

## LESSON 4

# The Fall of Adam and the Gift of Agency

### Introduction

The Fall of Adam was an integral part of God's plan. It brought about the conditions under which we could come to earth and be tested. God's plan also includes giving His children agency (see 2 Nephi 2:27). In this lesson, students

will learn that the key to exercising our agency well is to seek to do God's will, thus following the example set by Jesus Christ.

### Background Reading

- Robert D. Hales, "Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 24–27.
- Jeffrey R. Holland, "Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 104–6.

### Suggestions for Teaching

**2 Nephi 2:19–26, 28; Alma 42:6–10, 14; Moses 5:5–9**

#### *The Fall of Adam*

Display the following statement by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy, and ask a student to read it aloud:



"Since the fifth century, Christianity taught that Adam and Eve's Fall was a tragic mistake. ... That view is wrong. ... The Fall was not a disaster. It wasn't a mistake or an accident. It was a deliberate part of the plan of salvation" ("The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 97).

- Why do you think it is important to understand that the Fall was not a mistake or accident but rather a deliberate part of the plan of salvation?

Invite students to study 2 Nephi 2:19–25 and make a list of the effects of the Fall—the things that happened to Adam and Eve after they partook of the forbidden fruit. Then ask students to write items from their lists on the board. (*Note:* Looking for lists within a scripture passage is a scripture study skill you might teach with this passage; see *Gospel Teaching and Learning* [2012], 23.) The list should include the following: Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden; they brought forth children; they entered a probationary state; they became lost and needed repentance; and they experienced opposition, which allowed them to experience good and evil and use their agency wisely.

- How does the list on the board help explain why the Fall of Adam was a necessary part of Heavenly Father’s plan? (Students will likely provide a variety of answers that could be summarized with this principle: **The Fall of Adam made it possible for us to enter mortality and to progress toward eternal life.**)
- What does it mean that “all men ... were lost” because of the Fall? (2 Nephi 2:21).

To help answer this question, invite several students to take turns reading Alma 42:6–10, 14 aloud while the class looks for additional effects of the Fall. As students share what they found, you might add their responses to the list on the board.

- What does it mean to be “cut off ... from the presence of the Lord”?

Display the following statement by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“[Adam and Eve] transgressed a commandment of God which required that they leave their garden setting but which allowed them to have children before facing physical death. To add further sorrow and complexity to their circumstance, their transgression had spiritual consequences as well, cutting them off from the presence of God forever. Because we were then born into that fallen world and because we too would transgress the laws of God, we also were sentenced to the same penalties that Adam and Eve faced. ...

“... From the moment those first parents stepped out of the Garden of Eden, the God and Father of us all, anticipating Adam and Eve’s decision, dispatched the very angels of heaven to declare to them—and down through time to us—that this entire sequence was designed for our eternal happiness. It was part of His divine plan, which provided for a Savior, the very Son of God Himself—another ‘Adam,’ the Apostle Paul would call Him [see 1 Corinthians 15:45]—who would come in the meridian of time to atone for the first Adam’s transgression. That Atonement would achieve complete victory over physical death. ... Mercifully it would also provide forgiveness for the personal sins of all, from Adam to the end of the world, conditioned upon repentance and obedience to divine commandments” (“Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2015, 105–6).

- Why are we “sentenced to the same penalties that Adam and Eve faced”? (We are born into a fallen world, and we transgress God’s laws.)

Invite a few students to take turns reading aloud 2 Nephi 2:26, 28 and Moses 5:5–9, while the class looks for how the effects of the Fall can be overcome in our lives.

- According to these passages, how can we be redeemed from the spiritual effects of the Fall? (Answers should include the following principle: **If we repent and call upon God for forgiveness, we can be redeemed from our sins through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.**)

Invite students to ponder the role of the Fall in the plan of salvation and how it was “designed for our eternal happiness.” Ask one or two students to share their thoughts with the class.

## 2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 26–29; Helaman 14:30–31; 3 Nephi 27:13

### *The gift of agency*

Display the following statement by President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ask a student to read it aloud:



“Adam and Eve [through the Fall] became mortal. Happily for us, they could also beget children and fulfill the purposes for which the world was created. . . . Other blessings came to us through the Fall. It activated two closely coupled additional gifts from God, nearly as precious as life itself—*agency and accountability*” (“Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 34, italics added).

- In what ways are agency and accountability “nearly as precious as life itself”?

Ask students to study 2 Nephi 2:14, 16, and 26, looking for what these verses teach about how God’s children differ from His other creations.

- What difference do these verses highlight between God’s children and His other creations? (Students should identify the following doctrine: **God’s children are created to act for themselves rather than to be acted upon.**)
- What does it mean that God created us to act rather than to be acted upon?
- Why is it important to know that God’s children were created to act for themselves and not to be acted upon?

To help answer this question, you might discuss the following statement by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“The old saying ‘The Lord is voting for me, and Lucifer is voting against me, but it is *my* vote that counts’ describes a doctrinal certainty that our agency is more powerful than the adversary’s will. Agency is precious. We can foolishly, blindly give it away, but it cannot be forcibly taken from us.

“There is also an age-old excuse: ‘The devil made me do it.’ Not so! He can deceive you and mislead you, but he does not have the power to force you or anyone else to transgress” (“Cleansing the Inner Vessel,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 74).

Ask some students to read 2 Nephi 2:26–29 and others to read Helaman 14:30–31. Encourage students to highlight words and phrases that show future consequences of choices we make now. Invite students to share some of the words and phrases they highlighted.

- What truth can we learn from these passages about the effects of our choices? (Students should identify the following truth: **The way we use our agency determines our spiritual progress and eternal blessings.**)

To help students understand this truth, ask a student to read the following statement by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:



“When we choose to do the will of our Heavenly Father, our agency is preserved, our opportunities increase, and we progress. ... The opposite is also true: when we don’t keep the commandments or follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost, our opportunities are reduced; our abilities to act and progress are diminished. ... Obedience to the commandments ultimately protects our agency” (“Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 25–26).

- What are some consequences that come from the misuse of agency?
- How does obedience to God’s commandments protect our agency?
- Why is using our agency “to do the will of our Heavenly Father” the key to our spiritual progress?

Ask students to silently read 3 Nephi 27:13 and consider Jesus Christ’s example of the righteous use of the gift of agency.

- In what ways can the Savior’s words “I came ... to do the will of my Father” help us to use the gift of agency wisely?

Share the following statement by Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to help students understand the great blessings that come from using our agency righteously:



“The Lord is intent on your personal growth and development. That progress is accelerated when you willingly allow Him to lead you through every growth experience you encounter, whether initially it be to your individual liking or not. When you trust in the Lord, when you are willing to let your heart and your mind be centered in His will, when you ask to be led by the Spirit to do His will, you are assured of the greatest happiness along the way and the most fulfilling attainment from this mortal experience. If you question everything you are asked to do, or dig in your heels at every unpleasant challenge, you make it harder for the Lord to bless you. [See 1 Nephi 3:7.]

“Your agency, the right to make choices, is not given so that you can get what you want. This divine gift is provided so that you will choose what your Father in Heaven wants for you. That way He can lead you to become all that He intends you to be. [See D&C 58:26–32.]” (“Finding Joy in Life,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 25).

Ask students to think about times when they made decisions to act in righteousness. Invite a few students to share how the consequences of those decisions brought blessings to them.

Encourage students to ponder how they can better follow the example of Jesus Christ in doing the will of Heavenly Father. Share your testimony that the proper use of our agency can lead us to eternal life.

## Student Readings

- 2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 19–29; Alma 42:6–10, 14; Helaman 14:30–31; 3 Nephi 27:13; Moses 5:5–9.

- Jeffrey R. Holland, “Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 104–6.