Scheduled for study Oct. 21-27, 2019. The gospel Christ taught is all about expressions of love, whether in word or in deed. Can you think of any doctrine that does not rely on the principle of love?

Day 1

1 and 2 Thessalonians - Be Not Soon Shaken in Mind, or Be Troubled

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. If we do not record the impressions we receive from the Spirit, we might forget them. What does the Spirit prompt you to record as you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

The more often I read these two books, the more I feel like I am reading the tender writings of a parent to his beloved children. The apostles were specifically taught by Jesus that they would all suffer and die for him. They had been shown the future state of the kingdom of God on the earth. They all knew that no matter how hard they worked and labored an apostasy would come and lead the people away from the truth, and that truth would remain corrupted until the Restoration came in the own due time of the Lord.

This was the future Paul saw for these people he loved, his "children" of the covenant. His responsibility, along with his brethren in the quorum of the Twelve was to strengthen the Saints as long as they were able to before the kingdom was lost to wicked apostates. Their concern was just as great for each current and new member of

Christ's Church as it ever was for those who had been raised with a knowledge of God and His covenants.

This spirit of love and devotion to those Paul served is expressed in all of his writings, but is so tenderly demonstrated here in Thessalonians. If you served a mission or have children of your own, can you feel some of what Paul is expressing here? He has given his life to teach them a better way to live. He has brought them the gospel of happiness. His concern is that they not lose that chance at happiness as long as he is alive to help them hold onto it.

Here is 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10.

> 9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;
>
> 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

These two sweet verses embody a true servant of the Lord's love for those to whom he has been sent to minister. His goal is stated at the very end of the sentence, stating that his whole desire is that they "might perfect that which is lacking in your [our] faith".

As you minister to those in your family, among your roommates, friends, or among your Church members, are you seeking to perfect that which is lacking in their faith?

Do you even consider what might be lacking in another's faith that you might be able to help fill?

How can we follow Paul's example to help people strengthen their faith in Christ and in his gospel?

Day 2

1 Thessalonians 1-2 - Ministers of the gospel preach with sincerity and love.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. If we do not record the impressions we receive from the Spirit, we might forget them. What does the Spirit prompt you to record as you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

Think about how you interact (minister/serve) with others. We have probably all experienced at some point or other the difference someone who loves us can make in our lives because of their love. Somehow love is able to take the same service provided

by others and make it so intimate and special that it acquires the ability to change a person's outlook and life. Love seems to be the catalyst of change.

Can you identify a person whose love and kindness toward you left you with an undying gratitude?

If you can think of even one example of such a person, were their kindnesses great or small, earth shattering or quiet?

What was it about their kindness that touched your heart such that their gentle influence in your life remains to this day?

If you will allow me, I would like to answer these questions with my own humble experience. I wanted to attend one of the Church colleges when I graduated from high school, but for some reason I couldn't get them to respond to me. Finally, a month after all the deadlines for registering and after all the scholarships had been awarded for the upcoming Fall semester, I received a notification from the Church school that all the girls dorms were full and that I would have to seek housing off campus. Not being a girl, I found that particularly troubling. This told me I had probably been accepted, though no official acceptance letter had arrived.

I went to my Stake President, who was the Church school representative back then, and was surprised when he told me the Lord didn't want me to go to a Church school, but to the university in my state. I was shocked. The local university was one of the nation's biggest party schools. Drinking was a professional sport at that school, and their dorms were coed in a day when coed dorms were a new thing. It was shocking that he would give me such advice.

But I followed his counsel and applied. Imagine my surprise when I was personally contacted by a student in the financial aid office who was a member of the Church. He personally turned the world on its head to find me scholarships, grants, and loans to pay my way my first year of school. He didn't know me from Adam, yet he made it possible for me to attend when I thought there was no way for it to happen.

But his kindness to me didn't stop there. When I was faced with not being able to attend a special dance or function because I had no money and no clothes suitable to attend, I came back to my dorm room to find an envelope with money in it and instructions to go buy some clothes for the event. This happened more than once.

Time and time again he performed little shepherding helps like this for me throughout my time at that university. He wasn't assigned to me. He wasn't responsible for me. He

did it because it was in his nature to be kind. At a time in life I felt particularly unloved and abandoned socially, his gentle spirit saved me. It wasn't until years later I found out that he was gay and had left the Church over philosophical differences. But to this day I express my gratitude to my Heavenly Father for his saving kindnesses. He had no agenda but to help. He was the best friend I ever found in my young adult years, and I will be eternally grateful for his help. It has been almost 40 years now, and I still look upon my friendship with him as one of the highlights of my life.

My point is this; none of us have to be perfect to serve each other. It is the love we have for others that bridges the social gaps that may exist between us. Love, when demonstrated, transforms our relationships and deepens our own ability to love others. It doesn't matter where the love comes from, or who shows and shares it. Service is nice, but service given with love changes lives.

Day 3

1 Thessalonians 3:9-4:12 - As I follow Jesus Christ, I can become holy.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. If we do not record the impressions we receive from the Spirit, we might forget them. What does the Spirit prompt you to record as you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

Many today have an aversion to the term holiness. I think it is because we don't really understand what the word holy means. Here is the definition as given in the Study Helps.

> According to the Old Testament, things or places were holy that were set apart for a sacred purpose; the opposite of holy is therefore common or profane (1 Sam. 21:5; Ezek. 22:26; 42:20; 44:23; 48:13–15). Similarly a holy person meant one who held a sacred office. The Israelites were a holy people because they stood in a special relationship to Jehovah. Under the guidance of the Prophets it was seen that what distinguished Jehovah from the gods of the heathen was His personal character. The word *holy* therefore came to refer to moral character (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 21:8; Isa. 6:3–8). Israel must be holy in character because the God of Israel was holy (Jer. 7:4–7; see also Matt. 5:48). The Law of Holiness (Lev. 17–26) shows how the attempt was made by means of ceremonial observances to secure this holiness of character. The attempt failed because the later Jews observed the letter and neglected the spirit; they attached more importance to the ceremonial than to the moral; and the result was a lapse into formalism. But in the

> writings of the Prophets it is clearly laid down that the value of worship in the eyes of God depends upon the personal character of the worshipper.

According to the definition of Holiness, we are supposed to be holy as individuals, holy as a people, and living in a state of holiness. How do we achieve this state of being a holy people? Based on the definition given above our holiness is defined by our personal character and by the covenants we have chosen to make.

Those who seek to be like Christ become holy as they make covenants with God and follow the example of living set by Jesus, God's Son. As we learn to love others, serve them in righteousness, and keep God's commandments we develop a character that becomes pure, or free from the pollutions of the world. We live in harmony with the laws of God, and so are justified by those laws. In turn, the keeping of God's commandments further purifies or sanctifies us, making us clean before God, hence holy.

It is not boastful or arrogant to want to be holy. It is not presumptuous to assume we can be holy while still in the flesh. God wants us to be holy, both as individuals and as a people. This is the goal of making and keeping covenants, and of our ministering efforts. Holy people are those who are becoming like Christ. Isn't that why we are here?

Day 4

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 5:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 - If I am faithful and watchful, I will be prepared for the Savior's Second Coming.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. If we do not record the impressions we receive from the Spirit, we might forget them. What does the Spirit prompt you to record as you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

Many of us tend to make a mistake when it comes to how we think about the Second Coming of Christ. We think that if we are not living in the flesh when it happens that we will have missed the second greatest event in the history of the earth (the greatest being the resurrection). In tomorrow's lesson we will learn about the apostasy that had to happen before the Second Coming could happen. Yet knowing that this great event could not possibly happen in their lifetime, Paul still encouraged the people to be prepared for it. Why?

I believe the reason Paul taught that we should all be ready for that great day, even when the chances are slim to none that it will happen in our lifetime is because we will all be alive and there on that day. But if we have already died, how is that possible? Here is 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

> 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
>
> 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

When the Savior returns those who are dead in Christ shall rise first. Huh? To be dead in Christ basically refers to those who lived righteous lives and obeyed God's commandments while they were in mortality. They have passed through the veil, but are still "alive in Christ." This means that all the faithful Saints in the spirit world will be raised at his coming to join him in his return. Then those who are righteous, still living in mortality, will be changed and caught up to meet him at his coming.

Wow! So who got left out? Who was denied the privilege of NOT seeing the grand re-entry of our Savior to claim his throne at the beginning of his millennial reign? The answer is no one who has ever been obedient to the commandments of God. All of us will be there. All of us will witness this glorious scene. Does it really matter when we live on earth? Does it really matter if we aren't standing on the ground when the trumpet sounds and the graves open? Either way, early Saint or latter-day Saint, we will all be there at his coming.

This is why we all need to live as though his coming is imminent. We need to be spiritually prepared to face our Lord at any time, for of a truth we do not know when he will appear. We can't afford to get comfortable and be lazy in our spiritual preparations. If we want to rule and reign with him we must be prepared to be called upon to do so at any time. And in reference to yesterday's lesson, we must already be a holy people.

Day 5

2 Thessalonians 2 - An apostasy, or falling away from truth, was prophesied to precede the Second Coming.

Record your impressions in your journal or notebook. If we do not record the impressions we receive from the Spirit, we might forget them. What does the Spirit prompt you to record as you read 1 and 2 Thessalonians?

The whole subject of the apostasy is rather awkward for the Church that was left behind after the apostles were all killed and the priesthood keys were lost to the Church. The verses listed in the manual are very clear that there had to be a falling away from the truth, followed by a restoration of God's truths and priesthood authority, and that all of this would happen before the Second Coming of Christ. But if a falling away had to happen before the restoration, where did that leave the members of the Christian faith in the early years after the apostasy? So the apostasy wasn't something that was really talked about much, for it put the clergy in an uncomfortable position.

It was this very doctrine that was used by the instigators of the Protestant Reformation to fuel their fire of reform. They could see that the existing church no longer resembled the ancient organization of Christ's church. They wanted to get back to the purity of that organization, but they didn't know how. They had been taught that revelation no longer happened, though deep in their hearts they still believed it was possible. In fact, many based their faith in the belief that at some point in time God would open the heavens again and restore his Church to the earth. It was this belief in modern revelation that led many of the early members of the Church to accept baptism at the hands of the missionaries that found them.

I encourage you to read the quotes and references in the manual.

Scripture Study and Home Evening

2 Thessalonians 3:13 - Do we ever feel "weary in well doing"?

The gospel of Christ is meant for anyone who wants to become like him, holy and pure, and ready to walk back into the presence of our Father in Heaven free of the guilt and stain of sin. That is not a process we sometimes refer to as a cake walk. It isn't easy. That said, is it any wonder then that there are times when the demands of the gospel can feel a bit much. They can weigh heavy on the soul. We all have a lot to change about ourselves. None of us came to earth nearly perfect, requiring only small tweaks to our personalities. We all have a lot to work on.

When Paul tells the Saints to not be weary in well doing, what do you think his expectations really are? He was just talking to them about those who have stopped the personal struggle to be better and are going about causing mischief among the Saints. He is encouraging the Saints not to associate with those who cause contention and disbelief, but to never be tired of doing good things, or of well doing.

When we minister to those who are apparently always active in the Church, sometimes we neglect them thinking they are already on safe ground and probably don't need to be loved and cared for like those who have lost their way. Am I right? Surely I am not the only one who has made this excuse for not visiting and ministering fervently to those who are active. But it is those who are the most active who bear the greatest burdens of discipleship. They are the ones who are working the hardest to live lives unspotted from the world, who are resisting most vigorously the temptations of Satan. Theirs is a burden we shouldn't neglect, for they, of all people, feel its weight and responsibility most keenly.

How can we help and serve those who might be feeling a little weary in well doing?

One thought that comes to mind is to openly recognize their efforts. Express appreciation for their faith and willingness to serve so selflessly. Encourage their goodness and support their efforts to be better each day. Weariness often comes from feeling abandoned or invisible to those around us. Inclusion should not just include those who are without God in the world. Inclusion should also include those who are working the hardest to be prepared for the Savior's return, who spend their lives in the service of others. They also need love and support in their efforts.

This just goes to show how universal the need for love is in the world. There is no emotional, social, or intellectual condition that doesn't need someone else's love to encourage them and help them feel better about being and doing good.

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

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