

## Introduction

Because of pride and exceeding wealth, the Nephites during the time of Jacob succumbed to many sins, particularly the sin of immorality. Feeling the weight of his prophetic calling, Jacob denounced these evil practices and boldly called the people to repentance. When have you witnessed the prophet and other Church leaders speak plainly to share an important message? By understanding the divine mandate of a priesthood leader to give spiritual correction, you will better understand the warning voice of modern-day prophets in an ever-increasingly wicked world.

Note that after teaching the Nephites the consequences of their sins, Jacob turned their attention to the Savior. He taught that we have power to overcome sin and weakness through the grace of Christ. Therefore he asked, “Why not speak of the atonement of Christ . . . ?” By so doing, we gain “knowledge of a resurrection and the world to come” (Jacob 4:12). Then we can develop a greater appreciation for the gift of redemption from sin and death that the Savior provides.

## Commentary

### Jacob 1:2–8. Jacob’s Purpose in Writing

- Notice that Jacob had the same intent that his brother Nephi did as he prepared to continue keeping the record on the small plates. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles put Jacob’s intent into perspective:

“Jacob seems to have been particularly committed to presenting the doctrine of Christ. Given the amount of space he gave to his witness of the Savior’s atonement, Jacob clearly considered this basic doctrine the most sacred of teachings and the greatest of revelations.

“‘We . . . had many revelations, and the spirit of much prophecy,’ Jacob said, ‘wherefore, we knew of Christ and his kingdom, which should come.

“‘Wherefore, we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ. . . .

“‘Wherefore, we would to God . . . that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world.’ [Jacob 1:6–8].

“No prophet in the Book of Mormon, by temperament or personal testimony, seems to have gone about that work of persuasion any more faithfully than did Jacob. He scorned the praise of the world, he taught straight, solid, even painful doctrine, and he knew the Lord personally. His is a classic Book of Mormon example of a young man’s decision to suffer the cross and bear the shame of the world in defense of the name of Christ. Life, including those difficult early years when he saw the wickedness of Laman and Lemuel bring his father and mother down to their graves in grief, was never easy for this firstborn in the wilderness” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 62–63).

### Jacob 1:9–19. Nephi and the Reign of the Nephite Kings

- After Nephi separated from his brethren, who later became known as Lamanites (see 2 Nephi 5), he established a kingdom among his people, and they came to be known as Nephites. Although reluctant, Nephi became the first king (see 2 Nephi 5:18–19). Nephi referred to his time as a king-leader as “my reign” (1 Nephi 10:1). The second king and the other kings who succeeded him were all referred to as Nephi (see Jacob 1:11–15). The record of the kings and the secular history was primarily kept in the large plates of Nephi (see Jarom 1:14; Omni 1:11; Words of Mormon 1:10).

## Major Leaders during Nephite History—600 B.C. to A.D. 421

Year-Reign of Judges	Christian Year	King, Chief Judge, or Governor	Historical or Church Leader	Military Leader
	600 B.C.	Nephi (2 Nephi 5:18–19)	Nephi (1 Nephi 1:1–3; 19:1–4)	Nephi (2 Nephi 5:14; Jacob 1:10)
	544 B.C.	Others designated (Jacob 1:9)	Jacob (2 Nephi 5:26; Jacob 1:1–4, 17–18)	
	544–420 B.C.		Enos and many prophets (Enos 1:22, 26)	
	399 B.C.	“Mighty men in the faith of the Lord” (Jarom 1:7)	Jarom and the prophets of the Lord (Jarom 1:1, 10–11)	“Mighty men in the faith of the Lord” (Jarom 1:7)
	361 B.C.		Omni (Omni 1:1–3)	
	317 B.C.		Amaron (Omni 1:4–8) Chemish (Omni 1:9)	
	279–130 B.C.	Mosiah <sup>1</sup> (Omni 1:12–23) Benjamin (Omni 1:23–25; Words of Mormon)	Abinadom (Omni 1:10–11) Amaleki (Omni 1:12) Benjamin with the holy prophets (Words of Mormon 1:16–18; Mosiah 1–6)	Mosiah <sup>1</sup> (Omni 1:12–23) Benjamin (Omni 1:23–25)
	124 B.C.	Mosiah <sup>2</sup> (Mosiah 1:15)	Mosiah <sup>2</sup> (Mosiah 6:3)	
	122 B.C.		Alma <sup>1</sup> (Mosiah 25:19; 26:28)	
1	91 B.C.	Alma <sup>2</sup> (Mosiah 29:44)	Alma <sup>2</sup> (Mosiah 29:42)	Alma <sup>2</sup> (Alma 2:16)
9	83 B.C.	Nephihah (Alma 4:17, 20)		
18	74 B.C.			Moroni (Alma 43:17)
19	73 B.C.		Helaman <sup>1</sup> (Alma 37:1; 45:20–23)	
24	68–67 B.C.	Pahoran (Alma 50:39–40)		
32	60 B.C.			Moronihah (Alma 62:43)
36	56 B.C.		Shiblon (Alma 63:1)	
39	53 B.C.		Helaman <sup>2</sup> (Alma 63:11)	
40	52 B.C.	Pahoran <sup>2</sup> (Helaman 1:1, 5) and Pacumeni (Helaman 1:13)		
42	50 B.C.	Helaman <sup>2</sup> (Helaman 2:1–2)		
53	39 B.C.	Nephi <sup>1</sup> (Helaman 3:37)	Nephi <sup>1</sup> (Helaman 3:37)	

Year-Reign of Judges	Christian Year	King, Chief Judge, or Governor	Historical or Church Leader	Military Leader
62	30 B.C.	Cezoram (Helaman 4:18; 5:1)		Last reference to Moronihah (Helaman 4:18)
66	26 B.C.	Cezoram's son (Helaman 6:15)		
?	?	Seezoram (Helaman 6:39; 9:23)		
92	A.D. 1	Lachoneus <sup>1</sup> (3 Nephi 1:1)	Nephi <sup>2</sup> (3 Nephi 1:1–2)	
	A.D. 16			Gidgiddoni (3 Nephi 3:18)
	A.D. 30	Lachoneus <sup>2</sup> (3 Nephi 6:19)		
	?		Nephi <sup>3</sup> (?) (Superscription to 4 Nephi)	
	A.D. 110		Amos <sup>1</sup> (4 Nephi 1:19–20)	
	A.D. 194		Amos <sup>2</sup> (4 Nephi 1:21)	
	A.D. 305		Ammaron (4 Nephi 1:47)	
	c. A.D. 321–335		Mormon (Mormon 1:1–3)	
	A.D. 326			Mormon (Mormon 2:2)
	A.D. 385		Moroni (Mormon 6:6)	

### Jacob 1:15. What Is a *Concubine*?

- *Concubines* in the Old Testament “were considered to be *secondary wives*, that is, wives who did not have the same standing in the caste system then prevailing as did those wives who were not called concubines” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 154). Concubines had full protection as wives and did not violate the law of chastity when the marriages were approved by the Lord (see D&C 132:34–43). During the time period of the Book of Mormon, however, concubines were not approved by the Lord (see Jacob 2:27; Mosiah 11:2).

### Jacob 1:18. “Consecrated Priests and Teachers”

- President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) defined the kind of priests and teachers that were referred to in Jacob 1:18: “The Nephites officiated by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood from the days of Lehi to the days of the appearance of our Savior among them.

It is true that Nephi ‘consecrated Jacob and Joseph’ that they should be priests and teachers over the land of the Nephites, but the fact that plural terms *priests and teachers* were used indicates that this was not a reference to the definite office in the priesthood in either case, but it was a general assignment to teach, direct, and admonish the people” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 1:124).

### Jacob 1:19. “We Did Magnify Our Office unto the Lord”

- While discussing the duty of priesthood holders to serve others, President Thomas S. Monson explained: “What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it, to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men.

“And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 59; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 54).

**Jacob 1:19; 2:2. “Answering the Sins of the People upon Our Own Heads”**

- Individuals who have a responsibility to lead in the Church shoulder a sobering responsibility. Jacob taught that when a leader neglects to teach the word of God to those whom he is called to lead, he becomes partly responsible for their sins. President Hugh B. Brown (1883–1975) of the First Presidency elaborated on the responsibility Jacob described:

“President John Taylor said on one occasion, speaking to the brethren of the priesthood: ‘If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty.’

“This is a challenging statement. If I by reason of sins of commission or omission lose what I might have had in the hereafter, I myself must suffer and, doubtless, my loved ones with me. But if I fail in my assignment as a bishop, a stake president, a mission president, or one of the General Authorities of the Church—if any of us fail to teach, lead, direct, and help to save those under our direction and within our jurisdiction, then the Lord will hold us responsible if they are lost as the result of our failure” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1962, 84).

**Jacob 2:8–10. Admonish “According to the Strict Commands of God”**

- Rather than teach “the word which healeth the wounded soul” (Jacob 2:8) or speak “the pleasing word of God” (v. 9), Jacob felt compelled by the Lord to address a subject that, regretfully, would “enlarge the wounds of those who [were] already wounded” (v. 9). Sometimes blunt and challenging words are necessary when a priesthood leader cries repentance to Church members.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the challenging balance of teaching the truth both sensitively and boldly:

“Jacob spends much of ten full verses apologizing, in effect, for the sins he must address and the language he must use in addressing them. He notes that he does so with ‘soberness,’ being ‘weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of [his hearers] souls’ (Jacob 2:2–3). Knowing him as we do, we would be surprised if he had said otherwise.

“Listen to the mournful tone of these passages—literally the grief of them—as he single-mindedly pursues what he has always been single-minded about—steadfast loyalty to God and His commandments.

“‘Yea, it grieveth my soul and causeth me to shrink with shame before the presence of my Maker, that I must testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts. . . .

“‘Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes, to enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds; and those who have not been wounded, instead of feasting upon the pleasing word of God have daggers placed to pierce their souls and wound their delicate minds.’ (Jacob 2:6–7, 9.)

“We are not even into the discourse per se before we sense that, quite literally, this bold and unyielding manner of preaching is almost as hard on Jacob as it is on the guilty ones in his audience. But perhaps that is as it should be always, and why Christ in his preaching was oftentimes ‘a man of sorrows.’ The commandments have to be kept, sin has to be rebuked. But even such bold positions must be taken compassionately. Even the sternest of prophets must preach from the depths of a sensitive soul” (“Jacob the Unshakable,” in *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [1995], 39–40).

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that when priesthood leaders feel “constrained” by the Spirit to give admonitions and

warnings, members of the Church have a responsibility to act upon the correction and instruction given to them:

“Last week I was talking with a member of the Quorum of the Twelve about comments we had received on our April conference talks. My friend said someone told him, ‘I surely enjoyed your talk.’ We agreed that this is not the kind of comment we like to receive. As my friend said, ‘I didn’t give that talk to be *enjoyed*. What does he think I am, some kind of entertainer?’ Another member of our quorum joined the conversation by saying, ‘That reminds me of the story of a good minister. When a parishioner said, ‘I surely enjoyed your sermon today,’ the minister replied, ‘In that case, you didn’t understand it.’”

“You may remember that this April conference I spoke on pornography. No one told me they ‘enjoyed’ that talk—not one! In fact, there was nothing enjoyable in it even for me.

“I speak of these recent conversations to teach the principle that a message given by a General Authority at a general conference—a message prepared under the influence of the Spirit to further the work of the Lord—is not given to be enjoyed. It is given to inspire, to edify, to challenge, or to correct. It is given to be heard under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, with the intended result that the listener learns from the talk and from the Spirit what he or she should *do* about it” (“The Dedication of a Lifetime” [CES fireside for young adults, May 1, 2005], 1, [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org)).

### Jacob 2:12–19. 📖 “Before Ye Seek for Riches”

• Jacob taught that God does not condemn the wealthy for their riches. Instead, any condemnation comes from their pride or misuse of their abundance (see Jacob 2:13–14). Some of the people of Nephi chose riches rather than God as the center of their lives. Their search for wealth led them to persecute their brethren rather than assist them (see vv. 18–19).



© Photospin

- President David O. McKay (1873–1970) counseled us to be cautious regarding that which we seek. Though we may obtain almost anything we work for, it may



come at a high price: “What seek ye first? What do you cherish as the dominant, the uppermost thought in your mind? What this is will largely determine your destiny. . . . You may win in this world almost anything for which you strive. If you work for

wealth, you can get it, but before you make it an end in itself, take a look at those men who have sacrificed all to the accomplishment of this purpose, at those who have desired wealth for the sake of wealth itself. Gold does not corrupt man; it is in the motive of acquiring that gold that corruption occurs” (*Treasures of Life* [1962], 174–75).

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, provided additional instruction concerning the pursuits of life:

“We want our children and their children to know that the choice of life is not between fame and obscurity, nor is the choice between wealth and poverty. The choice is between good and evil, and that is a very different matter indeed.

“When we finally understand this lesson, thereafter our happiness will not be determined by material things. We may be happy without them or successful in spite of them.

“Wealth and prominence do not always come from having earned them. Our worth is not measured by renown or by what we own. . . .

“Our lives are made up of thousands of everyday choices. Over the years these little choices will be bundled together and show clearly what we value.

“The crucial test of life, I repeat, does not center in the choice between fame and obscurity, nor between wealth and poverty. The greatest decision of life is between good and evil” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1980, 28–29; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 21).

**Jacob 2:17. “Free with Your Substance”**

- In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, fast offerings assist the poor and needy. Church leaders encourage members to be generous with their offerings. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles provided counsel regarding how much to contribute:

“How much should we pay in fast offerings? My brothers and sisters, the measure of our offering to bless the poor is a measure of our gratitude to our Heavenly Father. Will we, who have been blessed so abundantly, turn our backs on those who need our help? Paying a generous fast offering is a measure of our willingness to consecrate ourselves to relieve the suffering of others.

“Brother Marion G. Romney, who was the bishop of our ward when I was called on a mission and who later served as a member of the First Presidency of the Church, admonished:



“Be liberal in your giving, that you yourselves may grow. Don’t give just for the benefit of the poor, but give for your own welfare. Give enough so that you can give yourself into the kingdom of God through consecrating of your

means and your time’ (*Ensign*, July 1982, 4)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 97; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 75).

**Jacob 2:20–22. “Proud in Your Hearts”**

- Pride is sometimes called the great sin of the spirit; it was Satan’s sin in the premortal realm (see Isaiah 14:12–14; Moses 4:1–2). Furthermore, pride leads to failure and destruction as the Lord repeatedly warns us:

“Beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation” (D&C 23:1).

“For the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand when the earth is ripe; and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up,

saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth” (D&C 29:9).

“Be not ashamed, neither confounded; but be admonished in all your high-mindedness and pride, for it bringeth a snare upon your souls” (D&C 90:17).

“He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted” (D&C 101:42).

**JACOB 2:20–21**  
*What truth does Jacob teach to demonstrate how persecution of others is “abominable unto him who created all flesh”?*

**Jacob 2:23–30. Plural Marriage**

- Jacob clearly taught that the Lord did not want the Nephites to practice any form of plural marriage. He stated that men were to have only one wife unless the Lord commanded otherwise (see Jacob 2:27–30). In our time President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) stated the Church’s position on plural marriage:

“I wish to state categorically that this Church has nothing whatever to do with those practicing polygamy. They are not members of this Church. Most of them have never been members. They are in violation of the civil law. They know they are in violation of the law. They are subject to its penalties. The Church, of course, has no jurisdiction whatever in this matter.

“If any of our members are found to be practicing plural marriage, they are excommunicated, the most serious penalty the Church can impose. Not only are those so involved in direct violation of the civil law, they are in violation of the law of this Church. An article of our faith is binding upon us. It states, ‘We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law’ (Articles of Faith 1:12). One cannot obey the law and disobey the law at the same time. . . .

“More than a century ago God clearly revealed unto His prophet Wilford Woodruff that the practice of plural marriage should be discontinued, which means that it is now against the law of God. Even in countries where civil or religious law allows polygamy, the Church teaches that marriage must be monogamous and does not accept into its membership those practicing plural marriage” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 92; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 71–72).



### Jacob 2:28. Chastity

- Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles clearly defined the law of chastity when he taught: “Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another’s body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 51; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 38).

Elder Scott also affirmed the divine sanction of marital intimacy, as well as the divine condemnation of sexual immorality. He warned:

“Those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes. Within the sacred covenant of marriage, such relationships are according to His plan. When experienced any other way, they are against His will. They cause serious emotional and spiritual harm. Even though participants do not realize that is happening now, they will later.

“Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities. It causes powerful physical and emotional stimulation. In time, that creates an unquenchable appetite that drives the offender to ever more serious sin. It engenders selfishness and can produce aggressive acts such as brutality, abortion,

sexual abuse, and violent crime. Such stimulation can lead to acts of homosexuality, and they are evil and absolutely wrong” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 50–51; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 38).

### Jacob 2:31–35. “Many Hearts Died, Pierced with Deep Wounds”

- Many Nephite husbands had broken the hearts of their wives and lost the confidence of their children. Families can be destroyed when the law of chastity is broken. Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how more than just those who participate in the sin are affected by the consequences:

“Unchastity and infidelity bring serious consequences such as the rippling, even haunting effects of illegitimacy and fatherlessness, along with disease and the shredding of families. So many marriages hang by a thread or have already snapped. . . .

“Therefore, the keeping of the seventh commandment is such a vital *shield!* (see Exodus 20:14). By our lowering or losing that shield, the much-needed blessings of heaven are lost. No person or nation can prosper for long without those blessings” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 96; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 78).

#### **JACOB 3:1–2**

*What blessings did Jacob identify would come to the pure in heart who had been betrayed or afflicted?*

### Jacob 3:10. Damage Caused by Poor Examples

- Children constantly learn from the examples set by those around them. Unfortunately, an unrighteous example can have a destructive influence on the young. Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy cautioned, “A word to adults and parents: Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s father [Oscar Walter McConkie] counseled that when we violate any commandment, however small, our youth may choose to violate a commandment later on in life perhaps 10 times or

100 times worse and justify it on the basis of the small commandment we broke” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 15; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 14).

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles admonished parents of the Church to demonstrate personal faith and righteousness to their children:

“I think some parents may not understand that even when they feel secure in their own minds regarding matters of personal testimony, they can nevertheless make that faith too difficult for their children to detect. We can be reasonably active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints, but if we do not live lives of gospel integrity and convey to our children powerful, heartfelt convictions regarding the truthfulness of the Restoration and the divine guidance of the Church from the First Vision to this very hour, then those children may, to our regret but not surprise, turn out *not* to be visibly active, meeting-going Latter-day Saints or sometimes anything close to it.

“Not long ago Sister Holland and I met a fine young man who came in contact with us after he had been roaming around through the occult and sorting through a variety of Eastern religions, all in an attempt to find religious faith. His father, he admitted, believed in nothing whatsoever. But his grandfather, he said, was actually a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. ‘But he didn’t do much with it,’ the young man said. ‘He was always pretty cynical about the Church.’ From a grandfather who is cynical to a son who is agnostic to a grandson who is now looking desperately for what God had already once given his family! . . .

“To lead a child (or anyone else!), even inadvertently, away from faithfulness, away from loyalty and bedrock belief simply because we want to be clever or independent is license no parent nor any other person has ever been given. . . .

“Live the gospel as conspicuously as you can. Keep the covenants your children know you have made. Give priesthood blessings. And bear your testimony! Don’t just assume your children will somehow get the drift of your beliefs on their own” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 91–92; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 86).

### Jacob 3:11. “The Second Death”

- The second death is also referred to as spiritual death. The Guide to the Scriptures explains that spiritual death is “separation from God and his influences.” The spiritual death or second death Jacob referred to “occurs following the death of the mortal body. Both resurrected beings and the devil and his angels will be judged. Those who have willfully rebelled against the light and truth of the gospel will suffer spiritual death. . . . (Alma 12:16; Hel. 14:16–19; D&C 76:36–38)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Death, Spiritual”).

### Jacob 4:5. Worship the Father in the Name of Jesus Christ

- Jacob’s writings provide us with an important insight into the law of Moses and the Old Testament. In Jacob 4:5 we learn that the Old Testament prophets prior to Jacob’s time knew of both Christ and the Father as distinct individuals and appropriately worshipped the Father in Christ’s name. Jacob’s words indicate that the law of Moses was far more than simply a law of strict commandments and legal codes, as some modern scholars claim. The law of Moses testified of Jesus Christ and led the righteous to sanctification through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.



### Jacob 4:10. “Seek Not to Counsel the Lord”

- President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) of the First Presidency explained what it meant to “counsel the Lord”: “Now I do not think that many members of the Church consciously urge the persuasions of men or their own counsel instead of heeding the Lord’s. However, when we do not keep ourselves advised as to what the counsel of the Lord is, we are prone to substitute our own counsel for His. As a matter of fact, there is nothing else we can do but follow our own counsel when we do not know the Lord’s instructions” (“Seek Not to Counsel the Lord,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 5).

**Jacob 4:14–18. “Looking beyond the Mark”**

• While serving in the Seventy, Elder Dean L. Larsen explained that the Israelites in ancient times “got themselves into great difficulty” because they “placed themselves in serious jeopardy in spiritual things because they were unwilling to accept simple, basic principles of truth. They entertained and intrigued themselves with ‘things that they could not understand’ (Jacob 4:14). They were apparently afflicted with a pseudosophistication and a snobbishness that gave them a false sense of superiority over those who came among them with the Lord’s words of plainness. They went beyond the mark of wisdom and prudence, and obviously failed to stay within the circle of fundamental gospel truths, which provide a basis for faith. They must have reveled in speculative and theoretical matters that obscured for them the fundamental spiritual truths. As they became infatuated by these ‘things that they could not understand,’ their comprehension of and faith in the redeeming role of a true Messiah was lost, and the purpose of life became confused. A study of Israel’s history will confirm Jacob’s allegations” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 11–12; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 11).

• Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained how “looking beyond the mark” can be avoided today: “This incredible blindness which led to the rejection of those truths spoken by prophets and which prevented the recognition of Jesus for who he was, according to Jacob, came ‘by looking beyond the mark.’ Those who look beyond plainness, beyond the prophets, beyond Christ, and beyond his simple teachings waited in vain then, as they will wait in vain now. For only the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us of things as they *really* are and as they *really* will be” (“On Being a Light” [address delivered at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, Jan. 2, 1974], 1).


**JACOB 4:14–15**

*What did Jacob say happened to the Jews anciently because they “looked beyond the mark”? (see Deuteronomy 32:4; Helaman 5:12).*

**Points to Ponder**

- Jacob mentioned that he received his “errand from the Lord” (Jacob 1:17). What must a person do in order to receive an errand from the Lord?
- Jacob taught that we should treat everyone as a valued child of God (see Jacob 2:21). How can you do this more fully?
- What are some of the consequences, immediate and extended, that come when someone violates the law of chastity? What have you chosen to do so that you will not violate this sacred commandment of God?
- What does it mean to “counsel the Lord” rather than to “take counsel from his hand?” (Jacob 4:10).

**Suggested Assignments**

- From the following scriptures, make a list of the Lord’s counsel concerning financial matters: Jacob 2:12–19 ; Mosiah 4:16–26. Use the list you have compiled to develop some personal financial guidelines to follow throughout your life.
- After reading Nephi’s counsel to Jacob concerning what should be recorded on the small plates in Jacob 1:1–4, make a plan to improve the strength of your personal history.