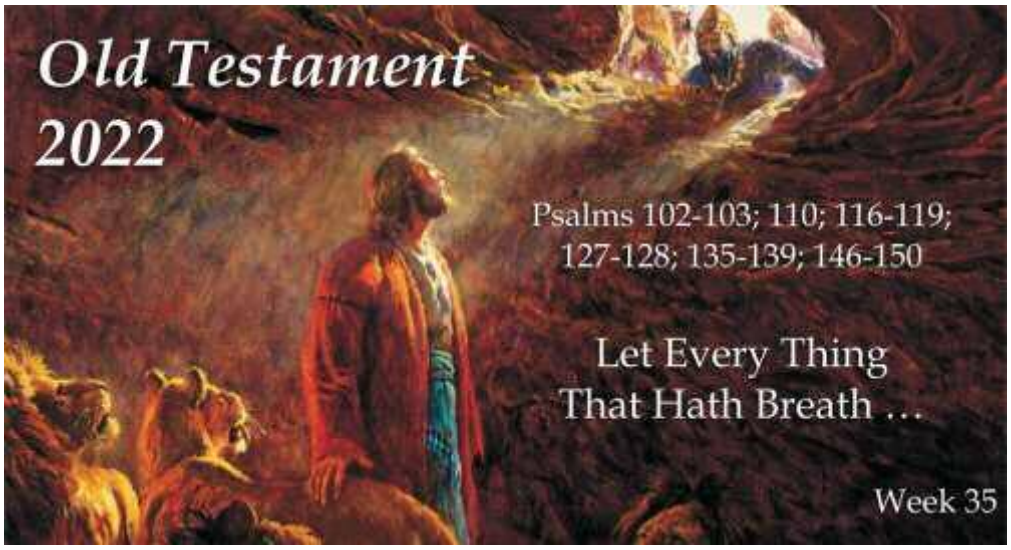

Week 35 is scheduled for study August 22-28, 2022. The question for this week is, "What can the Psalms teach us about ourselves and about our God?" He does more for us than we might think.

Day 1

Psalm 119:105 teaches that the word of God is "a light unto [your] path." As you read Psalms, record phrases and ideas that inspire you and help illuminate your path back to Heavenly Father.

Psalms 102-3; 116 - The Lord can comfort me in my suffering.

The comfort the psalmists talk about are with the perspective that idols are manmade, therefore pretend, and are not real. But God is real, has real power, and lives from everlasting to everlasting. As it says in Psalms 102:25-27, God will never die. The planets will come and go and God will change them out like we change our clothing, but though the planets pass away, yet will God endure forever; He will always be God.

> 25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.
>
> 26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:
>
> 27 But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

I think we sometimes have an understanding that God is alive and here in the present, but do we really comprehend that He was also still the same man He is today that He was before our solar system was created? Do we comprehend that God will still be here, there, and everywhere, doing what He has always done 20 billion years from now? The shaping and ordering of the cosmos for the welfare of His children is His business; it is what He does for a living.

The tenderness we ascribe to Christ was taught to him by God, our Father. He weeps over His children when they suffer. He rejoices in their righteousness, and prospers them in their goodness. God it eternal, and as such, so are His attributes. Did you notice that the psalmist says (Psalm 102:19-21) that God looks down at us from heaven so He can "hear the groaning of the prisoner" and to "loose those that are appointed to death."

> 19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did
> the Lord behold the earth;
>
> 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;
>
> 21 To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

The Lord has compassion for His children. He gave us a Savior to provide a way through the suffering we all need to pass through in order to become like Him. Without a Savior we could never become like our Father. The Savior's role is to release the prisoners from their spiritual confinement, and to offer life to those who will otherwise be appointed to spiritual death.

Does God want me to suffer? Certainly not. Does God delight in comforting me when I suffer, because I have to pass through trials in order to return home to Him? He certainly does.

Day 2

Psalm 119:105 teaches that the word of God is "a light unto [your] path." As you read Psalms, record phrases and ideas that inspire you and help illuminate your path back to Heavenly Father.

Psalms 110; 118 - The Psalms can point me to the Savior.

Isn't it amazing that the name of Jesus is never mentioned in the entire Old Testament, yet the Christ is spoken of, prophesied about, and discussed throughout the book. He is referred to as Jehovah, as Lord, as "my God" or just God. He is also known as savior, redeemer, he who brings salvation, and a host of other terms. Just not as Jesus.

As you read through the Psalms, notice all the titles given to God by the psalmists. Some titles are clearly about Christ, while others refer to our Father in Heaven. And many could be true whether we are referring to our Father or the Savior. The Godhead works together so closely that it can be a coin toss sometimes as to which person is being discussed at the moment.

One of the reasons the Psalms are so good at pointing us to the Savior is because the psalmists know their place before God. All the psalms are written in the spirit of gratitude and acknowledgment of God's goodness to His children and those who obey Him. They write like they have an intimate knowledge that certain events have taken place in the history of mankind, and that certain events will happen in the Lord's own time in the future. The psalmists praise God for being in control of the timeline, and that He is so good to His people. That goodness comes in the promised fulfillment of God's promise to send His people a Savior who will redeem Israel and defend her from those who would do her harm. And on a personal note, the psalmists recognize that each of us needs to rely on that same Savior for the forgiveness of our own sins. They looked forward to his day, and rejoiced in the victory that would most certainly be his. This has been the message of all the prophets from the days of Adam, not just the psalmists.

Day 3

Psalm 119:105 teaches that the word of God is "a light unto [your] path." As you read Psalms, record phrases and ideas that inspire you and help illuminate your path back to Heavenly Father.

Psalm 119 - God's word will keep me on His path.

The psalmist uses all of the following words to refer to God's word: commandments, testimonies, precepts, statutes, word, and law. He also makes frequent references to God's ways and His judgments. Since the Psalms are a form of poetry, I am guessing

that the first list of words refers to what God teaches us in the scriptures and through His prophets. The second words (ways and judgments) refer to the lifestyle God teaches us through the scriptures and His prophets.

As I read through the verses and sections of this psalm, I kept trying to identify what the perspective was of the psalmist. I finally concluded that he is one who is completely converted to living the ways of the Lord. He has learned that God's ways bring wisdom, happiness, protection, peace, and safety. He appears to have learned from his own experience that the world cannot give these things, and that it is through studying God's word that he can learn of God's ways. The psalmist also promotes contemplating the behavior's of the world, and what that behavior creates in comparison with thinking on the truths taught in God's word and how living by God's laws brings so many wonderful things into our lives.

I can see people like Nephi, Alma, Isaiah, or Jeremiah writing something like this psalm. As you reread this psalm, consider why the psalmist makes the claims and statements that he does. Why is he making the assumptions and declarations he does? I don't know if it is most or many psalmists who spend so much time focusing on their enemies who wish to see them suffer, or if this is something that is somewhat unique to David. So many times, even in just this one psalm, he asks the Lord to bring judgment on his enemies. There is an underlying assumption that he has the right to ask this of God because he, the psalmist, has been keeping the commandments and has a right to be able to ask such things and expect a positive response.

The words of our living prophets and the scriptures we have been given are the standard by which all people can guide their path through life. Since the days that Adam first recorded the word of God for his children until the present day, the purpose of the written word, coupled with current revelation, has been the standard by which Christ's gospel has been taught and spread. Does life seem complicated and hard? Remember that, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Doctrine and Covenants 89:3 is similar in its feeling.

> 3 Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.

The word of God is not designed for the well educated, the rich, or the sophisticated. All scripture is given so that all of God's children can learn and grow from what the Spirit

teaches them as they ponder and study His words. Joseph Smith taught that we all have the capacity to have our intellects enlarged, and it is by our personal study, and by the influence of the Spirit that this happens. So when life feels extra difficult or bleak, try turning to the scriptures even more often than you already read them (which is daily, right?), and you will find solace, comfort, and direction in your prayers and through your time spent pondering the things you have found in the scriptures. This is how we are supposed to get through life.

Day 4

Psalm 119:105 teaches that the word of God is "a light unto [your] path." As you read Psalms, record phrases and ideas that inspire you and help illuminate your path back to Heavenly Father.

Psalms 134-36 - The Lord is more powerful than any idol.

Have you ever asked yourself where the worship of idols comes from? What is an idol? How do you think the worship of idols began? Here is my own angle on these questions. I believe that the worship of something other than our own self comes naturally to us. We all are, after all, children of THE supreme being in the universe. But since Satan needs us to turn our attention from God so we don't follow Him, he came up with a thousand and one other forms of worship, complete with back stories, myths, legends, and methods of worship. This way if one way doesn't get us to stop following God, perhaps a different story will work just as well.

In any event, the worship of idols is to give our heart to fiction, to make believe. Idols are just something that someone made up. They are not real, therefore they have no abilities, no power, nor influence in the real world. Satan uses real things like faith and belief to twist reality into making it look like the worship of one of these false gods actually has power to have an effect on our life. He also uses his own priesthoods to perform miracles in the name of his lies. But when all is said and done, only one source has the ability to do anything for us beyond the veil of death, and that is the LORD. Forgiveness of sin and resurrection is only available through Jesus the Christ. And our Father in Heaven is the only one who has any kind of plan or power to bring us back into His presence once we leave our time in mortality.

So Satan can counterfeit all he wants. Nothing he can do can last beyond life on earth. If we want eternal life, eternal glory, and eternal progression, only Jesus Christ can grant that. Our idols may be in the form of a child-sacrificing monster like Baal, or it may be something simple like an RV (recreational vehicle), a sport, or video game that dominates our time and attention in life. What the idol is doesn't matter, except that it keeps us away from Christ. That's all Satan ever wanted an idol to do anyway.

Day 5

Psalm 119:105 teaches that the word of God is "a light unto [your] path." As you read Psalms, record phrases and ideas that inspire you and help illuminate your path back to Heavenly Father.

Psalms 146-50 - Praise ye the Lord.

Have you ever tried the exercise to plead with the Lord to teach you how to pray? You begin praying by letting the Lord know what it is you want to accomplish, which is to have the Spirit teach you what to be thankful for and what to ask Him about. Then when you feel like you have defined for yourself what it is you are looking for, you wait. That is a really uncomfortable wait, for you are wanting the Spirit to whisper something to you that is noticeable enough that you can say it as part of your prayer. This form of prayer takes a lot of practice and a lot of time to learn how to do it. Especially when we are first starting out, we just spend a lot of time awkwardly listening to the silence around us on our knees before the Lord.

If it is so awkward, why would we even try praying that way? The reason is because when we learn to seek the Spirit in our prayers, and we pray for what He puts into our mind and heart to pray for, those things will always be granted to us, for they are the mind and the will of God - they are right before Him. The Disciples prayed this way in 3 Nephi 18. It says that they did not multiply their words, because the Spirit told them what to say.

You might have noticed that this has little to do with praising the Lord. You are right, but the exercise is the same. We need to express gratitude to our God. He does so much for us, and is capable of doing so much more for us. What holds us back is often the lack of our own imagination as to what the Lord is capable of doing and what He is

willing to do in our life. Many times He can't do the best things for us, because we don't let Him. We make assumptions that our desire is petty or too small to take to God, so we don't even ask for it. Or we may assume that we are being too forward in our request or desires for His intervention, so we won't even bring it up in our prayers.

The spirit of gratitude is very important to our Father in Heaven and to Christ. In Doctrine and Covenants 59:20-21 the Lord is telling Joseph Smith that the creation of this entire planet, along with everything that is on it is for our use. It actually pleased the Lord to be able to do this for His children. Then He goes on in verse 21 to tell the prophet that nothing we do offends Him, except the sin of ingratitude. It is in not acknowledging His hand in all things that we show Him we are not grateful for what He has gone to so much effort to give us.

> 20 And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.
>
> 21 And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.

All our God wants is a little demonstration of gratitude, and acknowledging His hand in all things (that is the "confess" part), and keeping His commandments. That is all He asks. How do we acknowledge something? Don't we have to make some kind of outward, visible or audible statement that shows we know what was done, and that demonstrates that we are grateful? What does a mother in a home wish for so she feels like she is appreciated and loved? What does the father in the home need from the members of his family so he feels like his sacrifice of spending all day away from them to earn a living is noticed and appreciated? How do we let our friends know we are grateful for their friendship? Is a fleeting thought about it sufficient? Is thinking briefly about some of the wonderful things my wife does in our home enough for her to feel loved and appreciated?

I think you get the picture. Acknowledgment needs to be an outward gesture that is discernable by the one for whom it is directed. The Psalms are songs in poetic form that describe the power and majesty of God and His goodness. They were written by people who understood the importance of openly expressing gratitude. An artist may paint something that expresses how deep the feelings of appreciation go. A musician might write pieces that demonstrate the feelings of their heart. But what about all of us Joe

Averages who can't write a symphony, choreograph a dance, or paint a picture or carve a grand sculpture? What do we do to express ourselves to God?

I suggest you try this very embarrassing exercise. Do it when you are alone, as you will probably trip all over yourself the first number of times you try it. Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted then ponder. Think about all the things God has done. Try to comprehend His might, power, and majesty. What do you think it took for Him to create the planets and the heavens over the course of billions of years, all so His children would have a place of beauty to call home when their time for mortality arrived? What has God done in just the creation of this planet to show us how much our happiness means to Him? We have a nearly infinite variety of plants, animals, terrain, and weather with clouds that constantly change from moment to moment, vast sunsets and vistas to help us find peace and to feel awe in His creations. The list goes on and on. This is what you need to say out loud. Start expressing your appreciation to God for all He has done for you. Get personal if you feel the desire. Thank Him for blessings that He has given to you that have meant so much to you. Allow yourself to feel vulnerable, for acknowledging such things should allow our heart strings to sing whatever song they need to sing.

You can write this exercise. You can sing it if you want. God doesn't care that you can't carry a tune in a bucket, for He is listening to your heart, not your throat. All our Father wants is the expression that comes from our heart where we acknowledge that we have noticed what He has done for us, and continues to do for us each and every day. Just thinking the thoughts, though He can hear them, isn't good enough. When we only think something we tend to get sidetracked and get lost in our own thoughts. This exercise requires a physical response to God's goodness and greatness, whether it is through making something or speaking/singing/writing out thoughts.

The closest we come to this exercise in a public setting is Fast and Testimony meeting. I think that is the Lord's favorite general Church meeting, for it is as close to expressions of true appreciation for His goodness as many of us ever get. And when was the last time you got up and bore your testimony in any form?

FHE/Personal Study

Psalm 119:105 - "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

I would like to share a personal perspective on this verse. The point of the verse is that with the Spirit in our life, coupled with the teachings of the scriptures and the prophets, we can "see" the path or road we should go down in life. The teachings of the Lord "light the way". This is the way I have always thought of this verse. But as I was considering what to talk about in all the options for this section of the Come, Follow Me lessons for this week, I had a new perspective on this verse that relates to an old experience I had.

There was a time in my life when I was single with four children. My Stake Presidency had just cut me off, and was basically requiring me to leave town to seek employment. It is a complicated story, but you can read it here if you are interested. I was in a situation where I had to decide whether to walk away from the Church or follow the directives of my priesthood leaders, even though I strongly felt they didn't know what they were talking about. All I could see was a dark future where I was homeless with four children, no job, and no prospects, and I was being abandoned by the Church I had always been taught would be there for me, no matter what. My outlook was pretty bleak.

In trying to describe what it felt like in my mind and heart, the closest I could come to a description was to say that I had a light shining right ahead of my feet, but no further into the darkness. Now I had come upon a deep gorge. I couldn't see into the bottom as it was too dark. I just knew that if I took that next step I would plunge to my death. That is how I felt about having to follow my church leaders at that moment.

What occurred to me as I read this verse today was that I was focusing on what I couldn't see. All my stress told me to fear what was out of sight. It wasn't until all these years later that I now see that I was led by a light at my feet. I was only trusting that light as far as my physical eyes could see. What God was asking of me was to trust that the darkness He was asking me to step into was just the next step along the well lighted path He had already directed me down. My faith wasn't supposed to be based on the notion of whether or not I would plunge to my death by stepping into the darkness of my life at the moment, but should have been based on the fact that He had led me up to

this point and wouldn't have brought me to this spot if He didn't intend for me to continue to find blessings and be successful.

I had forgotten that my faith in Him was what brought me to where I was at that moment. All I needed to do was to trust in what He had already shown me and not worry that I couldn't see where the next step would take me, for He hadn't abandoned me up to that point. He had already given me all I needed to take that next step into the unknown. I just made it more difficult for myself by forgetting what He had already done for me and by focusing on my blindness, instead of on the illumination of the path God had already given me. I did take that step, but it would have been so much easier for me had I focused on my previous blessings as they lighted my way forward.

We have three things to light our path through life, the Spirit, the scriptures, and the prophets. When we put our faith in all three and seek to see things from the Lord's perspective, truly He will light the way back home so we never need to get lost in the dark.

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OT35-2022 - Let Every Thing That Hath Breath

Week 35