

Alma 30–31: Alma, Korihor & Zoramites

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Quotes

- If marriage were outlawed, only outlaws would have in-laws.
- Cannibals don't eat clowns because they taste funny.
- Children seldom misquote you. In fact, they usually repeat word for word what you shouldn't have said.
- Sometimes we must fall on our back before we will look up.
- We are not held back by the love we didn't receive in the past, but by the love we're not extending in the present. (Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love*)

1. Lucky Guesses

- **Jershon** is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance. (27:22)
Jershon appears to be derived from the Hebrew root (yrö) meaning "to inherit."
- **Rameumptom**, which, being interpreted, is the holy stand (31:21)
A standing place high above the head for only one at a time.
Ram in all Semitic languages means *high* or *high place*.

2. What does "Anti-" mean?

- a. Anti-Christ
- b. Anti-Nephi-Lehi

3. What is an Anti-Christ?

⁶ [Korihor] was Anti-Christ, for he began to preach unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ. (Alma 30:6)

Who else was an Anti-Christ?

What is an Anti-Christ in our day?

4. Laws against a man's acts, not his beliefs

⁷ There was no law against a man's belief; for it was strictly contrary to the commands of God that there should be a law which should bring men on to unequal grounds. ... ⁹ If a man ... believed in God it was his privilege to serve him; but if he did not believe in him there was no law to punish him. ¹⁰ But if he **murdered** he was punished unto death; and if he **robbed** ... **stole** ... [or] committed **adultery** he was also punished. ... ¹¹ Nevertheless, there was no law against a man's belief; therefore, a man was punished only for the crimes which he had done; therefore all men were on equal grounds. (Alma 30:7–11)

5. What and how did Korihor teach?

- a. There should be no Christ *Anti-Christian*
- b. ye are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? *Negativism*
- c. no man can know of anything which is to come *Agnostic*
- d. prophecies are foolish traditions of your fathers
- e. How do ye know of their surety? Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see *Empiricism*
- f. Therefore, ye cannot know that there shall be a Christ.
- g. Ye look forward [to] a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; *Psychological Explanation*
- h. this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into a belief of things which are not so. *Positivism*
- i. there could be no atonement made for the sins of men,
- j. every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; *Sophism*

- k. every man prospered according to his genius, *Naturalism*
- l. every man conquered according to his strength; *Egosim*
- m. whatsoever a man did was no crime. *Relativism*
- n. lift up their heads in their wickedness *Hedonism*
- o. when a man was dead, that was the end thereof *Nihilism*
- p. priests usurp power and authority over people *Anti-religion*
- q. ye do not know that prophecies are true *Skepticism*
- r. God is a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be. *Atheism*

6. Why is Korihor relevant to us?

"Korihor took ... a philosophical approach to destroying faith in our Savior, an approach remarkably similar to that taken by many persons today in semiphilosophical attempts to 'relieve' believers of what they are pleased to call their 'naivete.' His arguments could not hurt those whose belief was born of genuine spiritual experience, but they were powerfully effective among those weak in the faith whose belief had not yet gone beyond words. An analysis of those arguments helps us to see how we can be strong in the faith in Christ." (CC Riddle, *Ensign*, Sep 1977, 18)

7. How was Korihor received in Zarahemla? (Alma 30)

Korihor did lead ¹⁸ "away the hearts of many, causing them to lift up their heads in their wickedness, yea, leading away many women, and also men, to commit whoredoms—telling them that when a man was dead, that was the end thereof."

8. What happened to Korihor in Jershon? (Alma 30)

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies ²⁰ "were more wise than many of the Nephites; for they took him, and bound him, and carried him before Ammon, who was a high priest over that people. And ... ²¹ he caused that he should be carried out of the land."

Why did they bind him if no law against a man's beliefs?

9. What happened to Korihor in Gideon?

In Gideon "he was ... bound and carried before the high priest, and also the chief judge over the land. ... When the high priest and the chief judge saw the hardness of his heart, yea, ... that he would revile even against God, they would not make any reply to his words; but they caused that he should be bound; and they delivered him ... [to] the officers, and sent him to ... Zarahemla, that he might be brought before Alma, and the chief judge who was governor over all the land." (Alma 30:21–29)

10. What happened when Korihor met with Alma?

Korihor "did go on in the same manner as he did in the land of Gideon; yea, he went on to blaspheme." (Alma 30:30)

Blasphemy included insolent or seditious speech against God, king, man, holy places or things, including the law. (JWW) One who blasphemed was put to death (Ex 20:7; Lev 24:10–16).

³¹ And he did rise up in great swelling words before Alma, and did revile against the priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers, for the sake of glutting on the labors of the people.

How did Alma support himself?

11. Belief in God (Alma 30)

Alma: ³⁷ Believest thou that there is a God?

Korihor: ³⁸ Nay. ...

Alma: ³⁹ I know there is a God, and also that Christ shall come. ⁴⁰ ... What evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? ... ye have none, save it be your word only. ⁴¹ But, behold, I have all things as a testimony that these things are true.

12. “Show me a sign”

Alma: ⁴⁴ Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.

Ronald Reagan: Sometimes when I’m faced with an atheist, I am tempted to invite him to the greatest gourmet dinner that one could ever serve, and when we have finished eating that magnificent dinner, to ask him if he believes there’s a cook. (*Quote Book #4*, compiled by James H. Patterson, 5)

Albert Einstein: The harmony of natural law reveals an intelligence of such superiority that compared with it all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. (“Search for Truth” 7)

Recommended DVD: *The Privileged Planet* (www.theprivilegedplanet.com/; www.amazon.com)

⁴⁸ Korihor said unto him: I do not deny the existence of a God, but I do not believe that there is a God; ... and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe.

What sign did Korihor receive?

13. Korihor’s Confession

Korihor wrote: ⁵² I always knew that there was a God. ⁵³ But ... the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said ... Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God ^{Christ}. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words ... because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and ... I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true.

What was pleasing to the carnal mind?

14. How did the Zoramites worship God? (Alma 31)

¹² The Zoramites had built synagogues, and that they did gather themselves together on one day of the week, which day they did call the day of the Lord; and they did worship after a manner which Alma and his brethren had never beheld. (31:12)

How did the Zoramites worship God each week?

15. How is this relevant to us?

[The Zoramites] ⁹ had fallen into great errors, for they would not observe to keep the commandments of God ... according to the law of Moses. ¹⁰ Neither would they observe the performances of the church, to continue in prayer and supplication to God daily, that they might not enter into temptation. (Al 31:9–10)

Religion	Nehorites/Amalekites	Zoramites
Theology		
Morality		
Ritual	synagogues	synagogues, idols

When a person apostatizes, what changes first?

- a. **Theology:** beliefs about God, spirits, heaven, hell, ...
- b. **Morality:** beliefs and actions related to good and evil, or
- c. **Rituals:** public and private religious practices (e.g., church, temple, sacrament; personal study and prayer)

16. What did Alma and his friends do? (Alma 31)

⁵ As the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.

Alma’s Prayer: ³¹ O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people. ³² O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me. ... ³⁵ Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee.

³⁶ When Alma had said these words, that he clapped his hands upon all them who were with him. And behold, as he clapped his hands upon them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Nibley: “To *clap* means to put your hands firmly on something. ... He put his hands firmly on their heads when he set them apart.” (TBM 2:435)

³⁸ And the Lord provided for them that they should hunger not, neither should they thirst; yea, and he also gave them strength, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith.

17. Religion and Philosophy ask the same questions

Religion	Philosophy	Key Questions
Theology	Metaphysics	What is nature of unseen world?
Morality	Ethics	What is good or right?
Rituals	Epistemology	How do we know?

Recommended book: *THiNK INDEPENDENTLY: How to Think in This World but Not Think With It* by Chauncey C. Riddle (retired BYU philosophy teacher). At www.sviewp.com you can read book contents or excerpts, and his published articles.

“For several years I had the privilege of helping Chauncey teach a BYU Honors philosophy course. He discussed three key questions of both philosophy and religion: How do we know? What is the nature of God, man and the universe? and What is good or right? He then contrasted the basic answers of philosophers with those of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The students and I gained a greater understanding of, appreciation for, and testimony of the gospel. This book introduces readers to the questions and answers Chauncey discussed in class. These ideas significantly improved my thinking and my life. Now I can share these ideas more easily with family and friends.” — Monte F. Shelley

What is the purpose of gospel rituals and ordinances?

Rituals and ordinances transfer to a person the heart, mind, strength, and might or power of God. In a sense, they heal our thoughts, feelings, desires, and body so we become more like Christ and can be trusted with the power of God. As one puts off the natural man and becomes a saint, he becomes worthy to receive more help at the veil and to enter into God’s presence like Nephi, Jacob, the brother of Jared, and others who received the Second Comforter. One comes unto Christ and becomes like him through gospel ordinances and rituals.

¹ Thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. ... ²⁸ He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (D&C 93:1, 28)

Joseph: ⁷³ Immediately ... after we had been baptized, ...the Holy Ghost fell upon [Oliver], and he... prophesied many things.... I prophesied... many other things We were filled

with the Holy Ghost....⁷⁴ Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. (JS—H 1:73)

Joseph: God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye that Lord; for all shall know Him (who remain) from the least to the greatest [Heb 8:11; Jer 31:34]. How is this to be done? It is to be done by this sealing power, and the other Comforter spoken of, which will be manifest by revelation. (TPJS 149)

18. Ways of Knowing (Epistemology)

- a. Authoritarianism: people I trust say it is true
- b. Rationalism: it agrees with or can be deduced from my beliefs
- c. Empiricism: I can observe it with my “five” physical senses
- d. Statistical Empiricism: statistically analyze many observations
- e. Pragmatism: it works (for me)
- f. Skepticism: reject ideas with insufficient or contrary evidence
- g. Mysticism: substitute feeling for thinking
- h. Know good and evil: all sense (conscience) and choose between
- i. Personal revelation: idea, prompting, feeling from God or Satan

Which ways of knowing did Korihor accept and teach?

Words that are pleasing to the carnal mind are easily believed with little or no support. People tend to believe what they want to believe, but are skeptical of things they don’t want to believe. Our desires may determine our beliefs, not evidence or logic.

Seen (physics)	Unseen (metaphysics)
a. Observable data (evidence)	c. Assumptions (principle)
b. Observable pattern (law)	d. Explanation (theory)

Edison tried experiments until something worked (pragmatism). Einstein did imaginary or thought experiments to develop theories. Scientists emphasize empirical data, but use reasoning to develop theories based on unempirical assumptions or “articles of faith.” For example, we can (a) observe things fall to the ground, (b) notice patterns like how fast a thing goes depends on how far it falls, and (c) use our assumptions to (d) explain the observable patterns with our theory of gravity. Newton and Einstein developed different theories. Those who assume no God or spirits develop different theories than those who believe in God.

19. Alternate Book of Mormon tests (ALR)

If we contrast what philosophers might have said with what Moroni said, we gain a better understanding of and appreciation for Moroni’s promise. The following examples illustrate several ways of knowing mentioned above.

Authority: When you have been shown or told these things, I would exhort you to examine who said them. And if they have been spoken by a true authority or are completely consistent with everything other true authorities have spoken, then believe that they are true. And everything spoken by true authorities should be accepted without asking any further questions or having further doubts.

Rational: When you have read or thought of these things, I would suggest that you consider if it can be proven true. And if you can begin from undoubtable intuitions, adhering precisely to the principles of logic and mathematics, you can test to see if it is true. And if it is either a self-evident principle or a principle

logically derived from other self-evident principles, then you can be assured that it is indeed true.

Empirical: When you shall observe these things, I would exhort you to remain tentative. And if you will design an experiment, with an objective mind, attempting to control every possible chance of bias, you can test to see if it is false. And if it fails to survive an adequately designed empirical test, you can know that a hypothesis is not true. You may not know that any hypothesis is absolutely true, but you can tell if it is more or less confirmed by experience through proper observation and experiment.

Pragmatic: After you have tried these things, I would urge that you observe very closely their consequences, to see if they bring about desired results. Don’t worry whether or not they are ultimately true or not true, ask only if they work or are useful. And if they allow you to have greater control over your environment or are in some other way useful, you will know that they work and are practical for continued use, but you may need to change your opinion at any time in the future.

Moroni’s Promise: And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, in the name of Christ if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. (Moro 10:4)

20. Questions

- a. Could a 23 year old man have written the Book of Mormon?
- b. How do these things apply to me now in my circumstances?
- c. Are these things true? (read, remember, ponder, ask sincerely)

³ When ye shall read these things ... remember how merciful the Lord hath been ... and ponder it in your hearts. ⁴ And ... ask God ... in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Moro. 10:3–4)

- d. As I am reading these chapters, how do I feel?
- e. Do they invite and entice me to love God, believe in Christ, and do good?

21. How do we respond to modern Korihors?

Ezra Taft Benson: There are some who, for the time being at least, are members of the Church but not in harmony with it. ... The Lord has told us of the tares within the wheat that will eventually be hewn down when they are fully ripe. ... “The ravening wolves are amongst us, from our own membership, and they, more than any others, are clothed in sheep’s clothing because they wear the habiliments of the priesthood.” ... The wolves amongst our flock are more numerous and devious today. ... “The Church is little, if at all, injured by persecution and calumnies from ignorant, misinformed or malicious enemies. A greater hindrance to its progress comes from faultfinders, shirkers, commandment-breakers, and apostate cliques within its own ecclesiastical and quorum groups.” (Era, Dec 1967; CR Oct 1967)

M. Russell Ballard: There are “false prophets” rising within and without the Church. They believe they have had revelations, that they know something the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles don’t know. We need to be very careful of such people. ... The Savior said that in the last days even the very elect could be pulled away from the truth by such false prophets. (Ensign, Dec 1996, 56)

See my D&C lesson #24, “Beware lest you are deceived,” for more ideas related to this topic.

Joseph: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives. ... The very step of apostasy commenced with losing confidence in the leaders of this church and kingdom, and that whenever you discerned that spirit you might know that it would lead the possessor of it on the road to apostasy. (TPC:JS, 315)

Joseph: The devil flatters us that we are very righteous, when we are feeding on the faults of others. (HC 5:24)

I advise young ladies to run from a young man who says he received a revelation that she is to be his wife. Such a revelation should guide his actions and not be used to make her feel that rejecting him is rejecting God.

Likewise, I am very skeptical of fault finders who claim to have received revelations or to have seen Christ. Early church history has examples of men, like Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon, who had visions and saw angels or Christ. Their experiences did not (a) prevent them from finding fault with Joseph and apostatizing, or (b) guarantee that their future teachings would be true. Other people had "revelations" like Korihor that caused them to lead others astray. One's claim to revelation is not sufficient evidence for us to believe or follow him especially when he begins to "condemn others." We have been warned that false prophets and anti-Christ's will appear. Like any investigator, we are entitled to seek and receive a second witness from the spirit to know which, if any, teachings of another invite and entice us to do good, and to love and serve both God and neighbor (see Moro 7:13).

22. Give the Lord equal time

M. Russell Ballard: One of my fine missionaries who served with me when I was the mission president in Toronto came to see me some years later. ...

He said, "... For the first time I have read some anti-Mormon literature. ... I have some questions, and nobody will answer them for me. I am confused, and I think I am losing my testimony." ...

His questions ... were the standard anti-Church issues, but I wanted a little time to gather materials so I could provide meaningful answers. So we set up an appointment 10 days later ... [to] answer ... his questions. As he started to leave, I stopped him.

"Elder, ... How long has it been since you read from the Book of Mormon?" His eyes dropped. He looked at the floor for a while. ... "It's been a long time, President." ...

"You have given me my assignment. It's only fair that I give you yours. ... Read in the Book of Mormon for at least one hour every day between now and our next appointment." He agreed. ...

Ten days later he returned to my office, and I was ready. I pulled out my papers to start answering his questions, but he stopped me. "President," he said, "that isn't going to be necessary. ... I know that the Book of Mormon is true. I know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God."

"Well, that's great," I said. "But you're going to get answers to your questions anyway. I worked a long time on this, so you just sit there and listen." And so I answered all his questions and then asked, "Elder, what have you learned from this?"

And he said, "Give the Lord equal time."

May we engrave that thought on our minds and carry it with us as we walk through this process of mortality. Let us give the Lord equal time. Let us give Him His due share of our thoughts, our time, our talents, and our attention. I know that we are all very busy. There are many demands for our attention, and our time is

limited by a wide variety of constraints. But as we learn to manage our time, let us be sure that we give the Lord His portion. Establish a time and place to study the scriptures on a daily basis, even if it is only for a few minutes at a time. Pray regularly. Serve faithfully in whatever capacity you are called to serve in, including home and visiting teaching, which is the very essence of gospel service. Hold weekly, meaningful family home evenings. ("When Shall These Things Be?," *Ensign*, Dec 1996, 56)

Quotes

Brigham Young taught that in the *Millennium*, when all shall bow before Christ and accept him as King, people will still be allowed to have agency and choose how they wish to worship. "They will ask, 'If I bow the knee and confess that he is that Saviour, the Christ, to the glory of the Father, will you let me go home and be a Presbyterian?' 'Yes.' 'And not persecute me?' 'Never.' 'Won't you let me go home and belong to the Greek Church?' 'Yes.' 'Will you allow me to be a Friend Quaker, or a Shaking Quaker?' 'O yes, anything you wish to be, but remember that you must not persecute your neighbors, but must mind your own business, and let your neighbors alone, and let them worship the sun, moon, a white dog, or anything else they please, being mindful that every knee has got to bow and every tongue confess. When you have paid this tribute to the Most High, who created you and preserves you, you may then go and worship what you please, or do what you please, if you do not infringe upon your neighbors.'" (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:317).

Brigham Young also taught that the kingdom of God will be the means of protecting this freedom of worship (*JD*, 6:344-45).

Joseph: Avoid contentions and vain disputes with men of corrupt minds, who do not desire to know the truth. Remember that 'it is a day of warning, and not a day of many words.' If they receive not your testimony in one place, flee to another, remembering to cast no reflections, nor throw out any bitter sayings. If you do your duty, it will be just as well with you, as though all men embraced the Gospel. (*TPJS*, 43)

Ezra Taft Benson: The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Ne 3:12.) It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon is similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time. (*Ensign*, May, 1975, 64; Jan 1988)

Joseph: I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives. The principle is as correct as the one that Jesus put forth in saying that he who seeketh a sign is an adulterous person; and that principal is eternal, undeviating, and firm as the pillars of heaven; for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man. (*TPJS*, 156-57).

Boyd K. Packer: True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986)