is a theme in these chapters.

### Alma 13

I’ve always been struck by how legalese this chapter sounds. The core question is this: What is the purpose of our lives, and what does God have to do with it? Is there a Plan A? Plan B? Plan Q? What role does agency play? It took me until I was 36 to get a clear sense of my vocation, then another three years to start to put it in place. I can definitely bear testimony that often what we least want in life is what we most need. I also love the target of finding the specific good that we can do in life, and express what is most distinctly us.

### Alma 14

This is one of the most difficult and challenging chapters of the Book of Mormon, as the Ammonihahites burn women and children to death. This is not hypothetical or just in the past. We humans have destroyed cities and killed women and children. Wiping out entire cities and civilizations is horrifically standard. We know about Hiroshima and Nagasaki for example, but it wasn’t until literally this week that I learned about the systematic bombing of other Japanese cities that killed hundreds of thousands, mostly civilians. Also, I don’t think the theology in this chapter lines up. I don’t believe in the “I let the innocent die so that the punishment of the wicked is just” (14:11) is gospel truth. I also still hold the best reading is that Amulek was watching his own wife and children be burned. Alma and Amulek suffered greatly before their miraculous deliverance from prison. As I said, this chapter brings up deeply challenging questions. I firmly believe that everything is an invitation to growth, and can be a blessing if we make us of it, even the greatest tragedies and challenges. Obviously we should also do as much as we can to minimize those tragedies! It also helps me to remember that we humans work in groups and systems, so much is beyond our control. But we can do what we can within our power and influence. And we can always manage our own responses.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/01/896627359/opinion-75-years-on-remember-hiroshima-and-nagasaki-but-remember-toyama-too>

### Alma 15

Alma and Amulek leave Ammonihah and establish a church among those who have been kicked out, Zeezrom is healed and becomes a powerful missionary. As I shared in the earlier episode, lining up Alma 10:11 (which mentions Amulek's "women and children, father and kinsfolk") and Alma 15:16 (Amulek being rejected by "those who were once his friends, and also his father and kindred") is the most direct evidence for my theory that Amulek's wife and children were killed in chapter 14. I think 18 is my favorite verse:

**18** Now as I said, Alma having seen all these things, therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and strengthened him in the Lord. Again, note the pattern of resting and care between projects/efforts. I've been thinking much recently about how quickly things can come together, especially in our day of "going viral". Trust the flow and process.

### Alma 16

Is Zoram related to the Zoramites? Or just coincidence? War ramps up. Lamanites wipe out the city of Ammonihah; Alma uses revelation to guide military leaders to rescue captives. I really value everyone doing what they are good at and working together. War makes the Nephites more receptive to Alma and Amulek's preaching... I don't know of a way around the fact that pain is the most reliable motivator for us as humans. The best we can do is use the currency of pain and consequence to catalyze as much personal transformation as possible.

### Alma 17

The flashback technique is a nice touch here. This chapter is a touching and powerful example of how God can bless us and change our characters. I've always been struck by how God commands them to be comforted and strengthens them BEFORE their years of challenge and even suffering.

### Alma 18

There is so much good humor in this chapter. We can all learn from Ammon! SERVE and connect and learn about others before trying to teach them. One of the potential drawbacks of emphasis on teaching the gospel is that if we aren't careful, everyone becomes a project. An important paradox is that we need to genuinely love and respect people where they are before we can facilitate improvement or conversion (also, we can only facilitate, never make anything happen) One of my favorite exchanges in all scripture:

**8** And it came to pass that king Lamoni inquired of his servants, saying: Where is this man that has such great power?

**9** And they said unto him: Behold, he is feeding thy horses.

#### Alma 19

I think this is THE most female-centric story in the Book of Mormon. Abish is one of only THREE women named in the Book of Mormon (Isabel and Sariah are the others; and Eve, Mary, and Sarah are Biblical women referenced). “As for me, he does not stink” true love that. Note the power of the Queen’s faith. Others think the king is dead, but she holds true. Faith motivates us to work toward goals even though we may not have external validation, or even in the face of seeming counterevidence. An essential message from this story is communication, intention, misunderstanding. We need to make sure that we are understood and need to remember that we are overwhelmingly influenced by our perceptions. This is a powerful conversion story, yet at multiple points onlookers think the main characters are in danger or a danger. “Behold, he was a Nephite” (18). So much about assumptions and prejudice here. Also, lots to meditate on about ecstatic conversion experiences. Mysticism, direct communion with God, really is the purpose of religion.

#### Alma 20

Ammon meets Lamoni’s dad. Again, we have the fear leads to awaking pattern: **26** And when he saw that Ammon had no desire to destroy him, and when he also saw the great love he had for his son Lamoni, he was astonished exceedingly, and said: Because this is all that thou hast desired, that I would release thy brethren, and suffer that my son Lamoni should retain his kingdom, behold, I will grant unto you that my son may retain his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more “Breakdowns lead to breakthroughs” often we need pain or fear responses to break open our old ways of thinking, which then becomes an invitation to greater conversion. Note that the conversations relating to Ammon are \*love\* and relationship based.

#### Alma 21

Scene change to Aaron. Aaron (oldest child of Mosiah, heir to the throne). Ammon gets the most attention, but Aaron is the oldest (Mosiah 29:2). It is instructive to see the differences between Ammon and Aaron. Aaron tries civil religious debate, but the people are defensive and argumentative.

**14** And those who were cast into prison suffered many things, and they were delivered by the hand of Lamoni and Ammon, and they were fed and clothed.

Lots of understatement here. Note that Aaron didn't experience success in his ministry until after Ammon arranged his deliverance from prison.

**19** And king Lamoni would not suffer that Ammon should serve him, or be his servant. I freaking love that he tried.

Alma 22

**3** And now, O king, if thou wilt spare our lives, we will be thy servants. And the king said unto them: Arise, for I will grant unto you your lives, and I will not suffer that ye shall be my servants; but I will insist that ye shall administer unto me; for I have been somewhat troubled in mind because of the generosity and the greatness of the words of thy brother Ammon; and I desire to know the cause why he has not come up out of Middoni with thee.

Aaron tries it Ammon's way, but that's not his strength. I imagine the relationship between Aaron and Ammon would be complex. Aaron is a scribe and intellectual preacher. A king asking "why isn't your brother here" would be a matter of life and death.

Layers of meaning here:

**15** And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.

**16** But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

Aaron DID give up his kingdom, but that wasn't enough. Need to surrender the inside, our soul.

Alma 23

Lots to dig into here about the king's proclamation, and how policy and procedure strongly impacts what we can do and how much we can flourish and be effective in the institutions we belong to. The king's support and proclamation enables "great success" for the church.

**14** And the Amalekites were not converted, save only one; neither were any of the Amulonites; but they did harden their hearts, and also the hearts of the Lamanites in that part of the land wheresoever they dwelt, yea, and all their villages and all their cities.

I've always been curious about the one Amalekite. This will prompt one of Mormon's "Thus we see..." (Alma 24:19, 27)

**6** And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away.

**7** For they became a righteous people; they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren.

I appreciate the priority here. They did not fight against \*God\*, therefore they did not fight against their fellow humans.

#### Alma 24

Beautiful speech by Anti-Nephi-Lehi, brother of Lamoni.

**11** And now behold, my brethren, since it has been all that we could do (as we were the most lost of all mankind) to repent of all our sins and the many murders which we have committed, and to get God to take them away from our hearts, for it was all we could do to repent sufficiently before God that he would take away our stain—

**12** Now, my best beloved brethren, since God hath taken away our stains, and our swords have become bright, then let us stain our swords no more with the blood of our brethren.

Power of perspective and gratitude. Change of character. What do we need to do to so fully put down our sins that we will never pick them up again? What are our "weapons" that we wield against God, ourselves, each other? I've given up my temper, and cruel words.

What are your vows?

Four of mine:

I will see this through

I will treat people as people

I will not break down more than I have ability and opportunity to build up

I will give things/people the attention they deserve (no more, no less)

#### Alma 25

Note how the Lamanites are angry because of the murders they committed, and so they murder other people! I have noticed that a key rule of life and growth is that we either do our own inner work, or we project outward, either through codependence or cruelty. We either want others to take care of us or take out our issues on others, often both at the same time.

See the pattern of being stirred up to either contention or conversion:

**6** For many of them, after having suffered much loss and so many afflictions, began to be stirred up in remembrance of the words which Aaron and his brethren had preached to them in their land; therefore they began to disbelieve the traditions of their fathers, and to believe in the Lord, and that he gave great power unto the Nephites; and thus there were many of them converted in the wilderness.

**7** And it came to pass that those rulers who were the remnant of the children of Amulon caused that they should be put to death, yea, all those that believed in these things.

**8** Now this martyrdom caused that many of their brethren should be stirred up to anger; and there began to be contention in the wilderness; and the Lamanites began to hunt the seed of Amulon and his brethren and began to slay them; and they fled into the east wilderness.

#### Alma 26

Ammon's celebration of joy!!!! Joy occurs nine times in this chapter. Joy is such a life affirming emotion. Fully present, fully engaged. I don't think we celebrate ourselves, each other, and life enough. Let's be more like Ammon.

#### Alma 27

Mormon's commentary:

**17** Now the joy of Ammon was so great even that he was full; yea, he was swallowed up in the joy of his God, even to the exhausting of his strength; and he fell again to the earth.

**18** Now was not this exceeding joy? Behold, this is joy which none receiveth save it be the truly penitent and humble seeker of happiness.

**19** Now the joy of Alma in meeting his brethren was truly great, and also the joy of Aaron, of Omner, and Himni; but behold their joy was not that to exceed their strength. (That verse amuses me)

Again, note the importance of policy and action. Allowing human nature to take its course would have completely wiped out the converted Lamanites (27:12)

The Nephites vote to give the land of Jershon to the Anti-Nephi-Lehis (People of Ammon is a tender name), and then protect them with their armies (was integrating not an option? We had a great discussion about this in the Facebook group).

#### Alma 28

One of the greatest battles, with tens of thousands dead. Mormon describes it poetically:

**5** Yea, the cry of widows mourning for their husbands, and also of fathers mourning for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the cry of mourning was heard among all of them, mourning for their kindred who had been slain.

**6** And now surely this was a sorrowful day; yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer.

Then he summarizes:

**8** And this is the account of Ammon and his brethren, their journeyings in the land of Nephi, their sufferings in the land, their sorrows, and their afflictions, and their incomprehensible joy, and the reception and safety of the brethren in the land of Jershon. And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever.

Alma 28 is a pretty strong literary break, and then Alma 29 is placed without any context or introduction, interestingly.

#### Alma 29

One of my favorite chapters. I like to think that in Alma 45 Alma DOES become an angel. Translation seems to run in his family, I think.

I think we should discern and claim our desires.

Theological gem: **8** For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.

Joy theme again, though it seems only Ammon went over the edge:

**16** Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy.

#### Alma 30

We again see the pattern that war prepares the people to repent and progress spiritually. Pain and loss often prove to be the most powerful motivators.

Alma vs. Korihor.

And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.

This sounds a lot like LaVeyan Satanism... (As opposed to the Satanic Temple, which is super clever Humanism with snark).

**44** But Alma said unto him: Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.

My favorite question about God is “What is your relationship to God”, because that is one everyone can answer, even atheists. I also think it is essential to DEFINE our God, rather than we are assuming we are talking about the same thing. I playfully call myself a “Devout agnostic certain theist” because 1) God is bigger than anything we can understand and 2) God is demonstrably real, depending on our definition. As Alma says, we are created, so there is certainly a Creator. Now, what the \*nature\* of that Creator is is a more complicated question...

Not sure why Alma chooses to strike Korihor dumb as a sign...

Alma 31

Why have I never connected the Zoramites to actual Zoram!! Look at Jacob 1:13 and 4 Nephi 1:36. After hundreds of years they are STILL keeping track of who came from Jacob, who came from Zoram, etc. I'm deducing that there was a strict hierarchy not only Nephites vs. Lamanites, but which Nephite line you came from.

“Separation of the Zoramites from the Nephites”. I'm becoming increasingly confident that the Nephite society was strongly stratified and hierarchical, and that both church and state were kept under control of Nephi's line. (Just today I wondered whether Sam's son's married Nephi's daughters and then took on Nephi's name. I think that's what's behind Jacob 1:11).

Alma 32 (think of everything as a seed! Nurture it, respect what it needs, give it nourishment, space, remove obstacles, facilitate life, see what grows)

One of the best chapters in the Book of Mormon. I love it.

This touches on so much in my ministry training... we cannot make or force anything to grow or live. Everything has its own yearning and resources to grow and live. We can love, we can nurture, we can facilitate.

**28** Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

**29** Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea; nevertheless it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge.

**30** But behold, as the seed swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, then you must needs say that the seed is good; for behold it swelleth, and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow. And now, behold, will not this strengthen your faith? Yea, it will strengthen your faith: for ye will say I know that this is a good seed; for behold it sprouteth and beginneth to grow.

So applicable in everything. Our goals, our relationships, our own spiritual growth. Experiment, nurture, see what grows. I find it efficient and helpful to focus on what I want to invest in, then nurture it, then see what grows out of it, rather than trying to force it to be something in particular. So instead of: I want to be vice president, we can say I want to invest in this job, and see where it goes. Instead of I want to be their spouse, we can say I want to invest in this person, and see what the healthiest version of the relationship is.

Alma 33

Zenos and Zenock, otherwise unknown prophets (mentioned along with Neum in 1 Ne. 19), so would assume on the Brass Plates.

11: thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity

Interesting statement.

**21** O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief, and be slothful, that ye would not cast about your eyes, that ye might perish? (I've seen lots of parallels to wearing masks, that agree with).

I'm becoming increasingly convinced that living well is very simple, and very hard.

Resist nothing. Love what is. Live in harmony with reality. Love yourself. Love others.

Put your mind where your feet are. Invest in what's worthwhile. Feel your feelings. Treat

people as people. There is no other. (also, spending 10 minutes a day with your mind completely clear in meditation will train your soul like nothing else)  
The Four Agreements is one example of this simple approach.  
Be impeccable with your word. Don't take anything personally. Don't make assumptions.  
Always do your best.

Gay Hendricks in Conscious Living has another:

Face what is real (see reality)  
Accept what is real (harmonize with reality)  
Choose and commit  
Take action

Alma 34

Amulek bears lawyery testimony of Atonement  
Our behavior and soul training put us in alignment with heaven or hell, within or beyond the reach of redemption  
LOVE the emphasis on now. Now is the moment. Now is everything. Now is eternity. Be in this moment, love in this moment, then the next.

Alma 35

Zoramites get angry because the preaching “destroys their craft” and they kick out the converts.  
What are we incentivized to believe and do? I’m increasingly convinced that we are as good/productive/whatever else as we are incentivized and empowered to be.  
Look at the incentives and empowerment in your life. If you don’t like what you see, change something. But no matter what, open your eyes to it.

The Testament of Alma (I cherish these intimate chapters of a father’s love to his sons. Did he have daughters?)

To Helaman (I still think Helam was Alma the Elder’s father)

Alma 36

Remember (What is the relationship between past, present, and future?) My son said he heard that depression is based in the past and anxiety is based in the future, and I think there is some truth to that.  
I LOVE the Buddhist idea of “not self” (anatman). The idea is that we let go of the idea of ourselves so that we can experience and update to the REALITY of ourselves. I think much suffering is caused by loyalty to past versions of ourselves and others. Every day is new. Every moment is new. Past informs but does not imprison the present.

Such a powerful account of Alma's conversion. How can we know when we are forgiven? When the memory of our sins/past selves no longer pains us. I've had a number of experiences that pained me for years, even decades, before I really faced and processed and they became clean.

Helps me to differentiate clean vs. infected pain. We "infect" our pain through resistance and stories.

Alma 37

Respect what is sacred (our gifts, talents, opportunities). Invest in them.

Highly recommend journaling, for so many reasons. One of my most consistent healthy practices.

My mom reminded me of her bringing up this one at bedtime:

**37** Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

Liahonas in our own lives.

**40** And it did work for them according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold, it was done; therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day.

**41** Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey;

I'm very much in the "everything is a miracle" camp. Our attention and attentiveness is what reveals everything to be sacred. Again, pay attention and invest in the little daily things that make all the difference. (Spending time with my 19 year old son this summer has been special, and I have been aware as we work out together and have good talks that we will remember this the rest of our lives)

Shiblon:

Alma 38

His strengths: Steadiness and faithfulness

(consistent effort over time will usually lead to success)

He was imprisoned (in bonds) and stoned in his ministry which is intense

**12** Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness.  
Rightly focused on. Relationship with our traits. Be gentle. Our strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices, compassionately engage with them all so they can grow into their healthiest forms.

Corianthon

Alma 39

Oh boy, this is one of the more explosive chapters of the Book of Mormon.

Corianton boasted and abandoned his ministry. He “went after” Isabel, but we don’t know whether he did more than that.

39:5 these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost? I think this verse misunderstood and misapplied has done tremendous damage.

“Cross yourself in these things” We need to allow our lower ways of thinking and being die (even be crucified, metaphorically speaking) so that our new selves can be reborn. There’s power in this framing, though I think love and gentleness can get us there even more effectively

Alma 40

I love the transparency of Alma’s words “there is one thing I have inquired diligently to know” These verses make me think that Alma’s wife died.

My favorite part of this chapter is the precision of language.

Anticipation can be either strongly positive or negative, depending on our preparation and state!

Alma 41

Restoration: Natural consequence, following of principle

We are punished by our sins, not for our sins. I really appreciate how clearly these chapters lay out the Plan of Salvation/Plan of Damnation framing that runs through the Book of Mormon

I LOVE the words alignment, congruent, resonant. I think this is how the gospel works. We are in alignment or out of alignment with proper principles, with our true/divine/best selves etc.

One of my favorite things I’ve ever learned is that the Greek word for sin means “to miss the mark”. It’s that simple. “Oh, I missed. Let me line up and try again”.

## Alma 42

“God would cease to be God” is SUCH a powerful teaching! It answers what is called Euthypho’s dilemma: which is bigger, God or Good? Is something good because God says so, or does God say so because God follows Goodness? LDS teaching is clearly in the “Goodness is bigger than God” the entire idea of the Plan of Salvation is built on that. God became God because God followed the principles of Godliness, and the same is true of us.

Again, plan of salvation, plan of damnation “affixed opposite the plan of happiness” (42:16)

## Alma 43

I respect Alma not being able to rest (1)

More war. I have a hunch that the King Men and other opposition stems way back from the Mulekites being pushed out of leadership (I think Orson Scott Card makes this point).

This chapter describes psychological warfare, Zerahemnah putting in leadership roles the most firm in their hatred of the Nephites (or Nephite leadership, probably)

**13** And the people of Ammon did give unto the Nephites a large portion of their substance to support their armies; and thus the Nephites were compelled, alone, to withstand against the Lamanites, who were a compound of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, and all those who had dissented from the Nephites, who were Amalekites and Zoramites, and the descendants of the priests of Noah.

Again, note how carefully lineage is kept track of.

25 year old Moroni takes leadership of the armies. What’s his story?

Moroni was Mormon’s greatest hero, shown by the name he gave his son. Also touching that Mormon points out Moroni’s age, since Mormon was only 16 when HE took charge of the armies (Mormon 2:2). And he was severely wounded at 11 (Mormon 1:6), so was probably fighting by then.

Lots to learn about preparation and strategy from Moroni

Alma 44 Theme: Honor and following through. Application for ourselves: Be impeccably honest and have impeccable integrity.

Interesting rhetoric, as Zerahemnah points out. Moroni beats the Lamanites militarily then claims it is because of their faith, and Zerahemnah says nope, it’s because of your military.

I’m very impressed by the honor and honesty between Moroni and Zerahemnah. Oaths and covenants are taken very seriously.

I want to know who the soldier with the scalp object lesson was!

#### Alma 45

Alma interviews Helaman, passes on the records, then disappears. I like the idea that he was translated.

#### Alma 46

Note the overlap between religious and political/military conflict. Just now I'm wondering whether there were other religious traditions we don't read about, transmitted by the Mulekites perhaps?

It seems Amalakah was Nephite, but not a member of the ruling families. Thus the "lower judges" comment in 46:4

**12** And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole.

Motivation, covenant, follow through (incentivization and empowerment, Moroni was good at that).

His rhetoric is INTENSE. Anyone who doesn't support his definition of liberty is put to death?

Darkly amusing verse: **35** And it came to pass that whomsoever of the Amalickiahites that would not enter into a covenant to support the cause of freedom, that they might maintain a free government, he caused to be put to death; and there were but few who denied the covenant of freedom.

#### Alma 47

Amalakah is set up as a foil to Moroni. If I were writing a novel I would make Amalakah relatively closely related to the Nephite line, but not close enough to put him in power. Again we see the theme of honor vs. lack of honor (though we still need to take seriously Moroni's heavy handedness).

There are so many fascinating unnamed characters in these chapters! What about the servant who kills the king, then testifies to the queen?

#### Alma 48

Theme of this chapter is inspiration and motivation: Amalakah inspires Lamanites against the Nephites, and Moroni inspires the Nephites.

Mormon fanboying over Moroni: **17** Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.

## Alma 49

Moroni is a powerful example of diligence and persistence, designing (lives, training, cities) in such a way that the Nephites are prepared for anything. The “one step behind” theme with Lamanites and Moroni is somewhat darkly comical.

Nephites: Preparation

Lamanites: Assumption

## Alma 50

Another Facebook comment: As best as we can tell, Nephi's was the dynastic line for all the kings. And Jacob was the line for priests, until it got blurry with Mosiah. But I still think they kept track. Then it came together again with Alma, functionally. Then separated again with Alma as religious leader and Nephihah as political leader (I'm quite confident Nephihah was Alma's brother).

The precision of vs. 5 always amused me “they were prepared that they could cast stones from the top thereof, according to their pleasure and their strength,”

Again, see Moroni's thorough, rigorous preparation. Living well is practice and training.

## Alma 51

“Free men” vs. “king men” Not rhetorically loaded at all, no...

51:8 so now we have those of “high birth” in addition to the “lower judges”. All this conflict again suggests a rigid, stratified society where Nephi's line holds most of the power.

Much wrothness in this chapter.

Once again Moroni's approach is “support me or die” (understandable, but intense)

Some poetic imagery in 18: they did pull down their pride and their nobility, insomuch that as they did lift their weapons of war to fight against the men of Moroni they were hewn down and leveled to the earth.

22 subjecting them to peace and civilization,

There are so many amazing (and somewhat ironic) lines in these chapters.

Amalickiah takes possession of Moroni's carefully fortified cities (We need to be humble, diligent, and prepared, or our strengths can become corrupted) I'm working on a “Devotion Deck” that will facilitate meditation on virtue and vice. It strikes me that for every virtue there is the lack of that virtue, the excess of that virtue, the counterfeit of that virtue, and the corruption of that virtue. Corruption is the scariest, because it is genuine strength, just used against yourself and others.

Teancum: Special Forces Nephite

Hmm, who would be the Chaplain... Helaman for sure. :)

### Alma 52

First day of the first month would be some serious psychological warfare, because that would be a massively bad omen.

Amalickiah's brother is Ammoron, and Mormon gets the records from Ammaron, who is a descendent from Alma.

I think this reading of the strategy between the generals is pretty gripping.

**30** Now Lehi was not desirous to overtake them till they should meet Moroni and his army.

More understatement, because they would not have survived.

Again, we have a culture of honor in battle, because as soon as people give up their weapons, they are taken prisoner rather than being killed.

### Alma 53

Touching comment on the brotherhood between Moroni and Lehi

53:5 Now Moroni was compelled to cause the Lamanites to labor, because it was easy to guard them while at their labor;

Personal application: It is easier to cultivate healthy habits when we are productive and working!

8: we have "dissentions and intrigue" Lots of dimensions to this war

The people of Ammon and Sons of Helaman.

What is right is highly contextually dependent.

My favorite ethical equation is: An action should be defensible to the ideal versions of all those impacted by that action.

<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/284>

Joseph Smith: "Happiness is the object and design of our existence, and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God; but we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know, unless we comply with or keep those we have already received! That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.

### Alma 54

I really like the correspondence that we have at the end of Alma

True to form, Moroni is heavy handed in his letter. Amazing general, not a great diplomat.

I mean. Seriously impressive ineffectiveness. Everything looks like a nail when you are Moroni, right?

Here we go on lineage and dissensions:

**23** I am Ammoron, and a descendant of Zoram, whom your fathers pressed and brought out of Jerusalem.

He has some cleverness for sure as well. Note the different justifications the sides have.

#### Alma 55

This chapter is interesting because Ammoron agrees to Moroni's terms, but then Moroni backs out! He tells him to back down, then says he will exchange prisoners one man to man + women + children, but then he justifies backing out by conflating the prisoner exchange issue with the larger war issue.

Now Laman is a spy (one of the servants of Amalackiah). These stories have all the characters.

More humor/reverse psychology:

**10** But Laman said unto them: Let us keep of our wine till we go against the Nephites to battle. But this saying only made them more desirous to drink of the wine;

Arming all the prisoners was brilliant.

Again, we have this theme of Lamanites being one step behind, trying the Nephites' own tactics

#### Alma 56

Letter from Helaman

12: Note Lamanites only keep chief captains as prisoners, kill everyone else.

"My little army" is tender, and repeated

Poignant: Antipus and his leaders die because they had pushed so hard to save Helaman and his army

The "stripling Ammonites" become a sort of mascot, help with morale

#### Alma 57

Ammoron asks for prisoner exchange, surely upset that Moroni backed out of the deal

**10** At length their provisions did arrive, and they were about to enter the city by night.

And we, instead of being Lamanites, were Nephites; therefore, we did take them and their provisions.

More amusing language (though sieges were brutal)

57:16 Ethics of prisoners of war. Nephites avoid killing the prisoners if at all possible (in contrast to Lamanite practice)

Inspiring:

**21** Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness; yea, and even according to their faith it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them.

Alma 58

Nephite generals have to be maximally strategic because they are outnumbered  
**7** And it came to pass that we did wait in these difficult circumstances for the space of many months, even until we were about to perish for the want of food.

**11** Yea, and it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; yea, insomuch that he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him.

The power of our minds, faith, determination. The way that we think and respond literally changes our reactions in our bodies

**30** Yea, and it came to pass that the armies of the Lamanites did flee out of all this quarter of the land. But behold, they have carried with them many women and children out of the land.

An allusion to how brutal this all was

Alma 59

Even in a position of weakness Moroni is planning strategy, always moving

Alma 60

Now Moroni rips Pahoran a new one. Seriously sharp letter.

**9** But behold, this is not all—ye have withheld your provisions from them, insomuch that many have fought and bled out their lives because of their great desires which they had for the welfare of this people; yea, and this they have done when they were about to perish with hunger, because of your exceedingly great neglect towards them.

**13** For the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; (it seems this was a part of Nephite theology, something I personally don't believe. It makes sense people would come up with this in a violent society though)

Alma 61: Pahoran's response

One of my favorite verses for personal application:

**9** And now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart. I, Pahoran, do not seek for power, save

only to retain my judgment-seat that I may preserve the rights and the liberty of my people. My soul standeth fast in that liberty in the which God hath made us free.

Deep truth and understanding.

**19** And now, Moroni, I do joy in receiving your epistle, for I was somewhat worried concerning what we should do, whether it should be just in us to go against our brethren.

**20** But ye have said, except they repent the Lord hath commanded you that ye should go against them.

That is also brilliant reinterpretation. Moroni with his limited understanding thinks he is inspired to go against Pahoran, but Pahoran with greater understanding applies that inspiration to mean an answer as to whether to go against those who have overthrown him.

Alma 62

The scale of battle is almost the entire society; they are conscripting as many people as they can

**4** And he did raise the standard of liberty in whatsoever place he did enter, and gained whatsoever force he could in all his march towards the land of Gideon.

Interesting. I don't think former Moroni would have done this:

**25** And now when Moroni saw that they were fleeing before him, he did cause that his men should march forth against them, and slew many, and surrounded many others, and took them prisoners; and the remainder of them fled into the land of Moroni, which was in the borders by the seashore.

Lamanite prisoners join the people of Ammon; impressive they were given that option.

The end of Special Forces Teancum:

**36** And it came to pass that Teancum in his anger did go forth into the camp of the Lamanites, and did let himself down over the walls of the city. And he went forth with a cord, from place to place, insomuch that he did find the king; and he did cast a javelin at him, which did pierce him near the heart. But behold, the king did awaken his servants before he died, insomuch that they did pursue Teancum, and slew him.

Powerful reminder that we determine our responses to our environments. Everything is an invitation to growth; everything can be a blessing that facilitates growth and goodness.

**41** But behold, because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, because of the exceedingly great length of the war; and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility.

Alma 63

Moroni dies at 43, as best as I can tell. How did he die? (That's the age I just turned!)

Interesting note about Hagoth and many who travel north.

### **Takeaways from Alma:**

Learn from the past. Live in the present. Live fully now. Live well. Be prepared. (This is why I distill my life philosophy to "Show up")

Challenges and even tragedy can invite us to either soften or harden; it is up to us.

Everything is an invitation and potential blessing and source of growth.

Don't assume. Be honest, and communicate clearly, give people a chance to explain, and update. Treat people as people.