Week 41 is scheduled for study Oct. 4-10, 2021. This week we look at ways for each of us to become more like God, to understand His personality and character, and to trust that He really can help all things to work for our good.

Day 1

Prayerfully ask for the guidance of the Spirit as you read Doctrine and Covenants 111-114, and record your impressions. Then consider ways you can act on those impressions.

Doctrine and Covenants 111 - The Lord can "order all things for [my] good."

First off, let's consider what it means when the Lord says he will "order all things for your good." We usually think of the word "order" as meaning a command, like you order food at a restaurant or order a subordinate to do something. For this situation, a more useful definition of the word order is to set in place, to make ready, or to prepare for. In this case, the Lord is saying that if we are obedient He will prepare the way such that everything that happens to us will be for our eventual good. What a promise.

This revelation was given during a time when the church was in great debt. They were having difficulty figuring out how to repay what they owed, and then they are told of the possibility of a large sum of abandoned money in Salem. I love the concept of looking for treasure. When you go looking for treasure there is always that spark of hope that all your problems will be swept away in a single stroke.

We tend to focus on just the physical treasures that are worth money, since you can buy most anything you want in this life if you have enough money. But money is the lowest treasure on the Lord's scale of important things for us to obtain. In this section Joseph Smith and others are looking for lots of cash in order to pay off debts. That is their primary concern. This is the Lord's response to their money worries (Doctrine and Covenants 111:5-6).

> 5 Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them.
>
> 6 Concern not yourselves about Zion, for I will deal mercifully with her.

Those words must have brought more than just a measure of relief to these brethren. The Lord doesn't seem all that troubled by their financial distress, does He? Remember, He knows the future. He created the earth and all the treasures in it. There isn't anything He couldn't provide in one way or another, if His church was in real need. It is good that the leaders of the church were concerned about paying their debts, but they were perhaps a little too focused on money, and not enough on furthering the Lord's work. In Doctrine and Covenants 111:10 the Lord says:

> 10 For there are more treasures than one for you in this city.

There were many souls in the Salem area who needed the gospel message, and unbeknownst to Joseph Smith, they would bring with them the financial ability to help the church with its current debt problems. This is partly why the Lord is saying there are more treasures than one. If they just focus on the worth of souls, the conversion of those souls will help to solve the other problems the church is facing. Hence - all things will work together for their good. This is one of those examples where the humans in the room can't see the solution to their problem, but to God, they are surrounded by numerous possible solutions that will bless them. When they put their trust in God and do what He has commanded, the rest falls into line, for He promised it would happen that way. Too often we are like the blind men and the elephant. (Click here for the text of the poem of The Blind Men and the Elephant.) We can only perceive the part of the animal that is right at our fingertips. The Lord always sees the whole picture.

Please don't think I am underplaying the stress the First Presidency was under at this time. The whole church was experiencing a severe financial crisis, and their debts were a major concern to them, because they didn't yet see the solutions the Lord had in mind for them. In fact, the Lord even told them He wasn't displeased with them, despite their "follies."

Day 2

Prayerfully ask for the guidance of the Spirit as you read Doctrine and Covenants 111-114, and record your impressions. Then consider ways you can act on those impressions.

Doctrine and Covenants 112:3-15 - The Lord will lead those who humbly seek His will.

Though the physical story is about the President of the Quorum of the Twelve seeking counsel from the prophet, because there was so much contention within the quorum, the actual subject of this lesson is about our personal humility. This is a lesson those of the Quorum of the Twelve needed to learn.

The manual recommends the talk given by Elder Ulisses Soares, "Be Meek and Lowly of Heart." This is indeed a great article on being meek. As I read the talk, it occurred to me that some of us might mix up the definition of meekness, thus requiring a little clarification. Elder Soares refers over and over again in the talk to the meekness of Christ. This is where we need some clarification.

Christ's mission comes in stages. His mortal time was to provide us the perfect example of how we should behave and what we should learn during our time in mortality. After his resurrection Christ was no longer the submissive and meek man who was bullied, pushed about, mocked, and tossed aside by those who had no regard for their Maker. He was now King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. We are still in the submissive and meek phase where we need to learn how to submit to the will of God. Christ showed us what was possible, as well as what is sometimes needed for us to be submissive to God's will. It isn't always pleasant, nor is it always easy to do.

When Elder Soares talks about being meek like Christ, remember that during his mortal ministry Christ had to exhibit all the attributes that are required of us by our Father in this life. Now is not the time to rail against injustice, prejudice, unfairness of this life, and the callous disregard of others. Now is the day in which we learn to submit willingly to all that our Father requires of us and learn all the godly traits we can. Our day of exaltation is coming, just as Christ's day came, but it is not today. And when Elder Soares talks about being humble and submissive, he is not referring to the wants

or demands of the world, but to the demands of God. It is God we need to learn to please. It is God we are trying to emulate and become like.

The world doesn't require humility to excel, only avarice, drive, and ambition. To excel in the eternal world requires we become like Christ. He is our focus and our hope for a better world, both here and in the future. So as you read or listen to Elder Soares's talk, don't be confused. We are to be submissive to Christ and the Spirit, meek towards all men because we are learning to be Christlike, and gentle, humble, and tender in all our relationships, because that is the way God is with us. Our day of power will come in the next life, not in this one. For now, our submission to the teachings of the Spirit will show us just how much God thinks we are worth, and how to become more like Him. In all things in our mortal life, our focus must always be on the next life and on our eternal nature and worth, and the eternal nature and worth of all the souls around us. This is why those who are meek are able to encourage others to be the same way, because they recognize their eternal worth and potential.

Day 3

Prayerfully ask for the guidance of the Spirit as you read Doctrine and Covenants 111-114, and record your impressions. Then consider ways you can act on those impressions.

Doctrine and Covenants 113 - Joseph Smith was "a servant in the hands of Christ."

Hopefully, there are none who will read these words and argue against the idea that Joseph Smith was indeed "a servant in the hands of Christ." Here is Doctrine and Covenants 113:4. I have removed the middle of the verse that specifies Joseph Smith's lineage for a reason.

> 4 Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is a servant in the hands of Christ, ... on whom there is laid much power.

There are literalists in the Church who will contest that this verse only is able to apply to Joseph Smith, because other prophets don't share the exact physical lineage of Joseph. But I maintain that this verse applies to all the prophets of God in this dispensation. Is not our living prophet "a servant in the hands of Christ"? Is not the living prophet a man "on whom there is laid much power"?

It can be tempting to revere a dead prophet more than a living prophet, but it is the living prophet who has the word of God for us in our day, just as the dead prophet had the word of God for the people of his day. We leave the bounds of spiritual safety when we begin to think that the words of a past prophet supercede the words of a living prophet. That is, after all, what sets us apart from all other churches on the earth, living prophets who speak the word of God for our day. None of them are perfect, any more than any of the rest of us, yet somehow the Lord manages to get His work done anyway.

FHE/Personal Study

Doctrine and Covenants 112:11-14, 26 - Knowing the Lord

In these verses the Lord tells Thomas Marsh that there will be a day of wrath that will be poured out upon the earth, beginning among God's own people. Why? Because there are those who know God's name, but know nothing of Him, and because they know nothing of Him they have blasphemed His name in His own house.

Have you considered what it requires to truly know someone? How many times have you heard someone comment that they had known someone for many years, but evidently they didn't really know them, because they never would have suspected that they could have been capable of doing what that person just did? Where does one go to know the true nature and personality of God? What say you to that?

There are a number of ways in which we come to know God, as we would come to know any other person. The first way is personal experience. How much do you learn about another person when you work along side them for an extended period of time? What are some of the lessons you learn about them when you have witnessed for yourself how they behave when things go badly or there are setbacks in the progress of the job? How do they behave when things go well? Do they take credit for it or do they give credit for successes, even if they deserve most of the credit?

What about when the person you want to get to know experiences sufferings? Are they compassionate, loving, patient and kind, or do they become defensive and bitter that things went south on them? What circumstances in your life have shown you how the Lord reacts to you when you have problems, are suffering, or are despondent over your situation?

In your study of the scriptures, have you noticed that there are statements made about the nature and habits of God all throughout holy writ? Have you tried to remember them and piece them together to see if they are painting an accurate and complete picture of the man you are trying to come to know?

And how about your own personal life. We read about Christ's meek nature. Have you tried to become meek to see if you experience any of the promises God makes to those who are meek? Have you tried to control your anger, gain a more eternal perspective, learn patience, etc. to see if what God says about these things really work the way He says they do?

I maintain that emulating a man is the best way to get to know him. And in this case, learning to act like God in this life will teach us how He thinks, feels, and sees the world better than any book study will ever accomplish, for by so doing we will become more like Him. We will come to understand why He does some of the things He does, and we will learn to feel some of His feelings for ourself and for others. We may not be perfect in our understanding, but we will have an idea, a close approximation. Learning to follow the Spirit will teach us of God and lead us to understand Him better. How could someone who is in such a holy pursuit ever blaspheme God in His own house when we are trying so hard to be like Him?

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I Will Order All Things for Your Good

Week 41