Week 46 is scheduled for study Nov. 11-17, 2024. The veil between us and God is only as impervious as our belief (or lack thereof) makes it. Once we have enough belief the veil thins.

Day 1

Ether 1:33-43 - As I cry unto the Lord, He will have compassion on me.

The manual focuses on the three prayers offered to the Lord in today's verses. I have no proof (obviously) of my next statement, but it is my belief. Three prayers don't make or break one's ability to have conversations with the Lord. I firmly believe that the brother of Jared was gifted in his ability to exercise faith in his prayers to God. I find it amazing that the brother of Jared had no concept of God. He had never been taught the true nature of God, yet he exercised amazing faith in this being that was "nebulous" to him.

It wasn't until the brother of Jared actually saw Christ's finger that he had any idea that God had a body. All the years of his life he had been praying to something that had no known form. That is amazing to me. It seems reasonable to assume that with each heartfelt prayer that when he received an answer he attributed that answer to the being he had prayed to. Over and over again he approached God with his concerns, requests, and problems, and over time he came to trust that the being he prayed to always answers when approached in humility and with the belief that He would answer the one who petitioned Him. Even without any real understanding of the nature of God the

brother of Jared came to trust in Him and believe in His promises. He grew to love the God he prayed to.

The three prayers focused on in today's lesson were the culmination of many years of praying. I refused to believe these were his first three attempts at prayer. That makes no sense. By now he knew how to approach God when he prayed. You have already read ahead and seen how he approached God when he prayed about the problems with their barges. He reasoned with God. He acknowledged their sinfulness and their weaknesses, and was reverent in his language. The tone he used in his approach to the Lord was one of humble submission and subservience. The brother of Jared knew and understood his place in relation to the God of heaven and earth who could do all things. I find it interesting that even though he had not been taught the true nature of God he had been taught that God commands us to speak to Him and bring Him our problems and questions. Here is Ether 3:2-3.

> 2 O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires.
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> 3 Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock.

It seems to be a pattern of prayer by those who find great success in praying that they use the scriptures in their reasoning with the Lord. The brother of Jared in the verses above acknowledged the fallen nature of man, that they had been commanded to call upon the Lord that "we might receive according to our desires." He already knew that God rewarded humble and heartfelt prayers with the righteous desires of the heart. These two verses give us great fodder to chew on when we look at how we pray and how we approach the Lord in prayer.

Day 2

Ether 2; 3:1-6; 4:7-16 - I can receive revelation for my life.

Take a look again at Ether 4:7. Is there anything in the following verse that tells you God is stingy with his revelations? Is there anything in this verse that indicates that he doesn't want or intend for us to know the kinds of things He showed the brother of Jared that day in the mount?

> 7 And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.

When I read verse 7 I see an absolute promise that the same faith exercised by the brother of Jared will bring the same revelation to any soul on earth. There is something about becoming absolutely convinced of the power and faithfulness of God, and His desire to bless us with the desires of our heart that opens the heavens and brings down the blessings and revelations of heaven into our life.

Yes, revelations may not come today like we read about in the scriptures, with voices and visions, but when we are prompted by the Spirit do we acknowledge back to God that we recognize He just spoke to us? When we are given a blessing or direction that we desired to receive do we recognize that it was from God and let Him know that we are grateful for what we were given? In other words, do we recognize that God is developing a dialog with us because of His faithfulness and desire to open our eyes to the wonders of eternity? Are we actively seeking for more and greater communion with God? Does our communication seek to be more and more specific and real?

Study the wording of Ether 3:2-3. Note how the brother of Jared speaks to his mentor, his God. There is no hesitation, no doubt in God's intentions for him. He knows God will answer his query, but he also fears upsetting God because of his own weakness. God had given him an assignment, and he had worked it out and done his best to fulfill God's request in the best, most rational way he knew how to do. At no time in this process did he take God's power or role in providing him with an answer for granted. The brother of Jared knew that he had to give his all in solving this problem for God to do the part he couldn't do. And he knew that God could and would do something to give

them light, for He had always answered their prayers before. He just didn't know how God would provide them with the answer to this problem.

What impresses me in these verses is the brother of Jared's unwavering certainty that in his time of need God would not abandon him, but would grant him some kind of answer, no matter what it might be. There was no longer doubt in his mind that even the most wonderous of solutions was possible, because it was his friend God he was speaking to. God was someone he loved and respected, and he knew that God loved him too.

Day 3

Ether 2:14-15; 3:1-20 - Through his chastening, the Lord invites me to repent and come unto him.

The scriptures tell us that God doesn't chasten those who are not interested in His approval. His chastening and corrections are only for those who want to become like Him. This means His corrections are meant to elevate us to be more like Him. They are not given in a spirit of anger or disapproval, but in a spirit of Love and hope for our future happiness. Elder D. Todd Christofferson offered the following observations about the Lord's corrections in his talk "As Many as I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten."

> If we sincerely desire and strive to measure up to the high expectations of our Heavenly Father, He will ensure that we receive all the help we need, whether it be comforting, strengthening, or chastening. If we are open to it, needed correction will come in many forms and from many sources. It may come in the course of our prayers as God speaks to our mind and heart through the Holy Ghost (see D&C 8:2). It may come in the form of prayers that are answered no or differently than we had expected. Chastening may come as we study the scriptures and are reminded of deficiencies, disobedience, or simply matters neglected.
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> Correction can come through others, especially those who are God-inspired to promote our happiness. Apostles, prophets, patriarchs, bishops, and others have been put into the Church today, just as anciently, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Perhaps some of the things said in this conference have come to you as a call to repentance or change, which if heeded will lift you to a higher place. We can help one another as fellow Church members; it is one of the primary reasons that the Savior established a church. Even when we

encounter mean-spirited criticism from persons who have little regard or love for us, it can be helpful to exercise enough meekness to weigh it and sift out anything that might benefit us.

Correction, hopefully gentle, can come from one’s spouse. Elder Richard G. Scott, who just addressed us, remembers a time early in his marriage when his wife, Jeanene, counseled him to look directly at people when he spoke to them. “You look at the floor, the ceiling, the window, anywhere but in their eyes,” she said. He took that gentle rebuke to heart, and it made him much more effective in counseling and working with people. As one who served as a full-time missionary under then-President Scott’s direction, I can attest that he does look one squarely in the eye in his conversations. I can also add that when one needs correction, that look can be very penetrating.

Parents can and must correct, even chasten, if their children are not to be cast adrift at the mercy of a merciless adversary and his supporters. President Boyd K. Packer has observed that when a person in a position to correct another fails to do so, he is thinking of himself. Remember that reproof should be timely, with sharpness or clarity, “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy” (D&C 121:43).

Remember that if we resist correction, others may discontinue offering it altogether, despite their love for us. If we repeatedly fail to act on the chastening of a loving God, then He too will desist. He has said, “My Spirit will not always strive with man” (Ether 2:15). Eventually, much of our chastening should come from within—we should become self-correcting. One of the ways that our late beloved colleague Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin became the pure and humble disciple that he was, was by analyzing his performance in every assignment and task. In his desire to please God, he resolved to determine what he could have done better, and then he diligently applied each lesson learned.

All of us can meet God’s high expectations, however great or small our capacity and talent may be. Moroni affirms, “If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is [God’s] grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32). It is a diligent, devoted effort on our part that calls forth this empowering and enabling grace, an effort that certainly includes submission to God’s chastening hand and sincere, unqualified repentance. Let us pray for His love-inspired correction.

Day 4

Ether 2:16-25 - The Lord will prepare me to cross my "great deep."

The manual suggests we listen to or read the talk by Elder L. Todd Budge called Consistent and Resilient Trust. It is well worth your time.

Ether 3:3 brings up an interesting question.

> ... O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock.

The Jaredites were in their boats for almost a full year. Would the brother of Jared been willing to climb into their boats and sail across the ocean in complete darkness if that is what God needed him to do in order to learn what he needed to learn? In this case the answer is unknown, because the Lord did give them a source of light. But the question still remains for each of us. Are we willing to do things that seem overwhelming and daunting if that is what God requires? There are times in our lives when the Lord needs us to suffer hard things "including the sorrows that made space for more joy." (That's a quote from the talk.)

Thinking about what it would be like to travel in darkness in a ship that is constantly being battered from without by winds and water for a year, it occurred to me that we are spared as often as we can be from excess sorrow in life, because God is so merciful. He doesn't find joy in our suffering. Often times we suffer more from the anticipation of future suffering than the trial itself provides. We must learn lessons by the things which we suffer, and He doesn't want us to have to suffer any more than is needful to learn the lessons that change us into celestial people. Even Christ grew and learned by the things which he suffered.

The lack of light in the boat wasn't the only problem. They also lacked air and a way to prepare their food. God provided for both of these, but required the brother of Jared to come up with a solution on his own for the big problem of how to get light in a sealed dark space without fire. This shows us that God prepared the way for the brother of Jared to solve his own problem. God told him the facts of what was about to happen. He explained to him what the conditions of the voyage were going to be and flatly forbade fire of any kind. Now that all the obvious methods of acquiring light had been eliminated, the brother of Jared could only solve the problem by asking for a miracle, for all known methods of light were out of the question. God had backed him into a corner, but had given him all the tools he needed to solve his own problem. His answer

was the set of 16 molten stones. Now he just needed God to touch them and make them bright. Once again we see that many of our greatest challenges come down to a matter of faith.

Day 5

Ether 5 - Witnesses testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

The law of Witnesses has been around since the days of Adam. God has always required multiple witnesses in order to establish a thing to be true. In the case of the Book of Mormon, because of the importance of the book, God paved the way by providing multiple witnesses. There were far more than required by His own law.

We have the witness of the three who handled the plates and had an angel testify to them of its truthfulness. God also provided for another 9 witnesses. In addition to all of these all those who have received a testimony from the Spirit stand as witnesses of the truthfulness of the book. So many people fear they don't have sufficient testimony to go out and be a missionary, yet all of us have been in Fast and Testimony meeting where person after person has stood and shared their own witness of the truthfulness of Christ's gospel and the Book of Mormon. If we are willing to accept this multitude of witnesses then we are amply ready to bear our own witness, as humble as it may be of the book's worth to the souls of mankind.

Personal Study

Apply what you learn.

Surprisingly this was a difficult lesson for me to learn. I'm not sure why when my own patriarchal blessing opens with this line - "Your life must reflect your knowledge, and you must live what you know if you are to receive blessing from your Heavenly Father." For some odd reason I still thought my good intentions were enough to count toward my righteousness. It took years to learn for myself that the purpose of the gospel is to transform us into better versions of ourselves. Intentions don't count for anything, because it is good works that demonstrate to God that we are listening to His counsel.

As we practice living like Christ our attitudes and our abilities change and mature. We grow to become more naturally kind, gentle, forgiving, tolerant, and peace loving. Only applying what we learn from our studying and from our life experiences can make those changes.

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