

**January 29–February 4: 1 Nephi 16–22, "I Will Prepare the Way Before You"**

Willfully Rebellion

Much of the content of this reading assignment concerns the rebellion of Laman and Lemuel so lets begin by disusing what we have already read about their attitude and their actions

1 Nephi 2:9-12

9 And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness!

10 And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord!

11 Now this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold they did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart.

12 And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them.

What kept Laman and Lemuel from not accepting that their father was a prophet and from striving to follow God?

(stiffneckedness  
their gold, and their silver, and their precious things  
knew not the dealings of God)

Ezra Taft Benson

"The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. They pit their perception of truth against God's great knowledge, their abilities versus God's priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

"Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren't interested in changing their opinions to agree with God's." (CR, April 1989)

Christoffel Golden, Jr.

"Strange as it may seem, no teaching, no miracle, and no appearance even of a heavenly angel, as witnessed by Laman and Lemuel, appears to have the persuasive power to convince some individuals to alter their course,

outlook, or belief that something is true. This is especially the case when teachings or miracles do not agree with an individual's preconceived whims, wishes, or ideas." (CR, Oct. 2021)

This is the case with Laman and Lemuel. No matter how many wonders, miracles, angelic visitations, or heavenly pronouncements they experienced they would not be moved from their self-centeredness and the desires of the world

Nephi teaches them the meaning of Lehi's dream. Recall that they were told that in the dream Laman and Lemuel would not partake of the fruit.

1 Nephi 16:1-5

1 And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of speaking to my brethren, behold they said unto me: Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear.

2 And it came to pass that I said unto them that I knew that I had spoken hard things against the wicked, according to the truth; and the righteous have I justified, and testified that they should be lifted up at the last day; wherefore, the guilty taketh the truth to be hard, for it cutteth them to the very center.

3 And now my brethren, if ye were righteous and were willing to hearken to the truth, and give heed unto it, that ye might walk uprightly before God, then ye would not murmur because of the truth, and say: Thou speakest hard things against us.

4 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did exhort my brethren, with all diligence, to keep the commandments of the Lord.

5 And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord; insomuch that I had joy and great hopes of them, that they would walk in the paths of righteousness.

What causes Laman and Lemuel to be humble, at least for the time being?

(Thou hast declared unto us hard things, more than we are able to bear if ye were righteous... ye would not murmur because of the truth, and say: Thou speakest hard things against us  
I, Nephi, did exhort my brethren, with all diligence, to keep the commandments)

Everything up to now had taken place in the valley of Lemuel. Now the Lord commands Lehi to continue the journey. The next day he finds the Liahona.

1 Nephi 16:10,28

10 And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.

28 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were in the ball, that they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto

them.

29 And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.

Can you think of anything that we have been given that can help us in a way similar the way that the Liahona helped Lehi?

(pointed the way whither we should go  
they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed  
which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord)

David A. Bednar

“As we strive to align our attitudes and actions with righteousness, then the Holy Ghost becomes for us today what the Liahona was for Lehi and his family in their day. The very factors that caused the Liahona to work for Lehi will likewise invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. And the very factors that caused the Liahona not to work anciently will likewise cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost today....

“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....

“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.” (CR, April 2006)

Nephi breaks his bow so they cannot get food. This causes not only Laman and Lemuel to murmur against the Lord but also Lehi. Let's read what Nephi, who was equally afflicted, did.

1 Nephi 16:22-27,31-32

22 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did speak much unto my brethren, because they had hardened their hearts again, even unto complaining against the Lord their God.

23 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did make out of wood a bow, and out of a straight stick, an arrow; wherefore, I did arm myself with a bow and an arrow, with a sling and with stones. And I said unto my father: Whither shall I go to obtain food?

24 And it came to pass that he did inquire of the Lord, for they had humbled themselves because of my words; for I did say many things unto them in the energy of my soul.

25 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came unto my father; and he was truly chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord, insomuch that he was brought down into the depths of sorrow.

26 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord said unto him: Look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written.

27 And it came to pass that when my father beheld the things which were written

upon the ball, he did fear and tremble exceedingly, and also my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and our wives.

31 And it came to pass that I did slay wild beasts, insomuch that I did obtain food for our families.

32 And it came to pass that I did return to our tents, bearing the beasts which I had slain; and now when they beheld that I had obtained food, how great was their joy! And it came to pass that they did humble themselves before the Lord, and did give thanks unto him.

What causes Laman and Lemuel to humble themselves, at least for the time being?

(they had humbled themselves because of my words  
the things which were written upon the ball  
I had obtained food... they did humble themselves before the Lord)

The death of Ishmael stirs up great anger and rebellion

1 Nephi 16:34-39

34 And it came to pass that Ishmael died, and was buried in the place which was called Nahom.

35 And it came to pass that the daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly, because of the loss of their father, and because of their afflictions in the wilderness; and they did murmur against my father, because he had brought them out of the land of Jerusalem, saying: Our father is dead; yea, and we have wandered much in the wilderness, and we have suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue; and after all these sufferings we must perish in the wilderness with hunger.

36 And thus they did murmur against my father, and also against me; and they were desirous to return again to Jerusalem.

37 And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren.

39 And it came to pass that the Lord was with us, yea, even the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them, and did chasten them exceedingly; and after they were chastened by the voice of the Lord they did turn away their anger, and did repent of their sins, insomuch that the Lord did bless us again with food, that we did not perish.

What causes Laman and Lemuel to turn away their anger and repent of their sins, at least for the time being?

(the voice of the Lord came and did speak many words unto them  
they were chastened by the voice of the Lord)

They travel for 8 years. They came to a place on the sea that they call Bountiful "because of its much fruit and also wild honey" and Nephi notes, "all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish." After they had been there for "many days" the Lord commanded Nephi to build a ship.

1 Nephi 17:17-21

17 And when my brethren saw that I was about to build a ship, they began to murmur against me, saying: Our brother is a fool, for he thinketh that he can build a ship; yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters.

21 Behold, these many years we have suffered in the wilderness, which time we might have enjoyed our possessions and the land of our inheritance; yea, and we might have been happy.

With all the miracles that Laman and Lemuel had seen and experienced do you think that they believed that it was impossible to build a ship and cross the ocean?

Again, after all the signs and wonders that they experienced, what was the one thing that they still had their hearts focused on?

Neal A. Maxwell

"Ironically, many like Laman and Lemuel who are the first to demand signs are then the first to discount them. Some demand more miracles even while consuming a daily menu of manna and forgetting its remarkable Source."  
(CR, Oct. 1999)

Nephi counters their unbelief by reminding them of things that they know to be true

1 Nephi 17:26-30

26 Now ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that great work; and ye know that by his word the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither and thither, and they passed through on dry ground.

27 But ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea, who were the armies of Pharaoh.

28 And ye also know that they were fed with manna in the wilderness.

29 Yea, and ye also know that Moses, by his word according to the power of God which was in him, smote the rock, and there came forth water, that the children of Israel might quench their thirst.

30 And notwithstanding they being led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing all things for them which were expedient for man to receive, they hardened their hearts and blinded their minds, and reviled against Moses and against the true and living God.

In addition to what Laman and Lemuel had personally experienced, how did they know that all things are possible with God?

(ye know that by his word the waters of the Red Sea were divided  
ye know that the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea  
ye also know that they were fed with manna  
ye also know that Moses... smote the rock, and there came forth water)

And Nephi tells them that they, like the Israelites, had “hardened their hearts and blinded their minds”

1 Nephi 17:45-46

45 Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words; wherefore, he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder, which did cause the earth to shake as if it were to divide asunder.

46 And ye also know that by the power of his almighty word he can cause the earth that it shall pass away; yea, and ye know that by his word he can cause the rough places to be made smooth, and smooth places shall be broken up. O, then, why is it, that ye can be so hard in your hearts?

Nephi seems as confused about their stiffneckedness as we are. After stating that they know the power of God he asks, "O, then, why is it, that ye can be so hard in your hearts"

What do you think it means when Nephi tells them that they are “past feeling”?

Neal A. Maxwell

“Determined to walk in his own way, the natural man often persists to the point where he is ‘past feeling,’ having been sedated by pleasing the carnal mind. Sadly, like the drug addict, he is always in need of a fresh fix. (CR, April 1999)

The Lord demonstrates His great power thru Nephi. This convinces Laman and Lemuel to help him build a ship

1 Nephi 17:48,52-55

48 And now it came to pass that when I had spoken these words they were angry with me, and were desirous to throw me into the depths of the sea; and as they came forth to lay their hands upon me I spake unto them, saying: In the name of the Almighty God, I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him.

52 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren, insomuch that they were confounded and could not contend against me; neither durst they lay

their hands upon me nor touch me with their fingers, even for the space of many days. Now they durst not do this lest they should wither before me, so powerful was the Spirit of God; and thus it had wrought upon them.

53 And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: Stretch forth thine hand again unto thy brethren, and they shall not wither before thee, but I will shock them, saith the Lord, and this will I do, that they may know that I am the Lord their God.

54 And it came to pass that I stretched forth my hand unto my brethren, and they did not wither before me; but the Lord did shake them, even according to the word which he had spoken.

55 And now, they said: We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee, for we know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken us. And they fell down before me, and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer them, saying: I am thy brother, yea, even thy younger brother; wherefore, worship the Lord thy God, and honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee.

What causes Laman and Lemuel to listen to Nephi, at least for the time being?

(We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee  
the power of the Lord that has shaken us)

1 Nephi 18:1,4

1 And it came to pass that they did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship.

4 And it came to pass that after I had finished the ship, according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine; wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord.

What causes Laman and Lemuel to worship the Lord and humble themselves, at least for the time being?

(finished the ship, according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld  
that it was... exceedingly fine)

The trip in the wilderness was very trying. but crossing the sea seemed to seemed to be go so well that it was a cause for celebration. This temporary life of ease seems to have harden Laman and Lemuel even more.

1 Nephi 18:9,17-18

9 And after we had been driven forth before the wind for the space of many days, behold, my brethren and the sons of Ishmael and also their wives began to make themselves merry, insomuch that they began to dance, and to sing, and to speak with much rudeness, yea, even that they did forget by what power they had been brought thither; yea, they were lifted up unto exceeding rudeness.

17 Now my father, Lehi, had said many things unto them, and also unto the sons of Ishmael; but, behold, they did breathe out much threatenings against anyone that should speak for me; and my parents being stricken in years, and having suffered much grief because of their children, they were brought down, yea, even upon their sick-beds.

18 Because of their grief and much sorrow, and the iniquity of my brethren, they were brought near even to be carried out of this time to meet their God; yea, their grey hairs were about to be brought down to lie low in the dust; yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a watery grave.

19 And Jacob and Joseph also, being young, having need of much nourishment, were grieved because of the afflictions of their mother; and also my wife with her tears and prayers, and also my children, did not soften the hearts of my brethren that they would loose me.

What affect did the sorrow, suffering, and pleading of their father, mother, and brothers have on the hearts of Laman and Lemuel?

(they did forget by what power they had been brought thither  
did not soften the hearts of my brethren that they would loose me)

And when Nephi tried to talk to Laman and Lemuel they tied him up so he could not move. Recall their earlier statement about Nephi, "We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee"

1 Nephi 18:15,20

15 And it came to pass that we were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea. And after we had been driven back upon the waters for the space of four days, my brethren began to see that the judgments of God were upon them, and that they must perish save that they should repent of their iniquities; wherefore, they came unto me, and loosed the bands which were upon my wrists, and behold they had swollen exceedingly; and also mine ankles were much swollen, and great was the soreness thereof.

20 And there was nothing save it were the power of God, which threatened them with destruction, could soften their hearts; wherefore, when they saw that they were about to be swallowed up in the depths of the sea they repented of the thing which they had done, insomuch that they loosed me.

What finally causes Laman and Lemuel to soften their hearts, at least for the time being?

(they must perish save that they should repent of their iniquities  
there was nothing save it were the power of God, which threatened them  
with destruction, could soften their hearts)

From the time Laman and Lemuel left Jerusalem they acted contrary to the way of God. They could be humbled briefly if they were overwhelmed by a miraculous



event

- An angel appeared to them while they were beating Nephi
- They received the brass plates
- Lehi's dream revealed the fate that awaited them if they did not repent
- The miraculous appearance of the Liahona
- Being kept from starvation by Nephi being shown where to go to obtain food
- Hearing the voice of the Lord after threatening to kill Lehi and Nephi
- Hearing, seeing, and feeling the power of the Lord thru Nephi
- Being inspired by the Lord to build a ship that was "exceedingly fine"
- Facing certain death because of the stormy sea

Their refusal to seek the will of God after being given so many glorious opportunities caused them to be cutoff from the Lord

2 Nephi 5:20-21

20 Wherefore, the word of the Lord was fulfilled which he spake unto me, saying that: Inasmuch as they will not hearken unto thy words they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And behold, they were cut off from his presence.

21 And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint...

Neal A. Maxwell

“Laman and Lemuel’s rejection of the prophets and the scriptures meant there could be no useful likening or rehearsals of remembrance and no freshening of personal revelation to them for their time. They simply did not understand that God’s ways are higher than man’s ways....

"Hence Laman and Lemuel became rebels instead of leaders, resentful instead of righteous--all because of their failure to understand either the character or the purposes of God and His dealings with His children." (CR, Oct. 1999)