

4 February 2024

“Thou shalt construct a ship”

Dear Sisters and Elders,

We all know the story of how the Lord commanded Nephi to build a ship. Something he had never done before, although perhaps as a young man he had been around the shipyards just enough to know that the ship the Lord was having him build was not being built *“after the manner of men”* (1 Nephi 18:2). It is in 1 Nephi 17:8 that the Lord first commands Nephi to begin the construction. *“And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters.”* Nephi then asks the Lord where he should go to find ore to make the tools so he could make a ship (it appears that Nephi was skilled in the art of metalwork). The Lord told him where to find the ore and then Nephi made a bellows from the skins of beasts to *“blow the fire”* to have enough heat to melt the ore. It was then that Laman and Lemuel began to murmur against Nephi and mock him, claiming he lacked judgment and could not build a ship (1 Nephi 17:19). Nephi responds to their mocking with a history of Moses and the children of Israel, and their trials associated with disobedience. Near the end of chapter 17 when he finishes with the history lesson, he chastises Laman and Lemuel for their hard-heartedness - and that makes them both very angry. They attempt to take him and throw him into *“the depths of the sea”* and Nephi responds with a powerful command, *“In the name of the Almighty God, I command you that ye touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither even as a dried reed; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for God shall smite him.”* This confounded his brothers and caused them to think twice about doing him harm. When Nephi later reached out to them, they were physically shocked and they fell to the ground. This experience brought temporary humility and they agreed to help him to construct the ship.

Let’s talk about the lessons we can learn from this powerful story in the Book of Mormon.

There are many different kinds of “ships” that we build throughout our lives. Relation“ships”, Companion“ships”, Steward“ships”, and Friend“ships”. In addition, and perhaps the two most important “ships” we build, are Wor“ship” and Disciple“ship”. All of these are “ships” that we must build throughout our lives if we want to have joy, prosperity, and peace. The key to doing this is found in the same verse 8 as highlighted above. I will repeat the key phrase, ***“after the manner which I shall show thee”***. In a talk at BYU-Hawaii, Elder Valeri V. Córdón spoke on this very topic. *“If we want to reach a celestial port, we need to build our ship after the manner of God. In our journey we need to balance our profession, family, church, studies, etc. There are many things that can distract us from serving God and being leaders in our families and communities.”* He later concluded his remarks by adding, *“Build the ship of your life after the manner of God, and you will have peace, joy and happiness in your life. Jesus Christ is our example; He is the light of the world.”*

Let's look at the four simple things that did Nephi did that enabled him to "*construct a ship after the manner*" which God showed him.

- 1) He did go into the mount oft and did pray often to the Lord.
- 2) He kept the commandments of the Lord.
- 3) He did exhort his brothers to be faithful and diligent.
- 4) He acted. (He did go and find the ore where the Lord said it would be, made the tools, and with the eventual help of his entire family, built the ship.)

And as a result of his willingness to do these four simple things, the Lord made promises and poured out blessings upon him. [see 1 Nephi 17:13]

- The Lord showed him great things.
- The Lord made their food sweet.
- The Lord promised to be their light in the wilderness.
- The Lord prepared the way for them.
- The Lord helped them to successfully construct a ship (even Laman and Lemuel were amazed that it was good, and that the workmanship was "*exceedingly fine*").
- The Lord would lead them to the promised land (and they would know with a surety that the Lord had done it).
- The Lord would tell them that Jerusalem had been destroyed after they left (they would then know that the Lord had delivered them).

And now for application to us as full-time servants in the Ghana Kumasi Mission fully engaged in gathering Israel. When we build our lives after the manner the Lord shows us, we will:

- Be led by His light through our own wilderness to a path prepared by Him. (John 8:12)
- Be led to a better life filled with greater peace and prosperity. (Psalm 122:6-7)
- Have stronger friendships, relationships, and the ability to fulfill our stewardships. (D&C 88:123-124; D&C 51:19)
- Practice Christ-centered discipleship through devoted worship. (Matthew 16:24; Mosiah 18:9; John 4:23; 2 Nephi 25:29)
- Be delivered from destruction. (Psalm 22:4-5; Mosiah 24:21)
- Know with a surety that He is leading us. (Alma 13:28; D&C 136:22)
- Clearly see the hand of the Lord in our lives. (Alma 2:28; Ether 10:28; D&C 97:19)

May we in the Ghana Kumasi Mission seek the will of the Lord in all that we do. May we have ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand the Lord's manner of helping us build our own "life ships" that will lead us to our own promised land.

As an addendum, today marks the end of the 29-day mission fast. It is my hope and prayer that you have strengthened and edified your desire to be a consecrated disciple of Jesus Christ. Please don't go back to doing the things you have been "fasting" from. Please continue to do

the things you have been “fasting” for. For the last 29 days you have been building “ships” in a manner shown to you by God. May you continue that journey.

All My Love,

President Kunz

This letter was based on concepts developed by Benjamin Hyrum White, a BYU adjunct religion professor and shared with Tyler Griffin. Tyler mentioned it in his Book of Mormon “Come Follow Me Insights” video.