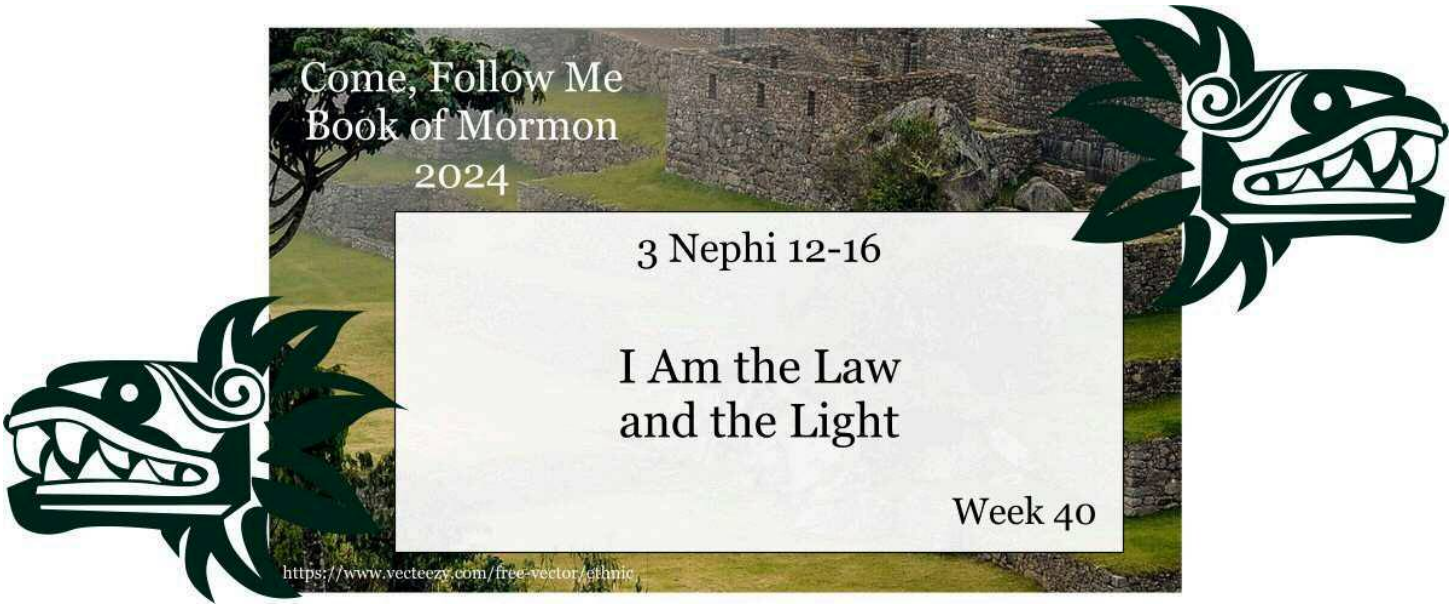

Week 40 is scheduled for study Sept. 30-Oct. 6, 2024. The first step in discipleship is belief. The second step is living what we believe. This pattern opens the windows of heaven.

Day 1

3 Nephi 12-14 - I can be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

The exercise the manual lays out for today's lesson is a good one for each of us to consider. As I pondered the statements listed in this lesson I began to wonder just what my duties are as a disciple of Christ. I found an amazing article on Bible.org that is well worth your time to read. Below is just a brief snippet towards the end of the article. I really hope you will read the whole article. There are great truths here. I speak further on this topic in the Personal Study section below.

[The Duties of Discipleship]

> In Peter’s commission by our Lord we are reminded again of God’s ability to use even our sins to bring about our good and His glory (Romans 8:28). Past sins, once forgiven, should not hinder us from future service. While Peter should have been strengthened and humbled by his three-fold denial of the Lord, he should also be encouraged by his three-fold commission.
>
> This chapter says much to every Christian about the matter of servanthood.

(1) True discipleship is evidenced by servanthood—that is, expressing, indeed continuing, the servanthood of our Lord, even in His absence. Follow me!

(2) Servanthood is rooted in and motivated by our love for Jesus Christ.

(3) Servanthood involves evangelism and shepherding. It seeks both to save the lost and to strengthen the believers.

(4) Servanthood involves self-sacrifice, even unto death.

(5) Servanthood concentrates on God’s will for us, and does not compare our calling with that of others.

Finally, I am encouraged to learn that my fellowship with the Lord Jesus is not one whit inferior to that of the apostles. They could not turn back the clock to the days before the cross. They would not have wished to lengthen the period of His post-resurrection appearances. Intimate fellowship with Christ was only possible after His ascension, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. How is this fellowship experienced? Let me suggest three avenues:

(1) In the Scriptures. We come to know our Lord as He was predicted in the Old Testament, and through the eyes of four men who knew Him well in the gospels.

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1 John 1:1-4).

(2) In suffering. It was the apostle Paul who wrote, “… that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10, cf. also Colossians 1:24).

(3) In service. Not only is there a fellowship in suffering, but in service. We sense the closeness of our Lord when His power is released in our lives in His service (cf. Philippians 3:10).

Day 2

3 Nephi 12:1-2; 15:23-24; 16:1-6 - Blessed are those who believe without seeing.

Isn't it interesting that we consider what a privilege it was to be in the Savior's presence and to be able to see and feel the wounds in his body and hear the sermons he preached. Yet in 3 Nephi 12:2 here are his words to the people.

> 2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. ...

"More blessed"? Why are they who never got to see the Savior more blessed than they who did see him? I have to keep reminding myself that to God everything is eternal, especially His perspective. To be more blessed would require more of something that is eternally important to our soul. I think what He is referring to is faith. Those who believe without seeing are more willing to demonstrate belief and faith than those who didn't believe before they saw with their own eyes.

It has always been part of the plan of happiness that the gentile nations in the last days would only receive the testimony of Jesus, not Jesus himself (3 Nephi 15:23).

> 23 And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost.

Day 3

3 Nephi 12:21-30; 13:1-8, 16-18; 14:21-23 - I can strive to purify the desires of my heart.

You could live the law of Moses without having to be a nice person. What mattered was that you observed the law, which many of the Israelites did while still living very worldly lives. The law of the Gospel requires that our inward attitudes and outlooks match our outward performances. In other words, our whole soul must be committed to living this law, not just our outward behavior. We must be as clean on the inside as we appear to others to be on the outside. That is what makes the law of the gospel so much more difficult to live than the law of Moses.

The manual gives some good suggestions for you to pursue to see how the Lord challenges us to be better on the inside than we may have been otherwise. I will offer my own challenge in the form of this article called The Measure of Our Civility.

Day 4

3 Nephi 14:7-11 - Heavenly Father will give me good things as I ask, seek, and knock.

I am discovering that my thinking is sometimes very confined and limited to the words on hand. In these verses the Savior tells the people that if they will just seek, ask, or knock, they will find or receive what they are looking for. He uses the comparison of us giving good things to our children, so how much more so will God give good things to His children who petition Him.

As I was thinking about the technical differences between seeking, asking, and knocking, it occurred to me that this is the same message Jesus has stated over and over again in other words. He has told us to come to him. He has never at any time turned away anyone. All of us are invited to come and partake of what he offers us. His promise is to give liberally to each of us. We read in the scriptures that at no time has anyone been forbidden from coming to Christ. Isn't this the same message he is stating when he tells us that if we will seek him we will find him, if we ask we will receive, and if we knock he will open the door for us?

I am no longer concerned with the technical differences between the words ask, seek, and knock. What matters here is that God wants us to understand that it is all here for the taking. We just have to have the desire to work for what we want. Asking, seeking, and knocking does take work. We need to choose to believe we can receive the answers we long for, and we must be willing to exercise our faith by studying the scriptures, praying, serving, and emulating Christ as best we can. Once we have demonstrated our sincerity Christ will reveal to us our heart's desire. He guarantees his willingness to do so.

Personal Study

Why the list?

This is just something to consider. I have often wondered why the Savior began his ministry to the Jews with the Beatitudes, a list of character traits. When he came to the Americas he did the same thing, he began with "rattling off" a list of character traits - the same ones. In fact, most of his sermons were just a list of basics to be considered. There weren't lengthy explanations as to what each of these things was supposed to accomplish in our life. We didn't receive lots of references so we could understand them more deeply. He just gave the basics about each topic then moved on.

This bothered me for a long time. I was, for some reason, expecting more. It wasn't until this time through that I finally began to see a pattern that I am probably the last on earth to find. In each instance Jesus was replacing the old law with the new law. And in each instance he didn't have the time or luxury of teaching all the details and ins and outs of how it all worked. That was the job of his apostles in the old world and the disciples in the new world. This is why he called them, to preach his gospel. He was just there to deliver it then move on. The Father had many things for him to accomplish, many places for him to go, many people to visit and bear testimony to.

As a result of the demands on Christ's time, he couldn't spend years with each of the groups teaching the people personally about how to live the gospel. The Spirit would have to reveal that information to the apostles and disciples so they could teach the people what they needed to know to live the gospel Christ delivered. This is why Jesus gave only the briefest of outlines of what the gospel entailed.

Our responsibility is to read the core behaviors and doctrines of the gospel of Christ and figure out, with the help of the Spirit, how to incorporate those character traits and attitudes into our lives. We turn to the Brethren for further guidance and clarification of those attributes we are all supposed to acquire and they help us learn how to apply them and acquire them in the society in which we live. That is their calling.

As it turns out there was no reason for me to be concerned that Jesus wasn't more detailed in his delivery of the higher law. He gave us the meat of the law as quickly as he could, because of the short amount of time he was able to spend with the people. Fortunately, the first thing he did was to call teachers who were righteous men to continue our instruction when he was gone.

Click the link below to

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BoM40-2024 - I Am the Law, and the Light