

Holding Fast to Sacred Things

by Jason L | Jul 21, 2016 | Agency, Book of Mormon, Compassion, Featured, Fellowship, LDS Missions, LGBTQ, Obedience | 2 comments



Sometime on my mission I read Alma 37 with new eyes. The main focus of the chapter is Alma's counsel to Helaman about how to care for the records of the Nephites. I'd always read it as just another instance of the Book of Mormon reinforcing its own significance. But this time as I read the Spirit whispered that this passage applied to me and the sacred things with which I had been entrusted.

It was a difficult time in my mission, when I was trying to make sense of my role as a missionary. I had learned that conversions weren't dependent solely on my own diligence (they weren't a 'blessing' for my obedience) but an outcome of the agency of others. This was a healthy realization but a discouraging one which seemed to undercut my earlier motivation.

Alma 37 offered me a new paradigm of approaching missionary work. Consider especially these verses:

“And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things, which

are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations.

“And now behold, I tell you by the spirit of prophecy, that if ye transgress the commandments of God, behold, these things which are sacred shall be taken away from you by the power of God, and ye shall be delivered up unto Satan, that he may sift you as chaff before the wind.

“But if ye keep the commandments of God, and do with these things which are sacred according to that which the Lord doth command you, (for you must appeal unto the Lord for all things whatsoever ye must do with them) behold, no power of earth or hell can take them from you, for God is powerful to the fulfilling of all his words” (Alma 37:14-16).

What the Spirit whispered to me as I read those verses was that:

1. I had been entrusted with teaching those in my area who wanted to learn.
2. They were sacred unto the Lord.
3. Their sacredness was not dependent on whether or not they converted.
4. My opportunity for joy with them – my relationship to these sacred beings – was contingent on my treating them as sacred beings should be treated.
5. If I treated them as I ought, our relationship could be eternal.
6. If not, I was the one who would suffer the consequences of being separated from them.

From my perspective, this was (and is) a much healthier paradigm. It allowed me to judge my own efforts more fairly and to view others with a greater measure of love, respect, and awe. Instead of seeing potential converts all around me, I could view others primarily as children of God with whom I might be privileged to share in a sacred relationship. Part of treating them as sacred included loving my neighbors unconditionally and recognizing (and preserving) their agency. Though I am still far from perfecting these qualities, I feel more certain that I at least have the right goals in mind in my relationships.

In my post-mission life, these insights are part of what concerns me when I see others leaving the Church. I don't worry so much about them, knowing they remain sacred and that the Lord will watch over them. I'm worried about *us*, those who remain in the Church and who are losing out on sacred relationships. This is especially the case with our dwindling numbers of LGBTQ members. If they are leaving because we have not treated them as we ought, *we* are the ones who are being “delivered up unto Satan, that he may sift [us] as chaff before the wind.” That's a scary thought and one that portends

a difficult time for the Church. We have miles to go before we reach Zion.

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Jason L

Jason L grew up in Arizona as a Mormon Democrat with a lawyer father – and heard all the jokes. Now he's got a Ph.D. in history, is married to a sugar sorceress, and enjoys raising their sweet son

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Daniel on July 21, 2016 at 6:51 am

I LOVE this perspective.

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Jason L on July 21, 2016 at 7:44 am

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