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CHRIST AND DIVINE PARENTHOOD IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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IN APRIL OF 1830 THE LORD TESTIFIED that the Book of Mormon contains “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9). A foundational teaching of the gospel is that through the plan of redemption not only can we dwell again with our Heavenly Father, but we can become as He is. President Spencer W. Kimball stated, “The teachings of Christ that we should become perfect were not mere rhetoric. He meant literally that it is the right of mankind to become like the Father and like the Son, having overcome human weaknesses and developed attributes of divinity.”¹ Growth and progress are the purposes of our mortal existence, as President Kimball declared: “You are sent to this world with a very serious purpose. You are sent to school, for that matter, to begin as a human infant and grow to unbelievable proportions in wisdom, judgment, knowledge, and power.”² Some of those qualities and characteristics we need to develop deal with family relationships and are best exemplified in the Book of Mormon.

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In our existence prior to coming to earth, we were children in our Heavenly Father's family. Here on earth is the first opportunity we have to become parents in a family relationship. That family relationship can continue after this life and into eternity through the sealing ordinances of the priesthood in holy temples. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that those who obtain exaltation "will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory."³ President Brigham Young further clarified, "The Lord has bestowed on us the privilege of becoming fathers of lives. What is a father of lives, as mentioned in the Scriptures? A man who has a posterity to an eternal continuance."⁴ In becoming a parent either in mortality or in the eternal worlds, we need to acquire the divine attributes of parenthood that our heavenly parents possess.

How do we learn to be that divine parent while here on earth? President Ezra Taft Benson said our Heavenly Father is the greatest example we have as a pattern for parenthood.⁵ The best window we have for viewing the Father's attributes is through His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. As the Savior declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The Prophet Joseph Smith pointed out, "The Saviour most clearly show[ed] unto us the nature of salvation, and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them—that he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings."⁶ Jesus asked and answered, "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). Understanding that Christ is the embodiment of the Father's attributes that we need to acquire, it is His example we are to follow. How can Jesus be the example for us to emulate as a parent? The Book of Mormon clearly shows the Lord as a divine parent and gives examples of others who are striving to partake in that aspect of His divinity.

CHRIST AS A DIVINE PARENT

In the Book of Mormon, Christ is directly called the Father forty-one times⁷ and indirectly numerable times. Regarding this

title, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated, “There are ways in which Christ is so united with his Father that in some assignments he rightfully plays a fatherly role and rightfully bears the title of Father in doing so.”⁸ These roles in which Jesus is rightfully called Father are as the creator of all things, as the author of salvation, and by divine investiture of authority.⁹ All these roles are pivotal in the plan of salvation, but His designation as the author of salvation, where He becomes the Father of the covenant, is especially instructive for parents. “This fundamental—and admittedly deep—doctrine of the Son-as-Father,” declared Elder Holland, “is illuminated more definitively in the Book of Mormon than in any other revelation ever given to man.”¹⁰

King Benjamin taught his people who entered into a covenant with the Lord that “because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith in his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7). In our covenant relationship with the Lord, we become His children and He our Father. In Abinadi’s commentary on Isaiah 53, he testifies that Jesus is both “the Father and the Son” (Mosiah 15:2) and that “when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed” (Mosiah 15:10). He then explains that those who “believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?” (Mosiah 15:11–12). When one enters into that covenant with the Lord, they become His seed, or His children and posterity in the covenant.

Jesus also explained this covenant parent-child relationship we have with Him to the brother of Jared: “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe

on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters” (Ether 3:14). When one partakes in this covenant and goes through a spiritual rebirth, we are born unto Christ in the new relationship. Alma explained that all of us “must be born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters” (Mosiah 27:25). Mormon wrote to his son, Moroni, “If ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ” (Moroni 7:19). Even in ancient Israel, those who made a covenant with Jehovah were termed “the children of the covenant” (3 Nephi 20:26; see also 2 Nephi 6:12; 29:1). Nephi records the beautiful lines of Isaiah that encapsulate this aspect of the Lord’s relationship with us: “For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel” (1 Nephi 21:15). In this parent-child relationship, we can look toward the Savior and how He works with His covenant children as an example of divine parenthood. The Savior’s parenting by covenants and by teaching are two aspects addressed here.

PARENTING BY COVENANTS

As the Father of this covenant with us, it is evident that Jesus works by covenants. Even in the great premortal council, Jesus as the Son made His own covenant with His Father in relationship to His role in the plan of salvation. President John Taylor described the scene in that council: “The well beloved Son then addressed the Father, and instead of proposing to carry out any plan of his own, knowing what His Father’s will was, said, ‘Thy will be done;’ ‘I will carry out thy plans and thy designs, and, as man will fall, I will offer myself as an atonement according to thy will, O God. Neither do I wish the honor, but thine be the glory;’ and a covenant was entered into between Him and His Father, in which He agreed to atone for the sins of the world; and He thus, as stated, became the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.”¹¹ Moroni closes his account by testifying of the role the Atonement plays in this

covenant, that we are “sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot” (Moroni 10:33). Because of that promise obtained from the Father, Jesus is able to work out our salvation and make intercession for us. As our advocate, He obtains a promise from the Father that by His Atonement and merits, offered on our behalf, we can be justified. Mormon wrote to his son that this is our hope, “to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise” (Moroni 7:41).

The role of the Savior interceding on our behalf under this covenant with the Father is witnessed throughout the Book of Mormon. We are told that the Messiah “shall make intercession for all” (2 Nephi 2:9), that He “standeth up to plead” (2 Nephi 13:13) and “pleadeth the cause of his people” (2 Nephi 8:22; see also Jacob 3:1). It is the Father who gives “the Son power to make intercession” (Mosiah 15:8), and Jesus “advocateth the cause of the children of men” (Moroni 7:28). No one can then “dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8). It is “relying wholly upon the merits of him” (2 Nephi 31:19; see also Moroni 6:4) that saves us, as we only receive a remission of sins “through his merits” (Helaman 14:13). Christ has the power to make intercession for us based upon His merits, and He in turn covenants with us so that we can apply His redeeming blood. It is through this covenant that He becomes the Father of the covenant and of us, His children.

A prime example as to how Jesus intercedes on our behalf as the Father of the covenant is in His visit to the Americas in 3 Nephi. In chapter 17 Jesus prays to the Father in behalf of the multitude, and the people “heard him pray for us unto the Father” (3 Nephi 17:17). In chapter 19 He prays for His disciples: “Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words” (3 Nephi 19:23; see also 19:28). He prays “for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me” (3 Nephi 19:29). They are those who by covenant become His children for whom He can intercede. As the intercessor

with Heavenly Father, Jesus asks them to pray to the Father in His name (see 3 Nephi 27:28). Using Jesus as an example, can we intercede on behalf of our children through covenants?

One of the great teachings in the Book of Mormon is how promises of intercession can be obtained from the Lord, our Father in the covenant. The prophet Lehi taught in the first three chapters of 2 Nephi, given in the New World, the pattern of how promises come by covenants and benefit posterity. In chapter 1, the promised land is used as an example as to how covenants work. Father Lehi spoke to his family “concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained” (2 Nephi 1:3), a promise he had obtained earlier (see 1 Nephi 5:5). He then explains that the promise was obtained by way of a covenant with the Lord, and the promise would be passed on to his children (see 2 Nephi 1:5). The conditions of the covenant are then set forth in clear “if-then” covenant language, with connected blessings and consequences (see 1:7). He then emphasizes personally how “I, Lehi, have obtained a promise” (1:9) by way of covenant. He also expresses his fears that some of his children may be “cut off” (1:17) by not keeping the covenant, that by their choices they may be “cut off from [the Lord’s] presence” (1:20).

In chapter 2 of 2 Nephi, Lehi teaches the role of agency and choice in the plan of salvation to not only Jacob (see 2:1), but also all of his sons (see 2:14, 28, 30). He teaches that “the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself” (2:16), and that “they are free to choose” (2:27). Lehi also emphasizes that he is speaking these things with “none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls” (2:30). Finally, in chapter 3, Father Lehi speaks to his youngest son, Joseph, and tells him of his namesake, Joseph who was sold into Egypt, “and great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph” (2 Nephi 3:4). Lehi outlines how ancient Joseph “obtained a promise of the Lord” that out of his posterity the Lord “would raise up a righteous branch” (3:5). The Lord told ancient Joseph that his posterity would be brought “to the knowledge of the covenants” (3:7) and that His word would go “unto the seed of thy loins” (3:11). Ancient Joseph prophesies

regarding “this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins” (3:14). The effects of this promise on his posterity will be “as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust” (3:19). After explaining the covenant and promise that ancient Joseph had obtained for the benefit of his posterity, Lehi tells his son Joseph, “Wherefore, *because of this covenant* thou art blessed” (3:23; emphasis added). Interceding on behalf of his children and posterity, ancient Joseph obtained a promise from the Lord for them. The fact that the Book of Mormon would come forth in the latter days to the seed of Joseph is an example of how covenants can affect one’s posterity.

The doctrine of interceding on behalf of one’s children through covenants was taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother.”¹² Is it automatic that the posterity will then receive a celestial glory? Why did ancient Joseph’s covenant, which was to “all his seed” (2 Nephi 4:2), not have the same blessing and effect for Laman? It is because of the role of agency outlined by Lehi in 2 Nephi chapter 2. Even with those covenants, we still have our agency and choice to respond by obedience or not. President Joseph Fielding Smith warns that “all children born under the covenant belong to their parents in eternity, but that does not mean that they, because of that birthright, will inherit celestial glory. The faith and faithfulness of fathers and mothers will not save disobedient children.”¹³

What do the covenants do then to help one’s children? The effect of the covenant is to seek after them, to “cry from the dust; yea, even repentance,” to “make strong in their faith, unto the remembering of my covenants” (2 Nephi 3:20–21). As described by Elder Orson F. Whitney, “Though some sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold.”¹⁴ The key is if they will “hearken unto the words” (2 Nephi 3:23) and respond by obedience. Agency is a factor, and Alma later records “the promises of the Lord [are] extended unto them on the conditions of repentance” (Alma 17:15). President

James E. Faust testified, “Children of eternal sealings may have visited upon them the divine promises made to their valiant forebears who nobly kept their covenants. Covenants remembered by parents will be remembered by God. The children may thus become the beneficiaries and inheritors of these great covenants and promises. This is because they are the children of the covenant.”¹⁵ The power of those promises obtained by covenant can help lead them to salvation.

The promises obtained by ancient Joseph are referred to elsewhere in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 9:53; 25:21) and also obtained by others. Lehi and Nephi both obtained them (see 2 Nephi 29:2), as did Jacob, who declared that through the promise “our children shall be restored” (2 Nephi 10:2). Enos used the same pattern to obtain the promise: pray and labor so the Lord will grant desires by their faith (see Enos 1:12), and afterward he declared, “He covenanted with me” (Enos 1:16). Moroni stated the process: “It is by faith that my fathers have obtained the promise” (Ether 12:22).

The Book of Mormon records other examples of those who prayed for and obtained promises from the Lord on behalf of their children. Alma the Elder prayed and pled for the Lord to intercede on behalf of his wayward son Alma. The Lord responded by sending an angel (see Mosiah 27:14). That angel helped to “feel” after wayward Alma and call him to repentance, and he responded. King Mosiah inquired of the Lord and obtained a promise from Him on behalf of his missionary sons that they would be safe among the Lamanites (see Mosiah 28:6–7). Those promises had a direct effect on Mosiah’s son Ammon, for in dangerous circumstances he was protected by that covenant (see Alma 17:35–37; 19:23). In the Book of Mormon, parents’ hearts and desires turn toward their children and posterity, and they seek for their welfare. Through our covenants and faith, we can obtain promises from the Lord and bless our children and intercede on their behalf.

PARENTING BY TEACHING

Another aspect of the Savior’s divine nature that parents can learn from the Book of Mormon is His teaching. We learn not just

from the fact that He taught but also from the way in which He taught. The Lord's pattern is to teach and instruct so that His children can then use their agency wisely. He does this not only by telling us what we should do but by teaching doctrines and principles so we know why we should do it. In fact, the Lord expects us to follow His way and keep His commandments only "after having made known unto them the plan of redemption" (Alma 12:32). The Book of Mormon testifies that it is "the Lord thy God who teacheth thee to profit" (1 Nephi 20:17), for "the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3). Many times the Savior teaches directly by His words, or voice, to His children in the covenant.¹⁶ By direct communication, Nephi "was instructed of the Lord" (1 Nephi 17:18), as was Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 18:11) and the brother of Jared (see Ether 2:16). Alma testifies that "the Lord doth counsel in wisdom" (Alma 29:8), and the Lord told Nephi that blessed are those who "lend an ear unto my counsel" (2 Nephi 28:30). As a loving parent, the Lord speaks to, instructs, and counsels His children.

When teaching, the Savior also "shows" His children. Through visions, demonstration, metaphor, and example, He gives them a way to visualize and see what He means. As the Book of Mormon opened, Lehi was taught by the Lord and "saw and heard much" (1 Nephi 1:6), was "carried away in a vision" (1:8), and prophesied according to what "he had both seen and heard" (1:18). In the great vision of the tree of life given by the Lord, Lehi was taught visually and stated, "I cast my eyes round about" (8:13; see 8:26). He "looked to behold" (8:14), and there was much he "saw in a vision" (8:36). In that vision, the Lord used a variety of symbols and objects to teach including the tree, the rod of iron, the river of water, and the great building (see 1 Nephi 8). When Nephi desired to see the same things and had his own vision from the Lord, it was also a sensory experience. In his vision (see 1 Nephi 11–14), some form of the words *see*, *look*, and *behold* occurs more than 175 times.¹⁷ When Nephi was commanded to construct a ship, he "did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me" (1 Nephi 18:2), and he would later testify that the Lord "hath given me knowledge by

visions” (2 Nephi 4:23). Jacob stated that “the Lord has shown me” those at Jerusalem (6:8), that “it has been shown unto me” those who perished (10:2), and Nephi, son of Helaman, declared he was an “eye-witness” to “know concerning the ministry of Christ” (3 Nephi 7:15). In the great vision given to the brother of Jared, the Lord “showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth” and “withheld them not from his sight” (Ether 3:25). Moroni testified that “the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things” about the latter days, and “Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me” (Mormon 8:34–35). In all these examples, the Lord taught visually to His covenant children by “showing” and using symbols and imagery.

The Lord showed His covenant children the right way most effectively by His example. Nephi taught that the reason Jesus was baptized was to “set the example before them” (2 Nephi 31:9). When the Savior appeared to the Nephites, He immediately allowed them to have a sensory knowledge of Him by feeling and seeing the prints in His hands and feet. The multitude “did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety” (3 Nephi 11:15). He then showed them “after this manner ye shall baptize” (11:27) and “after this manner therefore pray ye” (13:9), demonstrating not just by word but by example what they were to do. In giving instructions on the sacrament, He said, “This shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done” (18:6). He again told them, “As I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray” (18:16), and they were to do “that which ye have seen me do” (18:24).

He also gave each of them the opportunity to be taught individually in addition to being taught in groups. When the multitude came forth to feel the prints in his hands, they did so “one by one” (3 Nephi 11:15) so they could witness for themselves. When He blessed the children, He did so “one by one” (17:21), and angels descended so that all could see “every man for himself” (17:25). In teaching and ordaining His disciples, He did so “one by one” (18:6) and personally interviewed them “one by one” (28:1) to know their desires. The Lord teaches not only by words but by “showing” and example, and He does so on an individual basis.

Others have written regarding the way parents in the Book of Mormon have taught,¹⁸ but some examples of the consistency, content, and method of their teaching will suffice here. Righteous parents taught their children; Nephi pointedly begins the Book of Mormon record with these words: “I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father” (1 Nephi 1:1). Enos salutes his father, Jacob, with the statement that “my father . . . was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Enos 1:1). King Benjamin caused his sons to “be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies” (Mosiah 1:2). He also “taught them concerning the records” that they might have known the commandments and not “suffered in ignorance” (1:3). In the Book of Mormon, approximately 20 percent of the writings about Alma’s ministry deal with his teachings to his sons (see Alma 36–42).¹⁹ The bulk of that instruction to his wayward son Corianton dealt with understanding doctrinal issues and the plan of salvation. The faithfulness of the two thousand stripling warriors was due to the fact that “they had been taught to keep the commandments” (Alma 53:21). Taught by whom? “They had been taught by their mothers” (56:47), and they did obey the words “that their mothers had taught them” (57:21). There were many things about repentance and the power of the Redeemer that “Helaman taught to his sons” (Helaman 5:13), from which “they went forth, keeping the commandments of God” (5:14). Mormon taught his newly called missionary son, Moroni, by way of letters that gave instruction and doctrine (see Moroni 8:1; 9:1). These parents in the Book of Mormon took upon themselves the responsibility of teaching and instructing their children.

Not only did Book of Mormon parents teach, but they gave their children individual attention in their instruction. Lehi taught his sons collectively (see 2 Nephi 1:19), but he also individually addressed Nephi (see 1 Nephi 3:2), Jacob (see 2 Nephi 2:1), Joseph (see 3:1), Laman (see 4:3), Lemuel (see 4:8–9), Sam (see 4:11), and their families. Alma addressed each of his sons on an individual basis, directing counsel to Helaman (see Alma 36–37), Shiblon (see

Alma 38), and Corianton (see Alma 39–42). Parents have been commanded by the Lord in this dispensation to teach their children the doctrines of the gospel (see D&C 68:25), and that has been reiterated by the First Presidency: “We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles.”²⁰ Too many parents allow their children to make decisions without instructing them in gospel principles for fear of offending them. President Heber J. Grant declared: “I have heard men and women say that they were going to let their sons and daughters grow to maturity before they sought to teach them the principles of the gospel, that they were not going to cram the gospel down them in their childhood. . . . It is folly to imagine that our children will grow up with a knowledge of the gospel without teaching. . . . Parents are deceiving themselves in imagining that their children will be born with a knowledge of the gospel.”²¹

As Enos wrestled over his sins, it was “the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life” that sank deep into his heart (Enos 1:3). Alma the Younger was in even deeper despair, and the thought that saved him was when he “remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world” (Alma 36:17). The gospel knowledge children gain and base their decisions on is greatly affected by whether or not parents teach and by what they teach.

In addition to teaching by their words, righteous parents in the Book of Mormon helped their children visualize and see to understand. Lehi taught his boys by use of metaphor and image as he compared Laman to a river and Lemuel to a valley (see 1 Nephi 2:9–10). In relating his vision of the tree of life, Lehi described the various symbols and objects the Lord showed him (see 1 Nephi 8). He also taught his children about the house of Israel by using the scriptural metaphor of an olive tree (see 1 Nephi 10:12–14). Lehi’s sons Nephi and Jacob wrote the words of Isaiah, full of metaphors, symbols, and visuals, and Nephi stated, “I will send them forth unto all my children” (2 Nephi 11:2). The secret convert among the Lamanites, Abish, attributed her conversion to the “vision of her

father” (Alma 19:16) that she was undoubtably taught. Other fathers in the Book of Mormon used imagery to expand the view and understanding of their children. Alma, for example, used the Liahona as a symbol to teach his son Helaman about following the words of Christ (see Alma 37:38–45). Helaman in turn instructed his sons by using a rock to visualize the strength of a foundation built upon Christ (see Helaman 5:12). The imagery used by righteous parents enabled their children to visualize gospel principles and deepen understanding.

Besides using words and objects to help their children see, these righteous parents used their lives as examples to follow. Nephi followed the same pattern that his father Lehi had shown him to know for himself the things his father taught,²² and Nephi also followed his father’s example in keeping the records of the people (see 1 Nephi 6:1). Even through periods of little-known Nephite history, the records were kept and passed on according to the commandments and example of the fathers (see Jarom 1:1, 15; Omni 1:1, 3, 9). King Mosiah followed his father’s righteous example, “that he might do according to that which his father had done in all things” (Mosiah 6:7). The two thousand stripling warriors were true to their covenants (see Alma 53:16–21) as they had learned from the covenant faithfulness of their parents (see 24:17–23). When Helaman filled the judgment seat righteously, “he did walk after the ways of his father” (Helaman 3:20). President Howard W. Hunter declared, “The greatest training that can be given to a child is that which comes from the example of parents. Parents need to set the example for young people to follow.”²³ Poor examples that parents set can have the opposite, detrimental effect, as when Jacob reminded some fathers of their “children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them” and that “because of your filthiness, [ye] bring your children unto destruction” (Jacob 3:10). President Joseph F. Smith advised: “Don’t do anything yourselves that you would have to say to your boy, ‘Don’t do it.’ Live so that you can say, ‘My son, do as I do, follow me, emulate my example.’ That is the way fathers should live, every one of us; and it is a shame, a weakening, shameful thing for any

member of the Church to pursue a course that he knows is not right, and that he would rather his children should not follow.”²⁴ The righteous examples of parents found in the Book of Mormon greatly influenced their children.

CONCLUSION

Parents in the Book of Mormon taught their children and worked by covenants to help them. These aspects of parenting were modeled by the Savior Himself, who is an example of divine parenthood in His role as Father of the covenant. The Book of Mormon has many other attributes of the Lord that pertain to parenting and deserve exploring—for example, His mercy and forgiveness, His tireless labors and nourishing, and His techniques for gathering in those who are lost. Most of all, consider His love for His children, which is the driving force behind His efforts. Jesus truly represents the Father and shows us our example of parenting. Elder Hugh B. Brown stated: “The Son was in his express image. He revealed a compassionate Father, a divine Parent, one in whom were incorporated the attributes of justice, judgment, mercy and truth. He revealed a God of love, of forgiveness, and understanding.”²⁵ It is that express image of a divine parent that we strive to emulate as we prepare for the eternities. It is a foundational teaching of the gospel to become like our heavenly parents, and the Book of Mormon shows us the attributes of divine parenthood.

NOTES

1. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 26.
2. Kimball, *Teachings*, 31.
3. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 301. Those who obtain exaltation shall have “an increase” (D&C 131:4), a “continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19), or “continuation of the lives” (D&C 132:22).
4. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 8:63.

5. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 503.
6. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 7:16.
7. Susan Easton Black, *Finding Christ through the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 20–21.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 183.
9. See James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:26–34.
10. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 183.
11. John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882), 97.
12. Smith, *Teachings*, 321.
13. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 2:91.
14. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, April 1929, 110; quoted by Boyd K. Packer, “Our Moral Environment,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 68. Joseph Fielding Smith also testified that those born under the covenant “may receive greater guidance, a greater protection, a greater inspiration from the Spirit of the Lord” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:90).
15. James E. Faust, “The Greatest Challenge in the World—Good Parenting,” *Ensign*, November 1990, 35.
16. He speaks by voice to Lehi (see 1 Nephi 16:9; 18:5), Nephi, son of Lehi (see 2 Nephi 31:12), Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 16:8), Jacob (see Jacob 7:5), Enos (see Enos 1:5–8), Alma the Elder (see Mosiah 24:13; 26:14), Alma the Younger (see Mosiah 27:25), Ammon (see Alma 20:2), Nephi, son of Helaman (see Helaman 10:3), Samuel (see Helaman 13:3), Nephi, son of Nephi (see 3 Nephi 1:12), Mormon (see Mormon 3:14), the brother of Jared (see Ether 2:14), and others.
17. Gerald N. Lund, “The Mysteries of God Revealed by the Power of the Holy Ghost,” in *First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 153.
18. See E. Douglas Clark and Robert S. Clark, *Fathers and Sons in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991).
19. Clark and Clark, *Fathers and Sons*, 133.
20. Letter from the First Presidency, 11 February 1999, *Ensign*, June 1999, 80.
21. Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1969), 155.
22. Lehi hears the word from the Lord’s servants (see 1 Nephi 1:4), prays to the Lord with all his heart (see 1 Nephi 1:5), receives his own witness (see 1 Nephi

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1:6–14), and goes forth to tell others (see 1 Nephi 1:18). Nephi hears the words from his father, prays to the Lord with great desire, receives his own witness (see 1 Nephi 2:16), and goes to tell others (see 1 Nephi 2:17–18). Nephi repeats this pattern again in relation to understanding his father's vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 10:17; 11:1–14:30; 15:11–36). Lehi's grandson Enos followed the pattern as he heard the words of his father (Enos 1:3), prays to the Lord with diligence (see Enos 1:4, 12), receives his own witness (see Enos 1:5–10, 13), and goes to tell others (see Enos 1:19).

23. Howard W. Hunter, *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 146.

24. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 285.

25. Hugh B. Brown, in Conference Report, April 1955, 80–81.