

Lesson 1: Preparing to Feel the Spirit

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Lesson Notes:

[1. The Importance of the Spirit](#)

[1.1. Value of Studying the Scriptures](#)

2 Timothy 3:16-17

**16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, we are given the source of scripture as well as its four-fold purpose. All scripture or inspiration from God has a specific purpose: The conveying of the doctrine or laws of the kingdom; Reproof or censure for a fault; Correction or need to conform to standard or repentance, or For instruction.

B/M, Alma 17:2

2 ...they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth, for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

We learn from the experience of the sons of Mosiah they had become "men of sound understanding" because "they had searched the scriptures diligently" in order to "know the word of God." Another benefit of studying the scriptures is by doing so we draw closer to our creator and are able to draw strength from the spirit and insight He has to offer his children. The scriptures provide an anchor in our lives that enables us to withstand the philosophies of men that threaten to sever us from the assurance and direction. This can only be found within the scriptures.

B/M, Omni 1:17

17 ...and their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records [scriptures] with them; and they denied the being of their Creator;...

The above verse has reference to another group of people referred to as the Mulekites who had come to the Americas from Jerusalem. Unlike those who came with Lehi and his family who had brought their scriptures with them, they had not. The result was when the two groups of people came in contact with each other, the language of the Mulekites had become so corrupted they could no longer communicate together. Also, they had lost the spiritual roots they once had known and this led to a loss of their faith.

How blessed we are to have the scriptures for guidance and direction and the application of these sacred principles can have in our lives.

D. Todd Christofferson observes,

"...the central purpose of all scripture is to fill our souls with faith in God the Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ—faith that they exist; faith in the Father's plan for our immortality and eternal life; faith in the Atonement and

Resurrection of Jesus Christ Historical and scriptural accounts illustrating the faith of others serve to strengthen our own faith” (“New Church video: Scriptures Legacy” by Ryan Morgeneeg in Church News [Week ending March 30, 2014], Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 10).

When an individual heeds the direction, and applies the given counsel the scriptures offer, he/she is then led further on the path towards perfection. When they choose to ignore these sacred records, they risk the loss of their bearings in a world that is becoming more hazardous to navigate each day.

The power of the scriptures can influence us profoundly. They can strengthen our testimonies of the Godhead, motivate us to repent, and inspire us to obey. But in order for the scriptures to bless us this way, the spirit must guide our study and discussion.

1.2. Why Do We Need the Spirit?

The Prophet Isaiah taught,

Isaiah 55: 8-9

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

If the ways of the Lord are higher than our ways, how then can we ever hope to understand his words as found in the scriptures? While the process of logic and rational thinking may aid us, it will not be sufficient. For example, how many churches in the world today, interpret the same scripture in a variety of ways. Things such as the mode of baptism are understood differently by different people. Some believe that sprinkling is sufficient, while others believe individuals must be completely immersed. Others suggest that baptism is not an outward ordinance, but refers only to the cleansing of one's mind.

The Apostle Paul taught,

1 Corinthians 2:11-12,

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Paul is teaching us that in order to understand the things/words of God, we must receive “the spirit which is of God.”

1.3. How Does the Spirit of God Come to Us?

1 Corinthians 2:13

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Paul instructs both those in Corinth, and us, that the spirit of God comes to us through the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). One of His responsibilities is to testify of truth to any individual sincerely seeking to know the things of God.

Paul, speaking to the skeptic within us all, cautioned,

1 Corinthians 2:14

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1.4. How Can I Gain the Spirit?

1.4.1. Daily Scripture Study

As we daily read the words of the Lord as found in the scriptures, and the words of the living prophets, we show unto the Lord our desire to better understand the things of the spirit. The words which the prophets wrote were given unto them by the Holy Ghost.

B/M 1 Nephi 22:2

2 ...they were manifest unto the prophet by the voice of the Spirit; for by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets which shall come upon the children of men according to the flesh.

Anciently Kings of Israel were instructed by the Lord to read His law as recorded in the written word.

Deuteronomy 17:19-20

19 ...all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in the kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Just as there were benefits that would come to the Kings of Israel from reading the written word of the Lord, there are also benefits that come to us as we read the words of the Lord as recorded by his prophets.

1.4.2. To Have A “Clean Heart”

Psalms 51:10

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

In order to obtain a clean heart, our thoughts and actions must be pure before Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Just as we would dress our finest and be physically clean in the presence of someone whom we admired and respected, it is likewise important we prepare ourselves to receive the spirit of Our Heavenly Father.

B/M, Helaman 3:35

35 ...they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

We must approach Our Heavenly Father in the attitude of humility, knowing that before Him we are nothing. In order to understand His ways, we set our own thoughts and ideas aside in order to prepare ourselves to receive direction and guidance from He who knows all things.

Ezekiel 11:19-20

19 And I will give them one heart and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:
20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

1.4.3. An Open Mind to Things Spiritual

As we approach our God humbly and with a sincere desire to learn in humility and also with a sincere desire to learn of his ways, He blesses us. We become more receptive to his words of counsel and admonition and His will becomes our will.

B/M, Mosiah 2:9

9 ...I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and open your ears that you may hear, and your hearts that ye may understand, and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view.

As we approach the Lord and the counsel He gives through revelation with open ears, hearts to understand, and open minds, then we are prepared to receive His words, we can learn the mysteries of God. If we do not approach the Lord in this humble manner, then we will be unable to understand His word.

The Book of Mormon speaks of a time when the people had turned from the words of the Lord as it had been declared by his prophets. They had chosen to follow the inclinations of their heart leading them away from the truths they had known. A prophet named Alma and his companion were going forth throughout the land preaching repentance and imparting the word of God unto as many as would listen to their words. They were desirous that all might listen and avoid the pending consequences of their actions.

B/M, Alma 16:17

**17 That they might not be hardened against the word, that
they might not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction,...**

If we do not come with an open heart and sincere desire to know the word of the Lord, we, too, will lose out on the blessings the Lord has yet to give us.

Through Moses the Lord commanded, "Hear, O Israel:...thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart"

1.4.4. Service to Others

Doctrine and Covenants 59:5

**5 Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying this:
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with
all thy might, mind and strength; and in the name of
Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him.**

In order for us to have the spirit of God to enlighten our minds, it requires us to have a clean heart, an open mind, and to be willing to provide service to others. Only then will the scriptures be opened unto us and we will be able to understand the mind and will of the Lord. As we read the scriptures, the words will become, like the fruit on the tree in Lehi's dream, "it was the most sweet above all that I ever before tasted" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:11).

1.4.5. Putting It Together

In the words of this hymn by C. Marianne Johnson Fisher encapsulate the process that will lead each of us to an increased understanding of the scriptures.

"As I Search the Holy Scriptures"

As I search the holy scriptures,
Loving Father of mankind,
May my heart be blessed with wisdom,
And may knowledge fill my mind.

As I search the holy scriptures,
Touch my spirit, Lord, I pray.
May life's mysteries be unfolded
As I study day by day.

As I search the holy scriptures,
May thy mercy be revealed.
Soothe my troubled heart and spirit;
May my unseen wounds be healed.

As I search the holy scriptures,
Help me ponder and obey.
In thy word is life eternal;
May thy light show me the way.

("As I Search the Holy Scriptures" in Hymns. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985, #277).

Monte S. Nyman observes,

"The spirit of revelation [knowing the will of the Lord] is the Lord telling [speaking to] "you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost" (Doctrine and Covenants 8:2-3). To know in your mind is to know intellectually. To know in your heart is to have the testimony borne to your spirit. The intellect without the Spirit may be deceived, and the spirit of the individual may be deceived by emotion if the intellect does not also receive a witness." (The Record of Alma, Vol. 3. Orem, Utah: Granite Publishing and Distribution, LLC, 2004, 233).

In the final analysis it takes both the spirit and the intellect in order to discern the things of God.

2. Enriching Our Study of the Scriptures

2.1. The Promise of the Lord

B/M, 1 Nephi 15:11

11 ...If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you.

These words which Nephi spoke to his brothers are true today. We can know the things of God through the spirit of the Holy Ghost as we diligently seek to know His will. The Lord wants us to understand His will. Through the words of His prophets, the path is clearly marked.

2.2. It is Our Choice

In order to gain a knowledge of the truth it is necessary we have a sincere desire coupled with the seed of faith in order to receive the sought for divine guidance and direction. The weak link in the process is often our doubt. When doubts of faith come, do not despair nor give up. Recall with me the words of the father who sought the Lord to heal his son after his disciples had failed.

Mark 9:23-24

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

I can imagine the father wanting his son to be healed, yet being plagued by his own doubts of faith. His response was not to discount the power of the Savior to heal, but to make a personal request of his own. He initially exercised the faith he did have to the Savior and then immediately requested a blessing for himself. His desire was that his own faith would be strengthened in the healing power of the Master.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

“When those moments [of doubt] come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes... When problems come and questions arise, do not start your quest for faith by saying how much you do not have, leading as it were with your ‘unbelief.’ [He continues] ...I’m not asking you to pretend of faith you do not have. I am asking you to be true to the faith you do have... Be as candid about your questions as you need to be; life is full of them on one subject or another. But if you [or your family] want to be healed, don’t let those questions stand in the way of faith working its miracle” (“Lord, I Believe” in Ensign, May, 2013, 94).

Sometimes our doubts overwhelm us and we back away from our “leap of faith” and then wonder why the blessings or answers do not come. Such was the case with the two brother of Nephi, Laman and Lemuel.

B/M, 1 Nephi 15:8-9

8 And I [Nephi] said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?

9 And they said unto me: ‘We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.

Let us learn a lesson from the lives of Lamen and Lemuel. They let their doubts of faith extinguish even a particle of hope they may have possessed for guidance by their failing to ask for help! If we have humbly taken the first step, to ask, then we must exercise our patience as we wait upon the Lord for his reply. It is essential we trust that He, as Our loving Heavenly Father, will intercede for us in the manner that will be to our greatest benefit, even if that is not immediately apparent to us, nor according to our timetable.

As we continue our quest for spiritual truth, we must be willing to exercise sufficient faith to ask and then do all we can do in order to receive His reply. The Lord stands ready to make the truth known if we will ask in the spirit of humility, with a real desire to know the truth, and then are willing to receive and act upon his direction. As we do so, the answers will come and we will feel his spirit guiding our lives. Doubt or faith, it is our choice.

I have personally sought to know the truths as revealed in the Old Testament. I have sought the expertise of others in order to bring clarity when confusion was present. If you will read the material as presented with a similar desire to know the truth, suspending your own doubts, you, too, will feel the spirit guiding your study and expanding your understanding.