

Learn from Alma and Amulek

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It is my hope that those who have strayed from the path of discipleship will see with their hearts and learn from Alma and Amulek.

Alma the Younger

Among the most unforgettable characters in scripture is Alma the Younger. Though he was the son of a great prophet, he lost his way for a time and became a “wicked and an idolatrous man.” For reasons we can only guess, he actively opposed his father and sought to destroy the Church. And because of his eloquence and persuasiveness, he experienced great success.¹

But Alma’s life changed when an angel of the Lord appeared to him and spoke with a voice of thunder. For three days and three nights, Alma “was racked with eternal torment, ... even with the pains of a damned soul.” And then, somehow, a faint memory brought light to the darkness of his mind—an eternal truth, taught by his father: that Jesus Christ would come “to atone for the sins of the world.” Alma had long ago rejected such concepts, but now his “mind caught hold upon this thought,” and he humbly, earnestly placed his trust in Christ’s atoning power.²

When Alma emerged from this experience, he was a changed man. From that moment on, he devoted his life to undoing the damage he had caused. He is a powerful example of repentance, forgiveness, and enduring faithfulness.

Alma was eventually chosen to succeed his father as head of the Church of God.

Every citizen of the Nephite nation must have known Alma’s story. The Twitters, Instagrams, and Facebooks of his day would have been filled with images and stories about him. He probably appeared regularly on the cover of the *Zarahemla Weekly* and was the subject of editorials and network specials. In short, he was perhaps the most well-known celebrity of his day.

But when Alma saw that his people were forgetting God and lifting themselves up in pride and contention, he chose to resign from public office and dedicate himself “wholly to the high priesthood of the holy order of God,”³ preaching repentance among the Nephites.

At first, Alma had great success—that is, until he traveled to the city of Ammonihah. The people of that city were well aware that Alma was no longer their political leader, and they had little respect for his priesthood authority. They reviled him, ridiculed him, and cast him out of their city.

Heartbroken, Alma turned his back on the city Ammonihah.⁴

But an angel told him to return.

Just think about it: he was told to return to the people who hated him and were hostile toward the Church. It was a dangerous and perhaps life-threatening assignment. But Alma did not hesitate. “He returned speedily.”⁵

Alma had been fasting many days when he entered the city. There he asked a complete stranger if he would “give to an humble servant of God something to eat.”⁶

Amulek

This man's name was Amulek.

Amulek was a well-to-do, well-known citizen of Ammonihah. Although he came from a long line of believers, his own faith had grown cold. He later confessed, “I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not [believe]; therefore I went on rebelling against God.”⁷

But God was preparing Amulek, and when Amulek met Alma, he welcomed the Lord's servant into his home, where Alma stayed for many days.⁸ During that time, Amulek opened his heart to Alma's message, and a marvelous change came over him. From then on, Amulek not only believed, but he also became a champion of truth.

When Alma went out again to teach among the people of Ammonihah, he had a second witness at his side—Amulek, one of their own.

The events that followed constitute one of the most bittersweet narratives in all of scripture. You can read about it in Alma chapters 8–16.

Today, I would like to ask you to consider two questions:

First: “What can I learn from Alma?”

Second: “How am I like Amulek?”

What Can I Learn from Alma?

Let me begin by asking all past, current, or future leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ, “What can you learn from Alma?”

Alma was an exceptionally gifted and capable man. It may have been easy to think that he did not need anyone's help. Nevertheless, what did Alma do when he returned to Ammonihah?

Alma found Amulek and asked him for help.

And Alma received help.

For whatever reason, sometimes we as leaders are reluctant to find and ask our Amuleks. Perhaps we think that we can do the work better by ourselves, or we are reluctant to inconvenience others, or we assume that others would not want to participate. Too often we hesitate to invite people to use their God-given talents and engage in the great work of salvation.

Think of the Savior—did He begin to establish His Church all alone?

No.

His message was not “Stand back. I'll handle this.” Rather it was “Come, follow me.”⁹ He inspired, invited, instructed, and then trusted His followers “to do the things which ye have seen me do.”¹⁰ In this way, Jesus Christ built up not only His Church but also His servants.

In whatever position you currently serve—whether you are a deacons quorum president, a stake president, or an Area President—to be successful, you must find your Amuleks.

It may be someone who is unassuming or even invisible within your congregations. It may be someone who *seems* unwilling or unable to serve. Your Amuleks may be young or old, men or women, inexperienced, tired, or not active in the Church. But what may not be seen at first sight is that they are hoping to hear from you the words “The Lord needs you! I need you!”

Deep down, many want to serve their God. They want to be an instrument in His hands. They want to thrust in their sickle and strive with their might to prepare the earth for the return of our Savior. They want to build His Church. But they are reluctant to begin. Often they wait to be asked.

I invite you to think of those in your branches and wards, in your missions and stakes, who need to hear a call to action. The Lord has been working with them—preparing them, softening their hearts. Find them by seeing with your heart.

Reach out to them. Teach them. Inspire them. Ask them.

Share with them the words of the angel to Amulek—that the blessing of the Lord shall rest upon them and their house.¹¹ You may be surprised to discover a valiant servant of the Lord who otherwise would have remained hidden.

How Am I Like Amulek?

While some of us should be looking for an Amulek, for others the question might be “How am I like Amulek?”

Perhaps you have, over the years, become less committed in your discipleship. Perhaps the fire of your testimony has dimmed. Perhaps you have distanced yourself from the body of Christ. Perhaps you have become disillusioned or even angry. Like some of the ancient Church of Ephesus, you may have left your “first love”¹²—the sublime, eternal truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, like Amulek, you know in your heart that the Lord has “called [you] many times,” but you “would not hear.”

Nevertheless, the Lord sees in you what He saw in Amulek—the potential of a valiant servant with an important work to do and with a testimony to share. There is service that no one else can give in quite the same way. The Lord has trusted you with His holy priesthood, which holds the divine potential to bless and lift others. Listen with your heart and follow the promptings of the Spirit.

One Member’s Journey

I was touched by the journey of one brother who asked himself, “When the Lord calls, will I hear?” I will call this fine brother David.

David converted to the Church some 30 years ago. He served a mission and then attended law school. While he was studying and working to support a young family, he came across some information about the Church that confused him. The more he read these negative materials, the more unsettled he became. Eventually he asked to have his name removed from the records of the Church.

From that time on, like Alma in his rebellious days, David spent a great deal of time debating with members of the Church, engaging in online conversations with the purpose of challenging their beliefs.

He was very good at this.

One of the members he debated with I will call Jacob. Jacob was always kind and respectful to David, but he was also firm in his defense of the Church.

Over the years, David and Jacob developed a mutual respect and friendship. What David did not know is that Jacob was praying for David and did so faithfully for more than a decade. He even placed his friend’s name for prayer in the temples of the Lord and hoped that David’s heart would be softened.

Over time, slowly, David did change. He began to remember with fondness the spiritual experiences he once had, and he remembered the happiness he had felt when he was a member of the Church.

Like Alma, David had not completely forgotten the gospel truths he had once embraced. And like Amulek, David felt the Lord reaching out to him. David was now a partner in a law firm—a prestigious job. He had developed a reputation as a critic of the Church, and he had too much pride to ask to be readmitted.

Nevertheless, he continued to feel the pull of the Shepherd.

He took to heart the scripture “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”¹³ He prayed, “Dear God, I want to be a Latter-day Saint again, but I have questions that need answers.”

He began to listen to the whisperings of the Spirit and to inspired answers of friends as he never had before. One after another, his doubts turned to faith, until finally he realized that, once again, he could feel a testimony of Jesus Christ and His restored Church.

At that point, he knew that he would be able to overcome his pride and do whatever it took to be accepted back into the Church.

Eventually, David entered the waters of baptism and then began counting down the days until he could have his blessings restored.

I am happy to report that this past summer, David’s blessings were restored to him. He is again fully participating in the Church and serving as a Gospel Doctrine teacher in his ward. He takes every opportunity to speak to others about his transformation, to heal the damage he caused, and to bear testimony of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

My dear brothers, my dear friends, let us seek out, find, inspire, and rely upon the Amuleks in our wards and stakes. There are many Amuleks in the Church today.

Perhaps you know one. Perhaps you are one.

Perhaps the Lord has been whispering to you, urging you to return to your first love, contribute your talents, worthily exercise the priesthood, and serve side by side with your fellow Saints in drawing closer to Jesus Christ and building the kingdom of God here on earth.

Our beloved Savior knows where you are. He knows your heart. He wants to rescue you. He will reach out to you. Just open your heart to Him. It is my hope that those

who have strayed from the path of discipleship—even by only a few degrees—will contemplate the goodness and grace of God, see with their hearts, learn from Alma and Amulek, and hear the life-changing words of the Savior: “Come, follow me.”

I urge you to heed His call, for surely you will receive the harvest of heaven. The blessings of the Lord will rest upon you and your house.¹⁴

Of this I testify and leave you my blessing as an Apostle of the Lord in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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