The Paradigm of Enos

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One of the subjects I teach at Brigham Young University—Idaho is Biblical Hebrew. Because of its complexity, my students often have difficulty learning the Hebrew verbal system. To aid students, Biblical Hebrew grammars utilize verb paradigms—charts that model the conjugation of the Hebrew verb. These paradigms prove very useful to every Hebrew student.

A paradigm is a model, pattern, or example used to describe something. The original meaning and use of the word is “archetype” or “ideal.” Currently, the word has taken on the nuance of simply a way of looking at something. In fact, a paradigm is very useful in understanding and comprehending the overall view of a thing.

The scriptures provide a number of paradigms of righteous living. The stories of Abraham, Moses, Peter, Lehi, Nephi, Alma the Elder, Alma the Younger, represent classic paradigms of righteous lives. However, their stories are recorded over several chapters making the pattern of life they represent cumbersome to extract. This is true even in the case of Jesus Christ, the most important paradigm of righteous living, who’s story is recorded in four different gospels.

Enos: A Paradigm of a Righteous Life

Perhaps the most concise yet thorough paradigm of a righteous life is the story of Enos. His story is found within twenty-seven verses. This provides a unique opportunity for those desiring to live the gospel and qualify for eternal life to review quickly and regularly the pattern or model of a righteous life. In so doing, the story of Enos can become a means making a personal evaluation to determine how one is progressing on the straight and narrow path.

The paradigm of Enos’ righteous life divides naturally into three parts. (1) The events surrounding Enos’ spiritual rebirth (Enos 1:1-8). (2) Enos’ devotion to the kingdom of God wherein dedicated his entire life to the welfare of both the Nephites and the Lamanites (Enos 1:9-26). (3) The last days of his life where Enos reveals his assurance that he will be granted eternal life (Enos 1:27).

The first two parts comprise the majority of his record. They show how Enos lived the first two great commandments. Recall the question asked the Savior by the Pharisaic lawyer: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus responded: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The Savior then concluded with this important statement: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:26-40). Just as a door hangs on two hinges, so a righteous life hangs on these two commandments. First, the person seeking a righteous life must put God and the things of God first in his. Second, he must love and serve his fellow man by seeking the spiritual and physical welfare of God’s children. Enos’ record provides greater insight into how these commandments form the basis of a righteous life.

I. Enos Puts the First Commandment First

In putting the first commandment first, Enos ensured that his “own soul” (Enos 1:4) was saved in the kingdom of God. This is our first great responsibility! “Each of you,” declared Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “has an eternal calling from which no Church officer has authority to release you. This is a calling given you by our Heavenly Father Himself. In this eternal calling, as with all other callings, you have a stewardship, and it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity.” This most important stewardship is the glorious responsibility your Father in Heaven has given you to watch over and care for your own soul. At some future day, you and I will each hear the voice of the Lord calling us forward to render an account of our mortal stewardship. This accounting will occur when we are called up to ‘stand before [the Lord] at the great and judgment day’” (2 Ne. 9:22).³

Enos ensured his soul was saved by becoming reconciled with God. Jacob, Enos’ father, taught that men may “be reconciled unto [God] through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son” (Jacob 4:11). The initiation of the atonement comes when God’s children put Him first in their lives through the process of spiritual rebirth. Through this process fallen man overcomes spiritual death—i.e., shut out from the presence of God (see D&C 29:41)—and, thus, qualify to come back into the presence of God.

The Savior taught Nicodemus that spiritual rebirth occurs upon receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost (see John 3:1-5). Thus, President Marion G. Romney said that “One is born again by actually receiving and experiencing the light and power inherent in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”² Elder Joseph Fielding Smith taught that men are “back again in the presence of God, through the gift of the Holy Ghost” a member of the godhead.¹ Likewise, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Those who enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost are spiritually alive; they are in the presence of God (for the Holy Ghost is a
member of the Godhead and is one with the Father and the Son).“

What do we learn about the rebirth process from the story of Enos that qualified him to have the gift of the Holy Ghost? Consider the following.

**An Awakening.** Enos’ spiritual rebirth began with an awakening—a spiritual awakening. He wrote of this in these words: “Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered” (Enos 1:3-4).

Sometimes the awakening is confused with the actual spiritual rebirth itself. But this is not so. The awakening only begins the rebirth process. From other examples of awakenings recorded in the Book of Mormon—including Nephi (1 Nephi 2:1-16, note especially verse 16), Alma the younger (Alma 36:6-16), Lamoni (Alma 18:1-18), Lamoni’s father (Alma 22:1-5), Zeezrom (Alma 15:1-4), and King Benjamin’s people (Mosiah 4:1-2)—it is evident that a spiritual awakening leaves one troubled and yearning for relief. When successful it produces within a person a desire for greater righteousness accompanied by a child-like belief.

**Taught Correct Doctrine.** In order to successfully led to a full spiritual rebirth, the one who has been awakened must be taught correct doctrine of the kingdom. Twice in his record, Enos noted the importance of him to taught played in his spiritual rebirth. First, it was his father who ensured that Enos was not only taught but taught correct doctrines. Enos began his record by stating: “Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it” (Enos 1:1). Second, as already noted, it was while Enos was hunting that he began to seriously reflect upon his father’s teachings (Enos 1:3).

Wise parents begin teaching doctrine that are essential to the spiritual rebirth process early in the lives of their children. Alma 22:12-14 combined with D&C 68:25-30 provide an excellent concise list of some of the basic doctrines every parent should teach their children. In fact, parents are under the strict command to teach “these things freely unto [their] children” (Moses 6:58-59; emphasis added). The importance of teaching these doctrines early to children was emphasized by President Harold B. Lee: “The Lord said that the power was not given to Satan to tempt little children, ‘until they begin to become accountable before me’ (D&C 29:47). This very significant statement follows: ‘That great things may be required at the hand of their fathers’ (D&C 29:48). Now, that means parents. Why is it that the Lord doesn’t permit Satan to tempt a little child until he comes to the age of accountability? It’s in order to give parents their golden opportunity to plant in the hearts of little children those vital things except for which, when that time of accountability comes, they may have waited too long.”

**Repentance.** Once Enos recognized his fallen spiritual condition, he began to repent. Because of the teachings of his father, he knew what he needed to repent of and how to go about doing it. Said he, “And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins. . . and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:2, 4).

We are not told of the sins he had committed. President Kimball observed: “I have always loved the story of Enos, who had great need. Like all of us—for none of us is perfect—he had strayed. How dark were his sins I do not know.” Truly, it is unimportant for the reader to know what his sins were. What is important is that Enos came to recognize his sins. President Kimball observed that Enos “realized that no one could be saved in his sins, that no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of God. He came to realize that there must be a purging, a new heart in a new man.”

Mormon tells us that “faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart” (Helaman 15:7). Herein is the true meaning of repentance. Elder Theodore M. Burton of the Seventy described this in these terms: “Just what is repentance? Actually, in some ways it is easier to understand what repentance is not than to understand what it is. As a General Authority, I have prepared information for the First Presidency to use in considering applications to readmit repentant transgressors into the Church and to restore priesthood and temple blessings. Many times a bishop will write, ‘I feel he has suffered enough!’ But suffering is not repentance. Suffering comes from lack of complete repentance. A stake president will write, ‘I feel he has been punished enough!’ But punishment is not repentance. Punishment follows disobedience and precedes repentance. A husband will write, ‘My wife has confessed everything!’ But confession is not repentance. Confession is an admission of guilt that occurs as repentance begins. A wife will write, ‘My husband is filled with remorse!’ But remorse is not repentance. Remorse and sorrow continue because a person has not yet fully repented. Suffering, punishment, confession, remorse, and sorrow may sometimes accompany repentance, but they are not repentance. What, then, is repentance?”

Elder Burton then examined both the Hebrew and Greek words translated repentance. “Both words mean thoroughly changing or turning from evil to God and righteousness.” He then stated that the confusion as to the meaning of repentance came when the scriptures were translated into Latin wherein the word poenitere was used to translate the Biblical words for repentance. “The Latin root poen in that word,” Elder Burton taught, “is the same root found in our English words punish, penance, penitent, and repentance. The beautiful meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words was thus changed in Latin to a meaning that involved hurting, punishing, whipping, cutting, mutilating, disfiguring,
starving, or even torturing! It is no small wonder, then, that people have come to fear and dread the word punishment.

Evidence that Enos’ repentance brought a complete change of life is to be found in the verses that record Enos’ life after his spiritual rebirth and will be discussed momentarily.

Forgiveness. Enos’ repentance was rewarded with forgiveness. As already noted, his remorse led him to pray into the night: “I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:4). Of this, President Kimball observed that this was “no casual prayer, no trite and worn phrases. Minutes turned to hours, and when the sun had set, relief still had not come; for repentance is not a single act, nor forgiveness an unearned gift. So precious to him was this communication with God that his determined soul pressed on without ceasing: ‘Yea, and when the night came, I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.’”

Sometime late that night, Enos records, “there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away” (Enos 1:5-6).

Faith in Jesus Christ. Enos was perplexed. “And I said: Lord, how is it done?”, he asked. How can one be forgiven of sin? An answer came, “Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole” (Enos 1:7-8). Faith in Jesus Christ is an essential ingredient if repentance results in forgiveness. President Ezra Taft Benson taught the Church, “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which sincere and meaningful repentance must be built. If we truly seek to put away sin, we must first look to Him who is the Author of our salvation.”

No doubt, Enos’ faith on Jesus Christ was fostered by his father, Jacob, regularly and consistently taught the Nephites about the redeeming role of Jesus Christ.

In summary, then, the first four principles and ordinances of the gospel were necessary to Enos’ spiritual rebirth. No doubt, Enos had received the ordinances of baptism and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost by his father at an appropriate age. However, reception of the ordinances of spiritual rebirth does not mean one is automatically reborn. The Lord told Adam that spiritual rebirth is similar to physical rebirth (see Moses 6:59). Just as the event of physical birth does not occur unless preceded by the nine-month process involving conception and gestation, so the event of spiritual rebirth does not occur unless preceded by process similar to that which Enos experienced. This process included a spiritual awakening which led to a child-like belief, fortified with correct doctrine that produced faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which ultimately resulted in repentance or a change of heart. Whenever this process happens, the commitment made at baptism is genuine and forgiveness is granted. Having been forgiven, then one qualifies to have the gift of the Holy Ghost—or spiritual rebirth.

II. Enos Endures to the End in Righteous Living

Spiritual rebirth is only the beginning of a righteous life. In essence, when one is spiritually born of God, they are as a baby who, as Joseph Smith said in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, must “grow up in [God], and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 109:15). Spiritual rebirth puts one on the strait and narrow path, as Nephi taught (2 Nephi 31:18). But, as Nephi asked, “after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feast ing upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19-20).

The paradigm of Enos helps us understand what pressing forward feasting upon the words of Christ means. The following are examples of a righteous life as found in the paradigm of Enos.

Selfless Devotion to the Spiritual and Physical Welfare of Others. As Nephi stated, once on the strait and narrow path, one “must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men” (emphasis added). Spiritual rebirth puts the love of God within a person. Becoming concerned for the welfare of others naturally follows. In other words, with the first commandment solidly in place, one’s heart and actions automatically turn to the second great commandment—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”(Matthew 22:39). As Elder Marion G. Romney once taught, “love and concern for the welfare of one’s fellows always fills the heart of the redeemed.”

Enos account reads that immediately after he had been forgiven of his sins, “I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.” (Enos 1:2–9, emphasis added). Praying with his "whole soul unto God for them" demonstrates that his concern for the Nephites was genuine and not out of duty. Such concern caused him to “struggle[e] in the spirit” for his brethren (Enos 1:10; emphasis added). Note that the word spirit is spelled with a lower case s meaning his own soul and not the Holy Ghost.

His love for his fellow man was not limited to the Nephites, but it extended to his enemies, the Lamanites. Said Enos, “I prayed unto [God] with many long
strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites” (Enos 1:11). In this statement, we see that Enos was maturing in his love. It is easy to love those who love us. But to love those who hate us is a sign of a pure, Christ-like love.

Enos’ concern and love for his fellow man was not limited to prayer but was demonstrated in action as well. Through many efforts he devoted teaching his own people (see Enos 1:19, 22-23) and attempting to restore the Lamanites (see Enos 1:14, 20) to the truth. Towards the end of his life, Enos said: “I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days” (Enos 1:26).

Continual Exercise of Faith. Throughout the account of Enos, we read that Enos continually exercised faith (Enos 1:8, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18). We learn from Enos’ record that the faith that leads to spiritual rebirth both continues and grows after the forgiveness and reception of the Holy Ghost. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin defined faith as “absolute confidence in that which we cannot see and on which is the absolute conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father. Without all three—first, absolute confidence; second, action; and third, absolute conformity—without these three all we have is a counterfeit, a weak and watered-down faith.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks added that the Lord’s timetable is an important part of faith. “The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” Elder Oaks said. “Faith means trust—trust in God’s will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable. We should not try to impose our timetable on His. . . Indeed, we cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in His will and in His timing.”

This is the faith exercised by Enos. For example, though Enos “prayed and labored with all diligence” to restore the Lamanites the truth, he was unsuccessful. Enos prayed to the Lord that the Lamanites might at some future time receive a record of the Nephites “that, perhaps, [the Lamanites] might be brought unto Salvation.” This prayer was in agreement with the Lord’s will therefore the Lord promised Enos that a Nephite record would be restored to the Lamanites “in his own due time” (Enos 1:13-18; emphasis added).

Exercising Prayer and Receiving Revelation. Faith is the essence of a righteous life—a life devoted to the building up the kingdom of God. As President Gordon B. Hinckley stated, faith is not a “Passive acceptance of the Lord.” Rather, “When I discuss faith, I do not mean it in an abstract sense. I mean it as a living, vital force.” Elder Oaks reminds us that “no matter how strong it is, [faith] cannot produce a result contrary to the will of him whose power it is.” Therefore, “When we try to develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ rather than merely cultivating faith as an abstract principle of power, we understand the meaning of the Savior’s words: ‘If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me’ (Moro. 7:33).” Thus, exercising true faith requires one to be in tune with the Divine—that is, consistently receiving line-upon-line personal revelation. The record of Enos confirms this aspect of righteous living.

We learn much from Enos’ practice of prayer and receiving revelation. We learn that revelation takes much sincere effort on our part. Further, we must be willing to be patient in getting answers to prayer. This is evidenced in Enos’ spiritual rebirth, of which Enos said: “all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:4). Again, while praying concerning “the welfare of [his] brethren, the Nephites,” Enos received an answer while “struggling in the spirit” (Enos 1:10; emphasis added). We see the patience of Enos while praying for the Lamanites: “and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites. And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord” answered his prayers (Enos 1:11; emphasis added).

One of the various ways in which the Lord answers prayers is demonstrated in Enos’ record. Regarding the answer to one prayer, Enos said, “And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying . . . “ (Enos 1:10; emphasis added), suggesting that hearing a voice in his mind was the normal way for Enos received answers to prayers. Of this, Elder Marion G. Romney said: “This is a very common means of revelation. It comes into one’s mind in words and sentences. With this medium of revelation I am personally well acquainted.”

Elder Boyd K. Packer offered this insight regarding this method of revelation: “While this spiritual communication comes into the mind, it comes more as a feeling, an impression, than simply as a thought. Unless you have experienced it, it is very difficult to describe that delicate process.” Elder James E. Faust gave us this further understanding: “How is inspiration received? Enos stated, “And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind” (Enos 1:10). One does not necessarily hear an audible voice. The spirit of revelation comes by divine confirmation. “I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart,” says the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 8:2).

Rejoicing in the Things of God Above “That of the World.” Another aspect of a righteous life demonstrated in the paradigm of Enos is stated by Enos in when he said that he had been “wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world” (Enos 1:26; emphasis added). The Apostle John admonished the Church in his day, “Love not the world, neither the things that are of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (JST 1 John 2:15).

The righteous have not only put off the things of the world but truly love the things of God. Likewise, the
righteous not only do the things of God by keeping His commandments, they love the things of God and rejoice in them. For them, keeping God’s commandments, service towards fellow human beings, studying the word of God, and doing all things for the kingdom’s sake is not done out of duty. Rather, it comes as part of a full expression of their pure love of God.

There is sincerity in Enos’ statement that he “rejoiced in it above that of the world.” When he was spiritually born again, Enos left the confides of the great and spacious building and placed both hands on the rod of Iron and walked boldly through the midst of darkness towards the tree of life, never looking back! This is the only way to find true peace. Those who keep one hand on the front door of the great and spacious building while holding on to the rod of iron with the other find frustration rather than happiness. Though they do some of the things of God, they do them out of duty. But they do not “rejoice in it above that of the world.” This is one of the differences between an honorable member of the Church and a valiant member and a key characteristic of a righteous life.

**Valiantly Enduring to the End.** One last aspect of a righteous life characterized in the Enos paradigm is that Enos endured valiantly to the end as suggested in this statement: “And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having... declare[d] the word according to the truth which is in Christ... in all my days” (Enos 1:26). The necessity for endurance to the end is mentioned many places in the scriptures. Nephi stated succinctly: “Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. And thus it is. Amen” (1 Nephi 22:31). And Amaleki, a descendent of Enos said it this way: “And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

**III. Enos Qualifies to Have His Calling and Election Made Sure.**

The third part of Enos’ record reports his knowledge that his calling and election had been made sure. Enos ended his record with these words: “And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen” (Enos 1:27).

Such knowledge comes to those who have endured valiantly for the kingdom’s sake. Thus Joseph Smith taught: “After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure.”

It is a righteous hope for all who have become spiritually born again and have devoted their lives to the building of God’s kingdom to have the same assurance the Enos did before they die. President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency concluded a very important talk on the Light of Christ with these appropriate words: “I know that everyone who, following the whisperings of the Spirit, develops faith, is baptized, and receives the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands by those having authority, may, by compliance with the teachings of the gospel, receive the gifts and the power of the Holy Ghost. And I bear further witness that every such person who, having come this far, will follow the Prophet’s admonition to ‘continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God’ (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 150), may obtain the more sure word of prophecy.”

**Notes**


19. Recall that D&C 76:71-79 states that honorable people members of the Church go to the terrestrial kingdom while valiant members of the Church qualify for the celestial kingdom.
