



I love Moroni chapter 6. I love that Moroni, fleeing for his life and carrying around this heavy record, took the time to record some of the little details about Christ's church that were missing. I love what he wrote about what the Nephite church *was*.

"And now I speak concerning baptism," he began, before sharing some of the most direct scriptural commentary on the experience of belonging to our Savior's church. Here I'd like to focus on two verses:

“And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.


“And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.” (Moroni 10:4-6).

Three elements stand out to me here. First, there was great care shown for the individual members of the church. They were counted among the fold. Their names were taken. They were nourished individually, to ensure that they received God’s word, spoke with Him in prayer, and learned to rely upon Christ. They did not just give speeches, but also spoke “one with another.”

Second, the function of the church required openness and vulnerability. You couldn’t keep people “continually watchful unto prayer” or be sure that they were “relying only upon the merits of Christ” if you closed off communication about their deepest struggles.

Instead, Moroni wrote that a primary purpose of gathering was “to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.” I have been in LDS Church settings where that happened. I think of missionary companionships, a bishopric I served in, a Gospel Essentials class I was privileged to teach, and various times in my work with youth and primary children.

But I’ve also been in Sunday School classes and priesthood meetings where we merely repeated the same cliches, focused on intellectual puzzles, and maybe told some new personal stories, but all with the same familiar theme: all is well in Zion. For those who aren’t feeling comfortable in Zion, those can be excruciating lessons to sit through – a spiritual “dreary wilderness”.

My strong suspicion is that Moroni wrote this chapter because he deeply missed the church. Wandering alone in the wilderness, with no short-term hope, he must have longed for that beautiful fellowship of the saints. Unfortunately, I know many people who have left the Church now who don’t miss it. That’s not because they are bad people whose own sins have made them uncomfortable. The New Testament is replete with examples of sinners who felt comfortable around Jesus. He had a way of inviting them in and making them feel welcome. I don’t think such embracing love implied that he was condoning their sins. Nor do I believe that charity made them more like  sin. Instead, inviting them in increased the potential for His atoning

grace to  them.

Which brings me to a third element that stands out in these verses: Jesus. All this church fellowship and worship was focused on Christ, "the author and the finisher of their faith." Christ's church in the Americas was not a place of boundary marking or therapeutic reassurance. The central focus was neither prophets nor priesthood (though they had both). Instead, it was a church and a worship style focused intensely on ensuring that each individual was "relying alone upon the merits of Christ," something we all must learn and which we are all commanded to teach.

And so, I will continue longing for a Moroni 6 church until that spirit permeates all of our meetings, until every time two or more are gathered together Christ's healing presence is immanent as we speak - as He would speak - regarding the welfare of our souls.

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