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## The Book of Mormon — A Guide to Religious Living: XII. Man's Search for Happiness

Author(s): Lowell L. Bennion

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# The Book of Mormon — A Guide to Religious Living

LOWELL L. BENNION

## XII. MAN'S SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

JOHN, in his appeal to men to love one another, writes: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God . . . He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (I John 4:7, 8.)

In a similar way, Book of Mormon writers identify God with happiness. He who knows God and his righteousness will find happiness, while he who seeks happiness contrary to the nature of God will never find it.

Religion has not always been associated with happiness, especially in this life. More often it has been considered a sacrifice of happiness now in order to gain eternal blessings in the world to come. The Book of Mormon is quite distinctive in the positive, jubilant manner in which it accepts earth-life and in its frequent association of God with the idea of happiness.

The oft-quoted Latter-day Saint statement: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy" (II Nephi 2:25), comes from the pen of Nephi, first author in the book. It is only one verse of an entire chapter in which

the privileges of mortality are extolled.

### GOD AND HAPPINESS

This joy is found by seeking God and his righteousness. Alma, the younger, speaking to his son, Corianton, puts it this way:

"Do not suppose, because it has been spoken concerning restoration, that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. *Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.*

"And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; *they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.*" (Alma 41:10, 11.)

The last line of the above quotation is thought-provoking: "And they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness."

Samuel, the Lamanite, preaching repentance to the Nephites expresses the same idea in forceful language:

"But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure; yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head." (Helaman 13:38.)

Nephi understood this, when he wrote early in Nephite history, "If there be no righteousness, there be no happiness." (II Nephi 2:13.)

#### HELL AND SPIRITUAL DEATH

Instead of defining hell as a place where the wicked go to be tortured, Book of Mormon writers describe it as a state of mind in which people suffer the torment, regret, and frustration which naturally follow unrighteousness — pitting oneself against God and the moral laws of the universe. Hell is something to be experienced in this life as well as in the life to come. And there is more than one degree of torment.

Alma, the younger, recounts to his son, Helaman, his state of mind when he came to a realization of his unrighteousness. His story is a fitting description of hell.

"But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins.

"Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea,

I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.

"Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

"Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds." (Alma 36:12-15. Read also Alma 40:11-14.)

One of the most interesting ideas in the Book of Mormon is the concept of a second or spiritual death. Some people think of the second death as the utter extinction of the mind of an individual. The Book of Mormon has a more reasonable explanation.

Repeatedly, the second death is defined as "an everlasting death *as to things pertaining unto righteousness.*" (Alma 12:32.) "But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out, and *consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup.*" (Alma 40:26.)

The second death comes to those who sink so low that they lose the

power to repent. They no longer can learn righteousness. Therefore, they cannot know God and the happiness which comes from sharing in the righteous, creative, and loving ways of God.

### *THE WAY TO HAPPINESS*

The road to happiness is to have faith in God, to open one's mind and heart to his will, to come unto him, to entertain a love of Christ. Let us turn to some of the more positive and encouraging statements on this theme in the Book of Mormon.

Jacob, younger brother of Nephi, writes, early in the record:

"Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold ye yourselves know that he counsel-eth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works." (Jacob 4:10.)

He would tell us, we believe, to cease making a struggle or a burden out of life, but rather to learn to accept it and to live in harmony with the laws of God. Therein lies our freedom, self-realization, and happiness.

Alma, in his great sermon on faith referred to in an earlier article, promises us the greatest possible happiness as a result of nourishing the word of God.

"And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious,

which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst. (Alma 32:42.)

### *WHO COME UNTO ME*

The Book of Mormon contains the Sermon on the Mount much as it is to be found in the King James translation of Matthew 5, 6, and 7. One of the few and very significant changes is found in the Beatitudes. In the Bible, the first Beatitude reads: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In the Book of Mormon it reads, "Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The little phrase, "who come unto me," is added.

Humility alone does not bring the kingdom of heaven. The humble, however, who come unto Christ, who find faith in him and who live his teachings—will surely find the kingdom of heaven.

If we might suppose that this phrase, "who come unto me," were intended for all the Beatitudes, think how much meaning it adds to each Beatitude!

There are those, for example, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, but are not filled because they do not find it. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who come unto Christ, will find it—for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost and be led unto truth

and righteousness. The Beatitudes bring their greatest blessings and happiness to those who come unto Christ.

This is illustrated in Nephite history. After Christ's appearance among the Nephites and the establishment of his Church among them, the people lived under the influence of his spirit and teaching for about 200 years. The result was most unusual in the chronicles of man.

"And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

"And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

"There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they

were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the Kingdom of God." (IV Nephi 15-17.)

All men are in search of happiness, "but few there be who find it." The Book of Mormon sanctions man's search, for "men are that they might have joy." That joy will be found, in fullest measure, by those who "nourish the good word of God," who "seek not to counsel the Lord but to take counsel from his hand," and by those, as Jesus said, "who come unto me."

Reading the Book of Mormon will help us all to remember God and his righteousness. Thereby we may be helped to learn the true values of life. Therein lies our happiness and peace of mind.

"I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

Readings in the Book of Mormon:  
II Nephi 2; Alma 32:26-43; 36;  
41; IV Nephi.

## CONFERENCE ADDRESSES

*(Continued from page 564)*

written upon the tablets of your soul that wonderful message out of the Ten Commandments — that kindly reminder—that earnest plea,

"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

I pray that we may do so in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

"All wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man—

"Every herb in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving." (Doc. and Cov. 89:10, 11.)