

In Support of the Rising Generation

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It is relationships in the lives of the youth that have the greatest influence on their choices.

In preparing to speak to you, I have been drawn to the story of Helaman and the stripling sons of the people of Ammon. I have felt the power of Book of Mormon prophets teaching parents, bishops, and ward members through studying this account.

Helaman was a man that the young Ammonites could trust. He helped them develop and mature in righteousness. They knew and loved him and “would that [he] should be their leader.”¹

Helaman loved these young men like sons and saw their potential.² Elder Dale G. Renlund taught that “to effectively serve others we must see them ... through Heavenly Father’s eyes. Only then can we begin to comprehend the true worth of a soul. Only then can we sense the love that Heavenly Father has for all ... His children.”³ Bishops today are blessed with discernment to see the divine identity of the youth in their care.

Helaman “numbered”⁴ the young men in his care. He prioritized building strong relationships with them.

At a critical time when life and death hung in the balance, Helaman and his young warriors lost track of the army pursuing them. Helaman counseled with the youth:

“Behold, we know not but they have halted for the purpose that we should come against them. ...

“Therefore what say ye, my sons ... ?”⁵

These faithful young men responded, “Father, behold our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall; then let us go forth.”⁶ The day was won, as Helaman supported these young men in their resolve⁷ to act.⁸

The young Ammonites had a great cause and were valiant in “the support of the people.”⁹ “This little force,” led by Helaman, spread “great hopes and much joy”¹⁰ into the hearts of the experienced Nephite armies. Bishops today can lead their uniquely gifted youth in blessing the ward and gathering Israel. President Russell M. Nelson has taught that this is the mission “for which [they] were sent to earth.”¹¹

Like these young Ammonites who were “true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted,”¹² Helaman faithfully followed his leaders. No matter the challenge or setback, Helaman always remained “fixed with a determination”¹³ to advance their purpose. When he was directed to “march forth with [his] little sons,”¹⁴ he obeyed.

The youth today are blessed as bishops follow the guidance of our leaders to “counsel with the ward Young Women president[s].”¹⁵ Stake presidents ensure that bishops and Young Women presidents are instructed in fulfilling their responsibilities for the youth.¹⁶

Helaman honored covenants. When Ammon taught the gospel to the parents of the stripling young men, these parents embraced it with open hearts. They were so committed to their new life of righteous discipleship that they made a covenant to “lay down the weapons of their rebellion.”¹⁷ The only thing that caused them to consider breaking this covenant, going back to their familiar past of fighting, was seeing the Nephites in danger.

The Ammonites wanted to help these people who had offered them a safe home. Helaman, along with others, persuaded them to keep their covenant never to fight. He trusted more in the strength that God would provide than in the strength these Ammonites could have provided with their swords and arrows.

When Helaman and his young warriors faced daunting challenges, Helaman was resolute. “Behold, it mattereth not—we trust God will deliver us.”¹⁸ In one instance, when they were on the verge of starving to death, their response was to “pour out [their] souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen [them] and deliver [them]; ... [and] the Lord ... did visit [them] with assurances that he would deliver [them]”¹⁹ “because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe.”²⁰

We learn from Helaman that these young men were supported by their parents. These faithful parents knew they had the primary responsibility for teaching their children. They taught their children to keep the commandments and “walk uprightly”²¹ before God. Their mothers taught them “that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.”²² Their fathers set a powerful example of covenant making.²³ These former warriors knew the horrors of battle. They entrusted their inexperienced sons to Helaman’s care and supported them by sending “many provisions.”²⁴

Helaman wasn’t alone as he served his young army. He had people around him whom he turned to for support and guidance. He reached out to Captain Moroni for help, and it came.

No one serving in the Lord’s kingdom serves alone. The Lord has blessed us with wards and stakes. Through His restored organization, we have the resources, wisdom, and inspiration to meet any challenge.

A bishop provides guidance for the ward through councils.²⁵ He promotes quarterly ministering interviews and then encourages the elders quorum and Relief Society to fulfill their responsibility of ministering to families. These presidencies take the lead in assessing needs and finding inspired solutions. Stake presidents offer support by instructing the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies in these responsibilities.

The needed guidance for leaders and parents is found in the Gospel Library and the Gospel Living apps. In these inspired resources, we can find the scriptures, teachings of modern prophets, and the *General Handbook*. The Youth tab in the Gospel Library has many resources for quorum and class presidencies²⁶ and has *For the Strength of Youth: A Guide for Making Choices*. As all members of the ward study these inspired sources and seek guidance from the Spirit, everyone will be directed by the Lord in strengthening the youth.

The entire ward will be blessed and strengthened as members focus on the rising generation. Despite our imperfections and shortcomings, Heavenly Father invites each of us, through the companionship of His Spirit, to reach out to others. He knows that we grow and are sanctified as we follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost.²⁷ It doesn't matter that our efforts are imperfect. When we partner with the Lord, we can trust that our efforts will be in line with what He would do for the youth.

By following the direction of the Holy Ghost in reaching out to the youth, we become witnesses of Heavenly Father's love in their lives. Acting on promptings from the Lord builds relationships of love and trust. It is relationships in the lives of the youth that have the greatest influence on their choices.

The youth will learn the pattern of revelation as they participate with us in the process of seeking and acting upon promptings to serve others. As the youth turn to the Lord for this inspired guidance, their relationships with and trust in Him will deepen.

We express our confidence in the youth by offering support and direction without taking over.²⁸ As we step back and allow the youth to learn through counseling together, choosing an inspired course, and putting their plan into action, they will experience true joy and growth.

President Henry B. Eyring taught that "what will matter most is what they learn from [you] about who they really are and what they can really become. My guess is that they won't learn it so much from lectures. They will get it from feelings of who you are, who you think they are, and what you think they might become."²⁹

Our youth amaze us with their courage, their faith, and their abilities. As they choose to be fully engaged disciples of Jesus Christ, His gospel will be etched upon their hearts. Following Him will become a part of who they are, not just what they do.

Helaman helped the young Ammonites to see how a valiant disciple of Jesus Christ lives. We can be powerful examples to the youth of how disciples of Christ live today. Faithful parents are praying for these examples in the lives of their children. No program can replace the influence of loving, covenant-keeping adults.

As the president of the priests quorum, the bishop can set an example for the youth of how to be a loyal husband and a loving father³⁰ through protecting, providing, and presiding³¹ in righteous ways. Bishops, with a "laser-like focus on [the] youth,"³² will have an influence that will last for generations.

The youth today are among Heavenly Father's most noble³³ spirits. They were among the stalwart defenders of truth and agency in the premortal world.³⁴ They were born in these days to gather Israel through their powerful witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows each one of them and knows their great potential. He is patient as they grow. He will redeem and protect them. He will heal and guide them. He will inspire them. We, their parents and leaders, have been prepared to support them. We have the Savior's Church to assist us as we raise the next generation.

I bear witness that Christ's Church, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith and led today by President Russell M. Nelson, is organized to help the youth fulfill their great purpose in these latter days. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Alma 53:19.
2. “If you choose to, if you want to, ... you can be a big part of something big, something grand, something majestic! ... You are among the best the Lord has *ever* sent to this world. You have the capacity to be smarter and wiser and have more impact on the world than any previous generation!” (Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel” [worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018], Gospel Library).
3. Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 94.
4. Alma 56:55.
5. Alma 56:43–44.
6. Alma 56:46.
7. “Our Heavenly Father’s goal in parenting is not to have His children *do* what is right; it is to have His children *choose* to do what is right” (Dale G. Renlund, “Choose You This Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 104).
8. “As we empower the youth by inviting and allowing them to act, the Church will move forward in miraculous ways” (from a meeting with Elder David A. Bednar; see also 2020 Temple and Family History Leadership Instruction, Feb. 27, 2020, Gospel Library).
9. Alma 53:22.
10. Alma 56:17.
11. Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” Gospel Library.
12. Alma 53:20.
13. Alma 58:12.
14. Alma 56:30.
15. *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7.1.2, Gospel Library.
16. See *General Handbook*, 6.7.2.
17. Alma 23:7.
18. Alma 58:37.
19. Alma 58:10–11.
20. Alma 57:26.
21. Alma 53:21.
22. Alma 56:47.

23. See Alma 23:7; 24:17–19.
24. Alma 56:27.
25. See *General Handbook*, 7.1.1.
26. “As we seek eternal truth, the following two questions can help us recognize whether a concept comes from God or from another source: Is the concept taught consistently in the scriptures and by living prophets? Is the concept confirmed by the witness of the Holy Ghost? God reveals doctrinal truths through prophets, and the Holy Ghost confirms those truths to us and helps us apply them” (John C. Pingree Jr., “Eternal Truth,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 100).
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 4:2–4.
28. “If [our] youth are too underwhelmed [by God’s work], they are more likely to be overwhelmed by the world. ... How many deacons and teachers quorum presidencies consist of merely calling on someone to offer a prayer or pass the sacrament? Brethren, these really are special spirits, and they can do things of significance if given a chance!” (Neal A. Maxwell, “Unto the Rising Generation,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1985, 11).
29. Henry B. Eyring, “Teaching Is a Moral Act” (address given at the Brigham Young University annual conference, Aug. 27, 1991), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
30. See “Aaronic Priesthood Quorum Theme,” Gospel Library.
31. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
32. “It is our hope that bishoprics will give great emphasis and focus to the priesthood responsibilities of young men and help them in their quorum duties. Capable adult Young Men advisers will be called to assist the Aaronic Priesthood quorum presidencies and the bishopric in their duties. We are confident that more young men and young women will rise to the challenge and stay on the covenant path because of this laser-like focus on our youth” (Quentin L. Cook, “Adjustments to Strengthen Youth,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2019, 41).
33. “Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are *you!*” (Russell M. Nelson, “Hope of Israel,” Gospel Library).

34. “The teenager you love may well have been one of the valiant warriors on the side of agency and truth. ... We can help in the way we react to their determination to choose for themselves. They will sense whether we see them as if they could well have been one of the faithful warriors from the premortal existence, committed still to the defense of moral agency and aware of its great value to bring them happiness. If we can see them as faithful warriors from the premortal existence, we may also see their claims of independence as a sign of their potential, a sign that they are testing the power of agency that will bring them happiness” (Henry B. Eyring, “A Life Founded in Light and Truth” [Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 15, 2000], 3, 4, speeches.byu.edu).