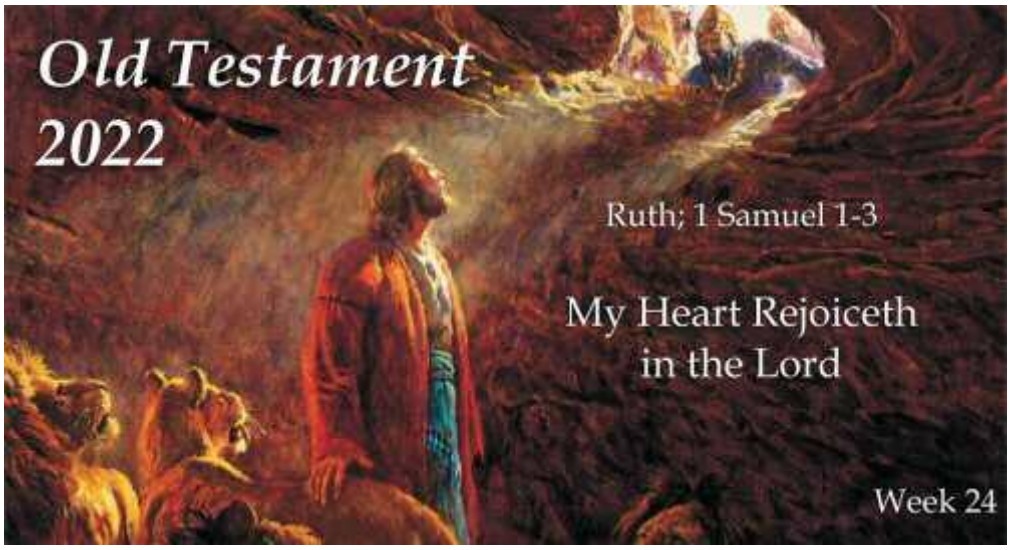

Week 24 is scheduled for study June 6-12, 2022. This week is a collection of uplifting topics. They tell us to trust in God, that Christ can turn tragedy into triumph, we need to obey His word, and we can rejoice in God.

Day 1

As you study the lives of Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, and others this week, listen closely to the Spirit and record any impressions you receive. What are you inspired to do?

Ruth - Christ can turn tragedy into triumph.

I am not going to question the Lord's way of setting up the rules for how Israel lived their lives. Whatever the Lord does is the right thing to do. With that said, as the manual points out, women without husbands or sons had virtually no rights in society in ancient Israel. Their society was built around the premise that the men supported the women. But life is what it is, and often times women found themselves with no men to take care of them. Such was the case of Naomi and Ruth. All their men folk had died, leaving them to fend for themselves. There was no realistic outlook that might lead them to think they could have a comfortable life from then on. Their lot would be one of hardships and loneliness for the rest of their lives.

With such a dismal outlook, Naomi still set the example for Ruth, a convert to her faith. She showed Ruth how to exercise faith in God, always acknowledging to Ruth both their life's difficulties, as well as the notion that God was in control, and that they

should always look to Him for answers and help. Ruth was a devoted daughter-in-law, and was willing to exercise her faith in both Naomi and God as Naomi instructed her. Naomi knew the culture in which they had to navigate, but Ruth was in uncharted waters, having been raised in another nation, culture, and religion.

I have stated before in my writings that I don't believe in coincidences. The Lord has His hand in everything when it comes to those who exercise faith in Him. He may allow the tragedies to befall us, but when we continue to seek Him out and demonstrate our faith in His power and mercy, miracles naturally follow. Those of the world might simply refer to these people as "lucky." They are actually just blessed.

Both Naomi and Ruth were resigned to their situation. The lands their men folk owned sat fallow, because the women weren't allowed to own the property. They knew that the only way for them to get food was to glean behind those reaping other people's fields. They would be consigned to get their grain by picking up the individual kernels that were left behind by those harvesting the fields. And unless they had a special relationship with the owner of the field, they wouldn't even be able to ask for water in the heat of the day as they scrounged for what little grain they could pick up off the ground.

But God is kind, and in my mind there is no doubt that Ruth was prompted to go to a particular field they knew was owned by a kinsman. They hoped that by gleaning in his field he would be lenient with them because of their family relation. As it turned out, Boaz was such an honorable man that when he learned who Ruth was he gave orders to his workers to actually drop whole handfuls of grain on the ground for Ruth to glean, and that they were to allow her to drink the water he supplied to his own workers.

> 8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:
>
> 9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

Anything in this narrative that seems miraculous? Not really. But little by little the Lord is relieving the suffering of Naomi and Ruth. Little by little they are being encouraged in their otherwise dismal situation.

The long and short of the situation with Ruth and Boaz is that through Naomi's advice to Ruth, Boaz did the honorable thing and redeemed Ruth according to the law of Moses, even though it was not his responsibility to do so. In the eyes of the law Ruth and Naomi were in a position where they could not redeem themselves from their situation. They needed a third party, one whose kindness and generosity would bring them back into full standing in society. This was the part Boaz played. He paid the price necessary to redeem them and make them respectable members of Israelite society. Did you notice in the reading that he not only redeemed Ruth socially, but he paid the price to gain ownership of all the land Naomi's and Ruth's husbands owned. In effect, he redeemed all of them, not just part of them. Here is Ruth 4:13-15.

> 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.
>
> 14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.
>
> 15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

Their son's name was Obed. Obed's son's name was Jesse, the father of David, king of all Israel. It is through this line the Savior, Himself was born. Did you remember that Ruth was not an Israelite by blood, but by adoption? She was a convert. This is another evidence that God is more concerned with the acceptance of His covenants than He is concerned with bloodline.

Reflect

Naomi and Ruth were both individually faithful to all of God's commandments. How quickly were their troubles relieved - in a day, a month, or over years? What about us? We all have trials in our lives. Most trials are of short duration, though at the time they may seem like an eternity. But eventually these things pass and are resolved. Do you always see the Lord's hand in the resolution of your problems at the time or do you sometimes need to look back and think about where God may have been moving to shape the details of your life in such a way that you were supported and led out of your trials.

Sometimes our trials are permanent.

How does God strengthen us in trials that are not taken from us?

Can you think of any way in which the Lord has enabled you to endure your long-lasting trial and become a better person through the things you experience?

Look at the role Boaz played in redeeming Ruth and Naomi from their social and financial situation. How is Boaz acting like the Savior in this scenario?

Day 2

As you study the lives of Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, and others this week, listen closely to the Spirit and record any impressions you receive. What are you inspired to do?

Ruth; 1 Samuel 1 - I can trust that God will guide and help me regardless of my situation.

In addition to the trials Naomi and Ruth experienced, today we add Hannah's trials to our list of those who suffered and were blessed by God for their obedience and devotion to His commandments. We have already looked at how Ruth showed her faith in God. As a woman without a man to care for her needs, she was known for her virtue and devotion to Naomi. Let's look at Hannah and what she had to endure.

Hannah was one of the two wives of Elkanah, a righteous man, and a good husband. Hannah's trials were two fold. Peninnah, the other wife had multiple children. That wasn't the problem. The problem was that Peninnah was proud that she was able to have children when Hannah was not. She made sure that she rubbed this "deficit" into Hannah's face every chance she got. The relationship between these two women was very much like the relationship of Leah and Rebekah, the wives of Jacob. Oh, how Hannah longed for a child, especially a male who could carry on the family name in Israel.

Each year that family journeyed to Shilo where the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were. There they made sacrifices to the Lord. And every year it was the same, every member of the family received a portion with which to offer their sacrifice, and Hannah received a worthy portion, which would indicate it was more than sufficient for what was required. Yet each year Peninnah would pick at Hannah's emotional wound that she had no children. Evidently the two women were not close.

> 4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:
>
> 5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the Lord had shut up her womb.
>
> 6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb.
>
> 7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

It was in this time of yearly humiliation by her fellow wife that Hannah finally went apart from all the others and pleaded with God to give her a son. She promised that if He would grant her a son that she would repay His kindness by giving her son to the temple to serve in the temple his whole life. While she prayed the High Priest, Eli was watching her lips move as she silently spoke to God. Once he learned of her petition to the Lord he blessed her (1 Samuel 1:17).

> 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

It was after Eli's blessing that she was able to conceive and gave birth to a son they called Samuel.

All three women had different forms of trials. Naomi had a husband and two sons, but all her family died, leaving her alone in the world. Ruth had a husband, but no children when he died, leaving her alone to go to a strange country and adopt a new religion. Hannah was born and raised in Israel, was married to a good husband, but was constantly heckled and tormented by her fellow wife about her inability to have a child. Children were the hope and future of every family, a view many in today's society no longer embrace.

In each instance, it was when faith and diligence in keeping the commandments was demonstrated that God strengthened them and answered their prayers. All of us have different circumstances in life, but the recipe for relief and strength is the same in each and every case. When we obey the commandments and exercise our faith in God, praying for the help we feel we need, answers come and God intervenes as His wisdom dictates.

Day 3

As you study the lives of Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, and others this week, listen closely to the Spirit and record any impressions you receive. What are you inspired to do?

1 Samuel 2:1-10 - My heart can rejoice in the Lord.

In this song Hannah sings she makes some profound points it would be well for all of us to remember. She points out that God is in control. She doesn't believe that we are prospered merely by our own cleverness or hard work. God makes people rich or poor according to His desire. He intervenes for those who keep His commandments.

Hannah glories that the Lord equalizes all people. The strong He makes weak, and those who are weak God exalts. She further glories in God's wisdom to weigh and measure all men's behavior.

Hannah's life wasn't ending. She had just had one of her prayers answered on a subject that was very important to her. Yet she shows us how grateful she is that the Lord heard her petition and answered her plea as she desired. Something tells me that Hannah was so humble that if her prayer for a child had been denied it wouldn't have effected her faith. Like Job she would have conceded that God giveth and God taketh away. Glory be to God.

We don't usually sing songs or compose hymns when we are feeling especially blessed. What do you do when you feel overwhelmed by the generosity of the Lord in your life? Have you ever felt so grateful it was difficult to express yourself? I have only had a few times in my life when I felt so overwhelmed by gratitude that all I wanted to do was to sing and dance to the Lord. Unfortunately, my singing and dancing would have only made me look like a lunatic, so I had to resort to long prayers of thanksgiving, and long hours of grateful contemplation. The important thing is that we recognize our blessings then express gratitude. Ingratitude is a sin for good reason.

Day 4

As you study the lives of Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, and others this week, listen closely to the Spirit and record any impressions you receive. What are you inspired to do?

1 Samuel 3 - I can hear and obey the voice of the Lord.

One of the most difficult things we have to learn in this life is the skill to hear the voice of the Lord. For most of us, hearing the voice of the Lord comes by learning to hear the Spirit when He speaks to us. There are times when the Lord personally speaks, but for most of us His communications will come through the Spirit. Listening to the Spirit is not like reading a recipe. The Spirit has so many ways of communicating with us that learning to "listen" to Him is as much an art form as it is something practical. But one has to start somewhere, right? So let's take a look at a few ways to recognize the Spirit's voice.

Voice

When the Spirit speaks to us using words, they can come in many forms. Have you ever thought about how your conscience "speaks" to you? For example, sometimes when I go to do something I suddenly hear my mother's voice in my head saying, "I taught you better than that." Bringing things you have learned in the past back to your remembrance is one way in which we can hear the Spirit's voice.

In some instances the Spirit actually gives us input, almost as though we were having a conversation with a close friend. We hear in our head our friend giving us direction or suggestions. Admittedly there are times when I can't tell if it is my voice I am hearing or someone else's voice, but if you quickly evaluate the soundness of the suggestion you will find that it doesn't feel like your own voice, so you follow the counsel the voice gives you. Mind you, this voice will never tell you to do anything that isn't in the best interests of everyone involved. The Spirit will always tell you to do things that are good and beneficial, both for you and for others. If you have promptings to do things that break commandments or hurt others in any way, that is not a voice you should be listening to.

Over time, you begin to recognize that this voice is "familiar." You recognize it as one you have heard before, so you are more apt to follow its counsel. Listening to this voice eventually becomes almost second nature to you. But it takes practice. Plan on making mistakes and second guessing yourself, especially when you are first setting out to learn how to listen to the Spirit's voice. How He speaks to you may be slightly different than

how someone else might hear Him. This is why no one can give you a step by step guide on how to listen to the Spirit's voice - it is all so individual.

Feelings

We can be led to do things in life for many reasons. When it comes to emotions, all of us are influenced based on our past experiences with attending to our emotions. Some of us do our level best to ignore how we feel, and do things based as much as possible on logic and reason. Others of us are almost living our lives in a state of emotional abandon, where the slightest emotion easily turns us in another direction. We are individually all over the scale when it comes to how sensitive we are to our own emotions.

The Spirit relies heavily on teaching us through our feelings. His promptings often come through surges of empathy, charity, concern for others, a sense of need to do something, or any one of a hundred other senses we feel. I always think of how the Savior tells the Nephites that his bowels are filled with mercy and he is moved to grant them their prayerful petitions. Learning to feel for the welfare of others is a prime way to "listen" to the Spirit, for He will always give you urgings to bless or help others. Listen to those urgings and follow them.

Teaching others

My mother always taught me that if I want to learn how to follow the promptings of the Spirit, whether by His voice or by the feelings He gives me, I need to learn to follow the first inclination I receive to do good. By systematically following the first prompt I have to do good then the Lord comes to trust that when He sends us a message through the Holy Ghost we will follow it. This is why I say in my articles that if you don't follow the prompt you receive, chances are one of two things will happen. Either the prompt will come once again or it goes away and doesn't return.

Those who have had more experience with the Spirit than someone who is just learning have a duty (in my mind) to help them recognize the Spirit's influence in their life. All of us, once we learn how the Spirit speaks to us in whatever form that happens, should be willing to help others recognize His voice as well. It will support, as well as speed up, their spiritual growth.

Tendencies

One last note on how the voice of God manifests itself in our life is that when it comes it needs to be followed. When we put off responding to the urges or the instructions we are given, once in a while they might be repeated several times, but not usually. The Lord is not in the habit of arguing with us. If we reject the prompting we receive to do something the Spirit tells us to do, which will always be for our own good, often the thought or feeling is taken from us. We often have only one shot, two at the outside, to listen and follow, before the prompt is removed.

Once we have learned to hear the prompts when they come, and we have taught our self to respond positively to those promptings the prompts will come more often, and as often as not, because we are so familiar with the feelings and the "sound" of the voice that whispers to us, following those promptings becomes almost second nature. We no longer have to think, analyze, and fret over whether this is the Spirit or just our own thoughts. We will now be at a point where the Spirit can give us a little nudge and we just go with it.

Mind you, He won't tell us every step to take in life. We are expected to learn wisdom and to make the best choices for ourselves, but He is there to help us with course corrections, and to know what to do to bless the lives of others. That is, after all, what God is all about, blessing the lives of others. This is what we are trying to learn. We aren't in this whole process for our own self aggrandizement, but to be of service to others. This is the process of becoming more Christlike.

FHE/Personal Study

Lessons learned from Eli

This is my own topic. You won't find this specifically treated in the manual.

Eli is a great representation of each of us as humans. He was a High Priest. And as such he had served in his office for much of his life. I am guessing that he oversaw the workings of the Tabernacle and saw to it that everyone else was doing their jobs as the law proscribed. He blessed Hannah when she came and prayed for a child. I don't know how much of her blessing of having a child was influenced on her faith, and how much

his blessing as one holding God's priesthood may have influenced her receiving that blessing from God. My point is that Eli did some good things in life.

Eli, being like most of us, also had his weaknesses. His two sons appear to have been his greatest weakness. They fulfilled their offices in the priesthood in wickedness, intimidating and extorting payments from those who came to offer sacrifices. They violated innocent young women who served at the Tabernacle. He was in charge of the Tabernacle. He answered to God for how the whole Levite nation conducted themselves in the service of their God. But his sons appear to be his greatest weakness.

Now it might have been that Eli failed to restrain his sons because they threatened him with bodily harm if he didn't let them do as they wished. They may have known something about Eli he didn't want revealed, so he kept his mouth shut. Be that as it may, as the High Priest of God, Eli seemed more afraid of his sons than he was of the judgments of God. Even when the Lord send a prophet to tell Eli what He was going to do to him and his sons because of their wicked ways, he doesn't appear to have done anything to try to repent or change his ways. Neither did he make any real effort to restrain his sons from their evil practices in the Tabernacle.

The law of Moses provided a commandment about honoring your parents that could have solved this kind of problem. As mentioned in the Church's website, this commandment wasn't meant for just any disobedient child, but to rein in the incorrigible child who became a threat to the spiritual life of all Israel. Well that certainly appears to be the case with Eli's sons. Yet Eli did nothing to protect the spiritual purity of Israel, which was the whole point of his priesthood calling.

Personal

I compare Eli to each of us, because I, at least, am a combination of both good and bad, just like Eli. What about you? Do you do a lot of good, fulfilling what is expected of you in parts of your life, with other parts of your life more or less out of control and beyond your current reach and ability to control? We are all works in progress. It may be easy to point the finger of judgment at Eli and talk about all that he did wrong, but remember, this is the same man who taught the young prophet Samuel how to listen to the voice of God, and who taught him the importance of temple worship. Who knows how much good he did in other areas of his life. All we see, unfortunately, is tainted by

his unhealthy relationship with his wicked sons. It was that relationship that finally got all three of them killed, and his family cursed by God for all time. What lessons do you take away from his story?

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

OT24-2022 - My Heart Rejoiceth in the Lord

Week 24