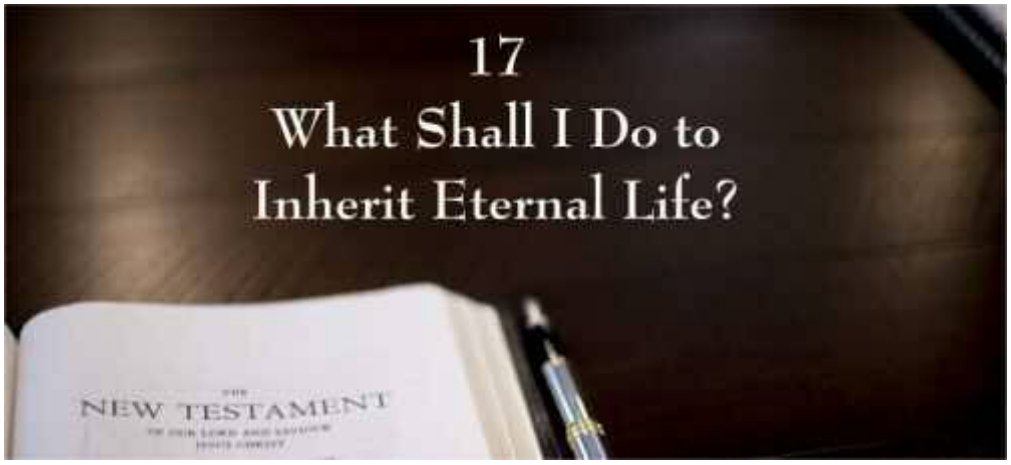

Scheduled for study April 22-28, 2019. We will all inherit life eternal, to live forever. But what about eternal life, that kind of life God lives? What are the attributes we need to obtain or begin to obtain in mortality that will qualify us to return home to live with our heavenly parents once again?

Day 1

Matthew 18; Luke 10 – The Lord has his own way of answering our questions.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. As you prayerfully read and ponder Matthew 18 and Luke 10, pay attention to the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost. He will tell you how these teachings and stories apply to you.

Every culture has their own way of reasoning, describing, and answering questions. In Western culture we tend to state our answers very directly, and preferably clearly, followed by the explanation of how we arrived at that answer. In the Middle Eastern cultures, they start at the outside edges of an argument and work their way in, ending their statement with the declaration that everything else supports. This is why Westerners have such a difficult time reading material from the Middle East, like the Bible. Culturally we think differently.

The Lord has His own way of answering our questions as well. When we ask a question, whether directly, clearly, or whether we aren't sure what exactly it is we need to ask, the answers we receive are geared to be precisely what we need for the development of our

soul at that moment in time. The answer may or may not have anything to do with the actual question asked. It is almost as though the Lord was just waiting for us to come and try to communicate with Him so He could give us the next important piece of information we need in our quest for exaltation. Why we approach Him isn't nearly as important as that we do approach Him. This is why sometimes when we sit and ponder or listen to a General Conference talk the promptings or feelings we get have little or nothing to do with the actual talk, but are all about what we need at that time.

If we pray while under the influence of the Holy Ghost, we have the added benefit of being prompted with the right questions to ask. It is in these times we are most likely to receive direct answers to the questions we ask, for then we are asking what the Lord wants us to ask for our own welfare. It is when we pray under the influence of the Holy Ghost that we are in sync or in tune with the Godhead - we are more at one with how God is thinking, and are therefore more likely to ask the right questions.

When I say we "are therefore more likely to ask the right questions," I am not saying that any other questions are wrong. What I am saying is that praying while under the Spirit's guiding influence we are more likely to ask the best questions for the welfare of our soul. And therefore we are more likely to be prepared to receive the best answers for the welfare of our soul.

When the man who conversed with Jesus wanted to know, for example, who his neighbor was, we are told in the scriptures he asked because he wanted to justify himself for not having to be nice to certain people. So the Lord gave him the parable of the good Samaritan, and taught him that anyone who needs help is his neighbor, and illustrated for him the extent that he should be willing to go to help others in need. This definitely was not what the man was wanting or hoping to hear, but this is what he needed to know, and needed to hear.

This is the lesson we learn from listening to the way Jesus answered people's questions. He told them what they needed to hear, not what they wanted to hear. When we learn that this is what we will receive when we pray, it might take some of the frustration out of the answers we may receive.

Can you think of a time you asked a question or took a problem to the Lord and received a feeling or prompting that seemed unrelated to what you thought you were asking?

If you did, what was the end result when you followed that thought or prompting?

Day 2

Matthew 18:21-35 – I must forgive others if I am to receive forgiveness from the Lord.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. As you prayerfully read and ponder Matthew 18 and Luke 10, pay attention to the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost. He will tell you how these teachings and stories apply to you.

In the scriptures numbers have important meanings. The number seven, for example, represents wholeness or completeness. This is why the creation took six days of labor and a day of rest, seven days. This is also why when Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive someone, his own suggestion of seven times represents an assumption that if done seven times that would be generous enough.

The Savior's reply is really important to understand. He said we were not to forgive just seven times, but seventy times seven, a vastly larger number. The Savior's number represents a largess (generosity) of spirit, a willingness to forgive that extends far beyond what mortals would think was needed or even possible. Jesus followed up by illustrating this answer with the parable of the king who forgave the debt of his servant.

To bring a bit of perspective into the story, the average daily earnings of a poor man in those days was a single penny for a whole day's labor, so his debt to his fellow servant of 100 pence was about three months wages. But this poor man's fellow servant owed 10,000 talents, their largest unit of monetary measurement. This was an insane amount of money. Even in the parable of the talents just one talent was considered a lot of money. So for most people it would be difficult to even imagine how much 10,000 talents could buy, as that was wealth beyond the reckoning of most people of Christ's day.

The king, upon hearing his servant plead for himself and his family, readily forgave the whole sum of 10,000 talents, and ceased to even consider the debt any longer. So imagine how disappointed the king was when he heard that this same servant who had been forgiven so much debt had thrown his fellow servant into prison over 100 pennies. This demonstrates the height of this servant's ingratitude, for he did not extend his gratitude to his king to being just as generous to a fellow servant who owed so little in comparison.

The lesson from this parable is that the Lord not only holds us accountable for our own sins, which he is ready and willing to forgive if we just sincerely ask for his forgiveness, but he also holds us accountable if we are not willing to extend that same generosity of spirit (largess) to those around us. The long and the short of it is that if we want to be forgiven of our sins we must be willing to forgive others of theirs. If we want the Lord to continue to forgive our personal transgressions then we must be willing to continue to forgive others their transgressions. Forgiveness is a measurement of our gratitude. Our willingness to be forgiving of others shows God that we are properly grateful for His forgiveness toward us.

When you find it difficult to forgive someone who has hurt you in some way, what is your excuse for not wanting to forgive them?

Can you find a way to justify not forgiving them when you look at your own shortcomings before the Lord in the naked light of day?

Can you think of any reason the Lord would excuse us for not forgiving someone else?

If you can think of any reason for you to not forgive someone else, can you see that this same reason opens the door for Jesus to excuse himself for not forgiving you? Is that what you want?

Day 3

Luke 10:1-20 – Who are the Seventy?

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. As you prayerfully read and ponder Matthew 18 and Luke 10, pay attention to the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost. He will tell you how these teachings and stories apply to you.

The Lord has back ups for His leaders. Their are three bodies of brethren to lead the Church, equal in authority. The first body is the quorum of the First Presidency. The second body is the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the third body is the quorum of the Seventy (Doctrine and Covenants 107:22-27). The First Presidency presides over the whole Church. The Twelve are traveling ministers throughout the whole earth. The quorums of the Seventy are assigned as standing or residing authorities to also help with the governing of the Church and to be special witnesses of Christ. Even though the members of the Seventy travel, a lot, they are mainly called to serve in a particular area and live in that area of the earth. They are what the Lord refers to as standing ministers.

The Seventy differ from the Twelve largely because the Twelve Apostles are called to travel the earth as witness of Christ, while the Seventy travel in pairs and generally live in the same area where they serve. So a Area Authority Seventy called in Brazil also lives in Brazil, or a country nearby, instead of only traveling to Brazil for a one weekend assignment then returning home to another country.

Day 4

Luke 10:25-37 – To obtain eternal life, I must love God and love my neighbor as myself.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. As you prayerfully read and ponder Matthew 18 and Luke 10, pay attention to the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost. He will tell you how these teachings and stories apply to you.

Let's explore the parable of the good Samaritan. I am assuming you have already read the whole story from Luke.

The Jews were taught to intensely dislike the Samaritans. Based on what you have read in the story of the good Samaritan, think about your own upbringing.

Are there any groups of people you were taught were bad, dishonest, untrustworthy, less than honorable, inferior, or in some other way not to be mingled or associated with?

Have you been taught to hate any group of people for their ideologies, their political views, or their ethnic origin?

What would Jesus tell you to do or how do you think he would want you to feel about these people?

I bring up the previous questions because almost every culture teaches us to dislike someone in our country or someone from another country. Just in the United States we have people who don't feel those on the opposite site of the political spectrum can be trusted, and some even hate those of differing political views, wishing them harm or even death. Along with this we have people who put certain ethnic backgrounds into stereotypes that paint all the people with that ethnicity as dishonest, lazy, untrustworthy, dangerous, etc. When we are raised with these views of others as being normal, it can be difficult to learn to see them as equally important as you and your friends are.

How might it change our view of an "undesirable" person if we think about each person from an eternal perspective as each of us being a child of God, and therefore brothers and sisters, literally?

How has service to someone outside your comfort zone changed your perspective of the people he or she represents?

How do we learn to love someone we were taught to hate or despise as a child?

Day 5

Luke 10:38-42 – We choose "that good part" by making choices that lead to eternal life.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. As you prayerfully read and ponder Matthew 18 and Luke 10, pay attention to the quiet promptings of the Holy Ghost. He will tell you how these teachings and stories apply to you.

In many ways this is a difficult topic to discuss. We are all often distracted by those things about mortality that seem to be the most important thing to do at the moment. It can be difficult to discern when we should wisely set aside the things of mortality in favor of things that have eternal significance. This was the problem with Mary and Martha.

Martha cherished each moment she could spend at the Master's feet, listening and learning from the Savior. But Mary was focused on what the Savior's needs were. He needed to be fed, his feet washed, and the other guests needed to be attended to. Both women felt they were doing what was most important at that moment, but Jesus taught Mary that Martha had made the better choice. She was focusing on that which was eternal, rather than stressing over that which was physical and temporary.

Some would argue that cleanliness and eating are pretty important issues as well. And they would be correct. But compared to the short time the Savior of the world would be with them to teach them personally about what would save their immortal souls, the physical issues could temporarily take a back seat. The Savior would only be with them for a short time. There was nothing more important to their eternal welfare than that which he was providing them during his brief visit. They could have fasted a meal or two, and not washed their hands, heads and feet for a while longer and fared much better than to abandon Christ and spend their time on food and washing.

Think about your daily and weekly routine.

Are you spending your short time on earth doing the things that will advance your eternal soul or are you spending most of your time with the cares and concerns of this world?

Are there spiritual habits available to you that would be of greater worth to you than what you are currently doing?

Some possible things to consider: are you attending the temple as often as you could and should?

Are you keeping all the commandments you know about in the way you believe they should and can be kept?

How often do you study, not just read, your scriptures?

How often are you speaking to God through prayer, whether formally or informally?

If you are not ministering to your assigned families or individuals in your ward or branch, what else is filling your time that prevents you from serving God's other children?

Are you doing all in your ability to fulfill your Church calling(s)?

Are you accepting callings or turning them down?

This lesson is all about choosing that which is most important to the eternal welfare of our soul. Are we really considering when we make certain choices if that choice is what is best for us eternally? Or do we do what is expedient because it solves an immediate or temporary problem? The Savior is always trying to get us to look beyond mortality so we can prepare ourselves for the rest of eternity. Mortality is a few short years, and eternity includes the birth, lifespan, and death of countless stars and planets. It is a very, very long time. What we do in these short mortal years will have a direct effect on everything that follows forever.

Scripture Study and Home Evening

Matthew 18:1-11 - Why would Jesus want us to become like a little child?

The Lord wants us to become like children in order to be prepared to live with him and our Father. From your understanding of children in general, how would you answer the following questions?

How easily do children take correction and direction? Examples?

How quickly do children forgive and forget wrongs?

Can you think of examples of children's generosity and willingness to share?

Children tend to believe about themselves whatever their parents teach them. If that is the case, how do you think we should view ourselves based on what our Heavenly Father has tried to teach us?

If we don't feel the way God feels about us, what do you think happened to derail us?

What lessons can we learn from a child's natural response to someone being hurt?

Here is a PDF of this week's study material.
Print it out for greater convenience in your studies.

New Testament 17