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Please Pass
the
Scriptures

Please Pass the Scriptures

John Hilton III



SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

Note: In nearly every story in this book, names of actual individuals have been changed to respect their privacy.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hilton, John, III.

Please pass the Scriptures / John Hilton III.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-59038-790-0 (pbk.)

1. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—Sacred books—Study and teaching.
2. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—Doctrines—Study and teaching.
3. Mormon Church—Sacred books—Study and teaching.
4. Mormon Church—Doctrines—Study and teaching. I. Title.

BX8622.H55 2007

289.3'2071—dc22

2007019196

Printed in the United States of America
Sheridan Books, Inc., Ann Arbor, MI

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



You probably read the scriptures every day, or at least try to. Have you ever found yourself reading the scriptures, but not really getting anything out of it? The purpose of this book is to explain how you can deepen your scripture study. Written especially for youth, young adults, and all those wanting to improve their study of the scriptures, this book will help you gain more from the time you spend exploring the word of the Lord.

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Acknowledgments



I owe many people a debt of gratitude for their assistance in writing this book.

First, to my dear wife, Lani, for her countless readings and re-readings of drafts and for her willingness to help me write.

Second, to my parents and grandparents, who taught me by precept and example the importance of scripture study.

Third, to Adam Miller, as well as the EFY students he taught, for helping me realize that many people want to and can improve their personal scripture study.

Fourth, to the teachers and leaders who have influenced my study (they are many). I am particularly grateful for the people quoted in this book. Each has profoundly affected my life.

Fifth, thanks to the kind and helpful people at Deseret Book. I am grateful to product director Chris Schoebinger for his belief in this project; to Richard Peterson for his editorial skills; to Shauna Gibby for her creative design; to Lisa Mangum for her help on many

last-minute details; and to Tonya Facemyer for her typesetting expertise. Each has been extremely helpful.

Sixth, I give thanks to the prophets and nameless scribes who diligently labored to create and preserve the sacred records for us.

Ultimately, I am thankful for the One who has revealed His word.

Introduction



“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee.”—Isaiah 41:10

The first time I remember going to the scriptures for help was when I was eleven years old. At recess one day, a bully came up to me and said, “Hey, John, after school I’m going to beat you up!” I responded like a tough guy, but inside I was terrified. As soon as the bell rang, signaling the end of class, I ran home as fast as I could—and I was safe. The bully didn’t find me.

But once I got home, I realized I still had a problem. I had a paper route, and in order to pick up my newspapers, I would have to ride my bike right past the bully’s house. So I asked my mom to drive me to pick up my papers.

She said no.

I was so afraid to ride my bike past the bully’s house that I burst into tears. My mom was surprised and asked, “Why are you crying?”

I didn’t tell her about the bully because I didn’t want her to think I was a wimp! Fortunately, my mom took pity on me and gave me a

ride. Though I was saved that day, I knew it was only a short-term solution. I began to search the scriptures, looking for references that could help me overcome my fear. I wrote them down on a sheet of paper, and whenever I was scared I read those verses.

I still have that piece of paper today. The first scripture on the list is Isaiah 41:10: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee.” This verse and others similar to it gave me courage, and I learned that the scriptures *really can* help me in my life.

The scriptures are the words of Christ and provide powerful protection, guidance, and insight. Nephi does not tell us to just “read” the scriptures, but to “feast” upon them (2 Nephi 32:3). Just sitting at the kitchen table does not mean I will be nourished. Similarly, merely reading my scriptures for fifteen minutes does not constitute a feast.

I think most of us know that we should read our scriptures every day—but how do we really get spiritually nourished from our scripture study? Once I talked with a lovely eighteen-year-old young woman who felt as though the scriptures were hard to understand. She read her scriptures regularly, but for her it was more of a chore than something enjoyable.

Then she took a class on how to get more out of her scripture study. She later shared with me how this class had opened her vision of the scriptures and told me that she was now excited to study them. I hope this book will help you similarly increase the spiritual nourishment you gain from the time you spend in the scriptures.

This book is divided into three parts. Part One explains why it is important to study the scriptures and offers some ideas about how to more effectively read them.

Part Two discusses a variety of purposes you can have in your study.

Part Three describes additional ways you can deepen and enhance your scripture study.

I invite you to have your scriptures next to you as you read this book so that you can practice the things you read about and mark the verses referenced.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

I'm not a very good handyman, but I do know that in order to fix things it's helpful, and sometimes essential, to have a variety of tools. In the same way, you can improve your scripture study by being able to study the scriptures in various ways, by having “scripture tools” so to speak.

The chapters in this book are meant to be tools to help you improve your scripture study. My hope is that the way you study your scriptures changes because you find some new scripture study techniques that are helpful to you. But you won't be able to change the way you study your scriptures simply by reading a book, because as President Spencer W. Kimball said, “We learn to do by *doing*” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 530; emphasis added).

To help you in your “doing,” I will give you two assignments at the end of each chapter. This is to help you practice the material discussed in the chapter. The first is a structured task that you should usually be able to complete in less than an hour. The second is more open-ended and is designed to help you practice the chapter subject over a period of time. Many of these assignments require writing; therefore, I suggest you get a notebook with several blank pages to record the things you learn—or feel free to write in this book! Even though it may be tempting to read straight through the book, please

don't do it! Take time at the end of each chapter to do at least one of the assignments so that you can build your scripture toolbox.

If you will take the time to do these assignments, I would like to recognize your efforts by sending you a certificate of achievement. See page 171 to find more information about this certificate.



One More Thing!

One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to somebody else. As you read this book and study your scriptures, plan to teach what you learn to somebody else. Is there a friend or parent with whom you could share what you are learning? If you read with the idea that you are going to teach and then share what you learn, you will gain much more from what you read!

PART ONE



Scripture
Study
Essentials

CHAPTER ONE

Why Study the Scriptures?



“The words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.”
—2 Nephi 32:3

If you are reading this book, I am sure you know that it is important to study the scriptures. It seems like the answers to most of the questions we are asked in Sunday School are “read the scriptures” and “pray.” But why is it so important to study the scriptures? The first word that comes to my mind is peace.

Just as I gained peace when I was afraid of a bully, you have probably been comforted in difficult times by turning to the scriptures. One young woman shared an experience about finding peace from the scriptures. She was at school when her teacher announced that a war between the United States and another country was about to begin. She was terrified about what this would mean to her and her family. When she got home, she tried to do her homework but had difficulty concentrating. She wrote:

I picked up a bookmark that had been given to me as I had entered Beehives earlier that year. On the back was a suggested

reading list for the year. . . . I decided I would start reading a little of the first thing on the list—the book of Matthew as translated by Joseph Smith. . . .

Soon tears blurred my vision and a feeling of warm calm enveloped me as I read the 23rd verse: “And you also shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all I have told you must come to pass; but the end is not yet” (JS—M 1:23). . . .

Since that night, alone in my bedroom with the Pearl of Great Price open on the desk, I have kept that calm feeling as [threatening] events . . . unfold. . . . I . . . have a promise that I should not be troubled.¹

Truly the scriptures bring us peace. Let’s use that word as an acronym to help us remember other reasons *why* it is so important to study the scriptures.

Protection

Easier to feel the Spirit

All things that we should do

Covenants

Easier to feel the Spirit

Protection

First, the scriptures give us **P**rotection. What kind of protection? Protection from the traps of the devil. When Nephi’s brothers asked him what the iron rod represented in their father’s vision, Nephi told them: “It was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; *neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction*” (1 Nephi 15:24; emphasis added).

When we “hold fast” to the scriptures we are better able to resist Satan’s temptations. This strength or protection can sometimes come in surprising ways. A boy named Andrew recounted an experience in which a man who was smoking approached him and told him that his beliefs were false. Andrew wondered if the man was telling him the truth, and even felt a little bit of doubt about the Church’s teachings. Andrew later turned to the scriptures and opened to the Old Testament, where he read: “An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire” (Proverbs 16:27). The young man thought of the man’s cigarette when he read “in his lips there is . . . a burning fire” and decided that he wasn’t going to base his beliefs on what the man had said!

Protection can also come in more subtle ways. For example, one young woman recounted an experience she had in which she was studying her scriptures when her little brother began pestering her. She said that usually she would have become angry, but because she was reading the scriptures, she felt differently. She was protected from the temptation to get angry. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained, “The scriptures . . . banish wicked thoughts and insulate us from evil influences. The reading of the scriptures—any scriptures, without regard to subject matter—can cleanse us from evil thoughts and strengthen our defenses against the adversary.”²

Easier to Feel the Spirit

The scriptures also make it **Easier** to feel the Spirit. There is an example of this in the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon. Father Lehi was shown a vision in which he was given a sacred book to read. “And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 1:12).

This can happen to you, too. A young woman named Tamara had just gone off to college. She was feeling homesick and was

worried about how things would go during her freshman year. As she talked with her roommate, her roommate shared these verses with her: “But behold, verily, verily, I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and ye cannot see me; But the day soon cometh that ye shall see me, and know that I am; for the veil of darkness shall soon be rent” (D&C 38:7–8).

When Tamara heard that verse she said, “Never before had I felt the Spirit so strongly. I knew at that moment that I was not alone.”³ Reading the scriptures will invite the Spirit.

All Things That We Should Do

Another reason to study the scriptures is that they tell us “All things that we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:3).

Wendy L. Watson, a professor at Brigham Young University, shared the following account of finding answers through studying the scriptures:

One woman was guided to learn how to hear the voice of the Spirit while reading the scriptures. She was tutored to kneel in prayer, to thank her Heavenly Father for the scriptures, to request that the Spirit be with her as she read, and then to tell the Lord what she needed from the scriptures that particular day—one question she needed answered, perhaps guidance in a relationship, perhaps confirmation of a decision. She would then open her scriptures . . . and begin reading. She never had to read very far . . . before the Spirit gave her the answer she was seeking. . . .

I have related her experience to others who then tried the same experiment; the results have been astonishing. Everything from financial problems to relationship concerns have been

solved. And in the process, their ability to hear the voice of the Holy Ghost has increased.⁴

Covenants

A final reason we should study the scriptures is that they help us keep the **Covenant** we have made to always remember Christ (see D&C 20:77, 79). Elder David A. Bednar taught that studying the scriptures will help us keep this covenant:

I do not know of a better way to always remember him than to daily study the scriptures. That covenant is not an abstract notion. It can be honored in meaningful, personal prayer every morning and night and in diligent study of the scriptures.

When I served as a stake president and interviewed literally hundreds of members of the Church, I frequently would ask, “Do you remember and keep the covenants you have made?” I do not recall many people answering no. When I would inquire further and ask about their scripture study, some would say, “I do not have time.” Then I would ask about their personal prayers, and the answer often was, “I am not as consistent as I should be.” On some occasions I would then inquire, “Do you, in fact, keep the covenant to always remember Him?”⁵

Think about that! When we partake of the sacrament each week, we renew our commitment to “always remember him.” Reading the scriptures daily is one way to ensure that He is always on our minds.

There are in fact many reasons to study the scriptures. Truly they bring **PEACE**. (See Appendix C for a list of other blessings that come from scripture study.) President Howard W. Hunter taught, “When we . . . read and study the scriptures, benefits and blessings of



The Final “E”

Remember, the “E” in PEACE stands for “Easier to feel the Spirit.” Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, “For me, reading the scriptures regularly . . . probably . . . has more to do with bringing the Holy Ghost into my life than almost anything else I do . . . the scriptures are always great invitations for the Spirit to come into your life” (CES Satellite Broadcast, August 2003).

many kinds come to us. This is the most profitable of all study in which we could engage.”⁶

Diligent scripture study has greatly blessed my life, and I know it will do the same for you—it is the “most profitable” thing we can do!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Why Study the Scriptures?

Assignment #1

Talk to at least three other people (friends, teachers, leaders) and ask them why they think it is important to study the scriptures. Write down what they say.

Assignment #2

This chapter talks about several reasons why it’s important to study the scriptures. Write or type a journal entry and record some experiences you have had that teach you the importance of studying the scriptures.

CHAPTER TWO

Making Time for Scripture Study



“The important thing is to allow nothing else to ever interfere with our [scripture] study.”—President Howard W. Hunter¹

The story is told about a time management seminar. The teacher had a huge jar and placed it next to a pile of large rocks. After filling the jar to the top with rocks, he asked, “Is the jar full?”

The students said, “Yes.”

But the teacher had some sand and poured it into the jar until it was full to the brim. He then asked, “Is the jar full?”

What would you say?

It still wasn’t full. The speaker took out a pitcher of water and was able to pour half of the pitcher in before the jar was completely full. The teacher asked, “What was the point of this object lesson?”

A student said, “It shows that you can always fit more things into your life if you keep trying.”

“That’s not the lesson,” the teacher said. “The point is, if you had put the sand or water in first you couldn’t have fit all the big rocks in. You have to figure out what the ‘big rocks’ in life are, and put them in first” (Various versions on the Internet).



In the Mouth of Two or Three Witnesses

Consider the following additional witnesses to the importance of having a set, regular time to study the scriptures:

“If possible, set a consistent time and place to study when you can be alone and undisturbed” (Elder M. Russell Ballard, “Be Strong in the Lord, and in the Power of His Might,” CES Fireside for Young Adults, March 3, 2002).

“The only way you can be sure that a busy schedule doesn’t crowd out scripture study is to establish a regular time to study the scriptures” (Elder Henry B. Eyring, “A Discussion on Scripture Study,” Ensign, July 2005, 24).

“My experience suggests that a specific and scheduled time set aside each day and, as much as possible, a particular place for study greatly increase the effectiveness of our searching through the scriptures” (David A. Bednar, “Understanding the Importance of Scripture Study,” Ricks College Devotional, January 6, 1998).

For me, that has been a powerful object lesson. What are the “big rocks” in your life? I believe that for each of us, one of the biggest rocks is scripture study. If we put it first, there is time for everything else. If I procrastinate and say, “I’ll do it later,” it may never get done.

One of the keys to successful scripture study is to get scripture study into your daily routine by setting a definite time for it. President Howard W. Hunter taught, “Perhaps what is more important than the hour of the day is that a regular time be set aside for study. . . . The important thing is to allow nothing else to ever interfere with our study.”²

I know one young man who tried to read his scriptures the first thing every morning—but he kept falling back to sleep. Then he tried reading his scriptures just before going to bed—but again he fell asleep. He finally decided to study his scriptures as soon as he came

home from school—he wasn't too tired, and he made sure he finished it before doing homework or going on to any other activity. It might take a couple of attempts to figure out what time works best for you—but just as this young man did, you can do it!

How Much to Read

Once you have decided to read the scriptures every day, you might wonder, *Should I read a certain number of chapters or pages each day or just read for a certain amount of time? Or does it matter?*

It does matter. President Howard W. Hunter gave this advice:

We should not be haphazard in our reading but rather develop a systematic plan for study. There are some who read to a schedule of a number of pages or a set number of chapters each day or week. This may be perfectly justifiable and may be enjoyable if one is reading for pleasure, but it does not constitute meaningful study. *It is better to have a set amount of time to give to scriptural study each day than to have a set amount of chapters to read.* Sometimes we find that the study of a single verse will occupy the whole time.³

Does that make sense? We have been counseled to set a certain amount of time aside each day for scripture reading. How much time should you spend? Here are a few guidelines: President Hunter taught that “It would be ideal if an hour could be spent each day,”⁴ and President Harold B. Lee said, “Let there be study of the scriptures at least thirty minutes of each day.”⁵

Thirty minutes might sound like a lot—but if you do the math you'll find that it's only 2% of your day. Surely that's not too much time for one of the big rocks.

How can you decide how much time *you* should spend in scripture study each day? I think the best way is to pray and ask Heavenly



True Story!

Mallory studied her scriptures for a set amount of time each day. One day she went to a youth conference—it was very spiritual, and at the end of the day she was exhausted. She climbed into bed, ready for a good night's sleep—but she hadn't studied her scriptures yet.

"I'm too tired to read a lot," Mallory thought. "But I'll read one verse." She flipped open her scriptures and read the first verse she saw, Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

"Okay, okay," Mallory said. "I'll read a couple of verses, but I'm not going to read anymore in Galatians."

She opened her Bible again, this time to 2 Corinthians 11:16: "I say again, let no man think me a fool . . ."

Mallory felt like she was getting a message—Heavenly Father wasn't too pleased with her shortchanging her scripture study. She decided to study for her usual amount of time—and was glad that she did.

Father how much time He would have you spend in daily scripture study. Write down what you feel, and then do it.

Finding Time to Study

One of the biggest obstacles to daily scripture study is the belief that some people have that they are too busy to study the scriptures—does the phrase “I don't have time” sound familiar? The truth is we all have time—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The question is, how will we choose to spend our time? President Thomas S. Monson said: “Before we can successfully undertake a personal search for Jesus, we must first prepare time for him in our lives and room for him in our hearts. In these busy days there are many who have time for golf, time for shopping, time for work, time for play—but no time for Christ.”⁶

I know people who “don't have time” to read the scriptures, but have plenty of time to watch TV, play video games, or

exchange text messages with their friends. I also know many young people who are *extremely* busy—yet still make time every day to study their scriptures.

The problem of not having enough time to do everything is not new. In the Book of Mormon we read about Alma, who was the chief judge (the highest position in the Nephite government) and the high priest (the highest position in the church). The day came when Alma didn't have time to adequately perform both roles; he had to decide which he would give up. He chose to give up being the chief judge so he could focus on his role as the high priest. It wasn't that being the chief judge was bad—just like many of the activities that keep us from scripture study aren't bad. But, like Alma, we may need to give up doing some good things in order to make time for the most essential things—such as scripture study.

Still think you don't have time? Elder Boyd K. Packer taught, "We are counseled and urged to read the four standard works from beginning to end. You should do that—read each of the four books of scripture from beginning to end more than once. *You could hardly use your time to more advantage.*"⁷

You *can* make time for daily scripture study. Make a plan—decide what you will study and set a specific time of day in which you will study the scriptures for a specific amount of time. Jorge did



Do You Have Time for Scripture Study?

If not, ask yourself:

In the past week, how much time have I spent watching TV or movies?

In the past week, how much time have I spent talking on the phone?

In the past week, how much time have I spent sending e-mail or other messages to friends?



The Scriptures and the T.V. Guide

The dilemma of not having enough time to study the scriptures reminds me of this poem:

On the table side by side,

The scriptures and the T.V. Guide.

One is well worn and cherished with pride.

Not the scriptures, but the T.V. Guide.

One is used daily to help folks decide,

Nope, not the scriptures, but the T.V. Guide.

As pages are turned what shall they see,

Oh, what does it matter—turn on the T.V.

The word of God is seldom read,

Perhaps a verse before they fall into bed.

Exhausted and sleepy, tired as can be,

Not from the scriptures, but from watching T.V.

So back to the table side by side,

There sit the scriptures and the T.V. Guide.

The Plan of Salvation is for you and for me,

But it's found in the scriptures, not on T.V.

(Various versions available on the Internet)

this. After he made his plan and stuck to it, he said, “It was an amazing experience to have time that I didn’t know I had to study!”

Consider these promises, given by Elder M. Russell Ballard:

As I think about your schedules and the pressures you face at this time in your lives, I can understand why scripture study can so easily be neglected. You have many demands pulling at you. In some cases, just maintaining your social life is a full-time occupation. But I plead with you to make time for immersing yourselves in the scriptures. Couple scripture study with your prayers. Half an hour each morning pri-

vately studying, pondering, and communicating with your Heavenly Father can make an amazing difference in your lives. It will give increased success in your daily activities. It will bring increased alertness to your minds. It will give you comfort and

rock-steady assurance when the storms of life descend upon you.⁸

I invite you to draw closer to the Savior by making time for Him with scripture study each day. It truly is one of the big rocks. Will you make time for scripture study?



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
Making Time for Scripture Study

Assignment #1

Write a talk or a lesson about making time for scripture study. Testify from your own experience how having a regular time for scripture study has helped you.

Assignment #2

Prayerfully determine how much time you should spend studying the scriptures each day, and for the next twenty-one days, study your scriptures at the same time each day for the set amount of time. At the end of the three weeks, write about how doing this affected your scripture study. See how many days in a row you can read the scriptures. How long can you go? A month? A year? A lifetime?

CHAPTER THREE

Go PRO



“Getting good results from your study depends on having a strong desire to learn.”—Preach My Gospel¹

In junior high school, I was a huge football fan. I grew up in Seattle, and posters of the Seahawks star wide receiver Steve Largent hung in my room. I played Little League football, and was a wide receiver. I had big dreams of going pro, but unfortunately I wasn't on Mr. Largent's level. In fact, one day even my dad told me that I wasn't going to be a professional football player.

I was really bummed! Why did my dad say that? Aren't your parents supposed to encourage you in your dreams? But my dad also taught me an important lesson—he said, “John, you won't be a professional football player because you're not willing to put in the required effort.”

At first I was offended, but then I realized that he was right. I enjoyed playing football, but I didn't like to do drills or run laps. (I was also afraid of getting tackled!) I wasn't willing to do what it would take to go pro.

In a similar way, I have sometimes found myself acting like an “amateur” in my scripture study. I know I’m supposed to read each day, and I do; but do I put in the required effort to *really* be spiritually nourished?

Consider how the Old Testament prophet Ezra approached his scripture study—he *wanted* to be taught: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10).

Once you have established a consistent routine of daily scripture study, there are a few other scripture study habits you can develop to make your study more effective. Let’s consider going PRO (as in “professional”) with our scripture study.

Pray, **P**onder, and have a **P**urpose

Record

Obey

Pray

P stands for **Pray**. Pray before you begin reading. Ask to be in tune and be able to learn what the Lord would have you learn. President Howard W. Hunter said, “There is nothing more helpful than prayer to open our understanding of the scriptures.”²

The Lord has said that we can understand the scriptures only if we have the Spirit with us (see D&C 18:34–35), and what better way to invite the Spirit into our scripture study than to pray?

The Lord himself commanded that we “pray always that I may unfold [the scriptures] to their understanding” (D&C 32:4). I know that when I pray before reading the scriptures, I gain much more from my study.

In addition to praying before studying, pray after you read to



An Experience with Prayer

One young woman decided to try praying before studying her scriptures, to see if it would make a difference. After she prayed she opened the scriptures and Jeremiah 33:3 popped out at her. It said, “Call on me and I will answer thee!” She felt like the Lord was speaking directly to her—now she always prays before personal study.

thank the Lord for the scriptures and to ask for help in remembering what you have learned.

Ponder

The P could also stand for **Ponder**. To ponder is to think deeply about or to reflect on what you have been learning. Instead of reading your scriptures for your entire study time, plan to stop reading a couple of minutes early so that you can spend your final minutes pondering what you have learned and thinking about how what

you have read might apply in your life.

President Gordon B. Hinckley wrote: “You need time to meditate and ponder, to think, to wonder at the great plan of happiness that the Lord has outlined for His children. . . .

“I heard President David O. McKay say to the members of the Twelve on one occasion, ‘Brethren, we do not spend enough time meditating.’

“I believe that with all my heart.”³

Record

The R is for **Record**. Writing down what we learn is vital. There are over fifty places in the scriptures where the Lord has



A Purpose

*P is also for **Purpose**—see Part Two of this book for more information on this important part of scripture study.*

commanded his children to write down the words He speaks to them. For example, the Lord said, “I command all men . . . [to] write the words which I speak unto them” (2 Nephi 29:11). The Lord is speaking to us through the scriptures; are we writing down the impressions we receive? Some people make notes in the margins of their scriptures, other keep a notebook in which they can record their impressions, feelings, and new insights.

I’m not quite sure why it works, but I’ve found that when I study the scriptures with paper and pen in hand I receive revelation more easily. Perhaps having a piece of paper and a pen ready is an indication that I expect to learn things worth being written down. You can choose whether you prepare for scripture study by having a pen and some paper next to your scriptures or by using some other method of note-taking. It’s easy!



A Silly But True Poem

*I'll tell you a secret,
If you want to win.
You must always carry
A paper and pen.
For writing you see
Will always help you.
In sports and in school
And in spiritual things too!*

Obey

The O is for **O**bey. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, “The effect of sincere prayer and of careful scripture study is to *always* feel an urging to *do* things.”⁴ In addition to finding facts as we study, a major purpose should be to look for insights from the scriptures that help us more fully obey God’s commandments.

A great example of one who obeyed as a result of scripture study is the Old Testament king Josiah. Although his father and grandfather were extremely wicked kings, as a child Josiah “did that which

was right” (2 Kings 22:2). In Josiah’s day there were no scriptures, because they had been lost. But one day, after Josiah had been king for several years, a copy of the scriptures was found. As Josiah read the scriptures, he realized that there were many things that he and his people had failed to do. Notice what Josiah *did* after reading the scriptures:

And [Josiah] went up into the house of the Lord, and . . . read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.

And [Josiah] stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant. (2 Kings 23:2–3)

Josiah made a covenant to obey what he read in the scriptures—and he kept this covenant. Josiah is a great example for us; as soon as he got the scriptures, he read them. And as soon as he read them, he applied them. Of Josiah’s people we read that “all his days they departed not from following the Lord” (2 Chronicles 34:33).

Desire

There is one other important key to going PRO because if you don’t have it, you probably won’t even try to go PRO at all. That key is **Desire**. Alma taught, “I know that [God] granteth unto men according to their desire” (Alma 29:4). If you really desire to gain spiritual power from the scriptures, you will.

The reason I didn’t put in the effort to be a professional football player was because I didn’t want it badly enough. One challenge we may have with our scripture study is that we don’t want a scriptural



A Modern Application

Kristin was a young woman who prided herself on being up-to-date with the latest styles; she always wore trendy, expensive clothes. One day, her Sunday School teacher told the class that if they wanted to have a change of heart they could open the scriptures and learn how they could improve.

Kristin decided to take her teacher up on the challenge. After sincerely praying, she opened her scriptures and within a few verses found the following: "In all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel . . . and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another" (see Alma 4:6, 8).

When she read those verses she felt that she needed to change. It wasn't easy, and it didn't happen overnight, but she began to spend less of her money on clothes. Instead of focusing on fashion she began taking voice lessons and saving her money for EFY. She said, "Even my little brothers noticed [the change in me]. I had one brother say to me, 'Gosh, Kristin, you're so nice now. What happened to you?'

"As I stuck to what I knew would bring me my change of heart, I started to realize what was important in life. It certainly wasn't clothes. Slowly but surely, the Spirit worked on me until I practically became a new person. I found that I was not only experiencing a change of heart, as my Sunday School teacher said, but I was also gaining a stronger testimony."

*Kristin was blessed to have this change because she opened her scriptures and applied what she read. (See Kristin Bowen, "Change of Heart," *New Era*, May 1999, 36.)*



“Just One Lap”

If you were training for a marathon, would you say, “Coach, I’m pretty busy today. I think I’ll just run one lap around the track”?

That would be ridiculous! Similarly, Elder M. Russell Ballard wrote, “I have heard many well-intentioned Church leaders and teachers instruct congregations to find time for daily scripture study, ‘even if it’s only one or two verses per day.’ Though I understand the point they are trying to teach and applaud the sincerity of that conviction, may I gently suggest that if we are too busy to spend at least a few minutes every day in the scriptures, then we are probably Too Busy and should find a way to eliminate or modify whatever activities are making that simple task impossible” (When Thou Art Converted, 68).

Pay the price to go PRO!

feast badly enough to pay the price. Maybe I want to study while lying in bed, or I am too tired to go find a pen and paper. In those moments I have to ask myself, “Do I really desire to be spiritually fed?” The missionary manual *Preach My Gospel* says, “Getting good results from your study depends on having a strong desire to learn.”⁵

Practice

To be a successful athlete you need to practice—even if you don’t feel like it. Similarly, you can commit to study your scriptures even if there is a day you don’t feel like doing it. If you’re finding scripture study to be boring, ask yourself—are you putting in the effort to go PRO? When you go PRO, your desire to study will increase, and you will gain more and more spiritual understanding from your scripture study.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Go PRO

Assignment #1

Go PRO the next time you study your scriptures by praying before and after you read, pondering what you learn, recording what you learn, and finding something you can obey from your study. Write down whether “going PRO” made a difference in your study.

Assignment #2

This chapter is about several keys to effective study including praying before and after reading, pondering, and recording what you learn from your study. Choose to do one thing you think would improve your scripture study and implement it for the next three weeks. At the end of the three weeks, write about your experience and share it with somebody else.

CHAPTER FOUR

Keeping a Record



*“Knowledge carefully recorded is knowledge available
in time of need.”—Elder Richard G. Scott¹*

When I was nine years old, my Primary teacher gave me a journal. It wasn't just a spiral notebook; it was a nice, hardbound journal—and at the time it was one of the nicest things I owned. So I decided I'd better start keeping a journal.

As I look back on them now, some of the things I wrote seem a little funny. Here are two early entries from that journal (I've added some comments in brackets).

“January 11, 1987. I got this journal. Now that that's finished I will show you a 6th series Garbage Pail Kid. [I actually glued a Garbage Pail Kid sticker in my journal. Okay, so I was a little strange.] Well this is how the Super Bowl looks. It's Broncos against I don't know. I bet it will be the Giants. Until then good bye!” [Obviously, my journal-keeping didn't get off to a very interesting start!]

“January 15, 1987. Mom had the baby. [That would be my

youngest sister, Janet.] I can't get my mind off one girl. She was in my class last year and is very pretty. [Great, I was only nine and already couldn't get my mind off girls!]"

Although some of my journal entries were silly, I did write about some things I learned from the scriptures and family home evenings as well. I also kept track of how much time I spent reading the scriptures each day. Looking back, I realize that writing down what I learn has had a large impact on my life.

The importance of record keeping is a major theme in the scriptures. Shortly after Lani and I were married, she pointed this out to me. She carefully read through the Book of Mormon, putting a little square (to represent the gold plates) next to every reference to reading or keeping records. There are hundreds! Consider the following, taken from just the first chapter of 1 Nephi:

I make a record of my proceedings in my days (v. 1)

Yea, ***I make a record*** (v. 2)

And I know that ***the record which I make is true*** (v. 3)

And they came down . . . and ***gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read*** (v. 11)

And it came to pass that ***as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord*** (v. 12)

And ***he read***, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! (v. 13)

Yea, and ***many things did my father read*** (v.13)

And it came to pass that ***when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things*** (v. 14)

And now I, Nephi, ***do not make a full account*** of the things which my father hath ***written***, for he hath ***written*** many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and ***he also hath written***

many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which ***I shall not make a full account*** (v. 16)

But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, ***I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates*** which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged ***the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life*** (v. 17)

He testified that the things which he . . . ***read in the book***, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world (v. 19)

This pattern isn't found only in the first chapter. In the following chapters we learn of Nephi's attempts to retrieve the brass plates from Laban and of the great blessings his family received once they had obtained and read these records. For me, one verse clearly summarizes *why* it is so important to keep records. In Mosiah 26, Alma (the elder) is faced with a difficult problem. He asked the Lord for advice and received a lengthy revelation. Then, in verse 33, we read: "And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down ***that he might have them***" (emphasis added).

A principle from this verse could be stated: *If I want to remember the things that the Lord teaches me, then I should write down what I learn.* Spiritual insights are often difficult to hold in our minds, but if we take the time to make notes about our feelings and impressions, we can return to those things later on.

As you study the scriptures, you should also write down the things you learn, that is, information you wish to remember. Elder Richard G. Scott explained, "Knowledge carefully recorded is knowledge available in time of need. Spiritually sensitive information should be kept in a sacred place that communicates to the Lord how

you treasure it. That practice enhances the likelihood of your receiving further light.”²

So Elder Scott tells us that:

- If we record knowledge, it will be available when we need it.
- When we receive spiritual insights we should record them in a sacred place that shows the Lord how we treasure them.
- If we record what we learn, we are more likely to learn more.

Let’s explore each of these principles.

If we record knowledge, it will be available when we need it.

I was once asked to give a talk on the law of chastity. I knew this is an important and sacred subject, and I wanted to give the best talk I possibly could. I hoped to put morality in the context of our Father’s Plan of Happiness and help the youth understand that we should view each other as spiritual brothers and sisters and not get caught up too much in the physical side of things. I wanted to use a story to illustrate this principle, but I could not think of one.

About this same time I was reading a journal I had kept in college. I came across an experience I had completely forgotten about—and it fit in perfectly with what I wanted to say. That experience, which had been carefully recorded, was available to me in my time of need, just as Elder Scott promised.

What blessings have you received from writing something down?

When we receive spiritual insights we should record them in a sacred place that shows the Lord how we treasure them.

As a missionary I had a binder that I used to record the insights I gained in gospel study. For me that binder was a sacred and precious place. After my mission I tried at various times to continue keeping a record. I would buy a spiral notebook and write down

what I learned, but my efforts were sporadic—I couldn't seem to stick with it for very long.

One day I realized that for me, writing things down in a notebook no longer communicated to the Lord that I treasured what I was learning. I used the computer to record all of my school work—I only used paper and pen for things I planned to throw away. I changed my practice and began to record spiritual insights on the computer, and as I did so I found that I began to receive more insights.

I am not suggesting that you have to record your spiritual insights on the computer. But I do believe that the care we take in recording what we learn communicates to the Lord how much we value what we are learning.

If we record what we learn, we are more likely to learn more.

Elder Richard G. Scott shared the following experience. As you read it, notice how writing down what he learned preceded Elder Scott's receiving more revelation.

One Sunday . . . I visited [a] Sunday School class. . . . This experience . . . created an environment where strong impressions came to me. . . . I began to write the instructions given directly to my mind . . .

In this experience there came such an outpouring of personal impressions that I felt it inappropriate to record in the midst of a Sunday School class. In a more private location I continued to write the feelings that flooded into my mind, as accurately as possible. After each powerful impression was recorded, I pondered it, seeking to confirm that I had accurately expressed the feelings I had received. I then prayed, expressing to the Lord what I thought I had been taught by the Spirit. Feelings of peace confirmed the appropriateness of what I had recorded. I was impressed to ask if there were more I should receive. There came

further impressions and the process was repeated until I received some of the most precious, specific direction that anyone could ever hope to obtain in this life.³

I was impressed that in addition to his writing down what he learned, Elder Scott prayed and asked the Lord to confirm that what he had written accurately reflected the feelings he had experienced—and then asked for more guidance.

Throughout this book you will read about many things you can look for as you study the scriptures. I recommend that you record what you learn and what you feel as you look for these things. In addition, record the feelings you have as you liken the scriptures and words of the prophets to your own experiences. By making a record of the ways you apply the scriptures in your life, you will be able to remember these experiences in later years. In addition, your children will learn from your example that the answers to life's challenges are found in the scriptures.

I testify that when we write down what we learn, we learn more. Doing the things we have discussed in this chapter has significantly increased what I gain from my scripture study. Remember these words from Elder David A. Bednar:



Anne's Experience with Writing

A college student named Anne wrote how keeping a record helped her with her scripture study shortly after her baptism: "While I would study my scriptures I would feel energized and excited about my day . . . [but] after school I couldn't remember the inspiration I felt from my scripture study. So I started writing all of my thoughts and interpretations from my scripture studies. Even though it takes me twenty-five minutes to read two pages, it's alright because all of a sudden I find that I can apply what I'm learning so much more to my personal life."

Recording what we learn and writing about what we think and feel as we study the scriptures helps us to revisit the same spirit that brought the initial insight or revelation and invites even greater understanding than was originally received. Recording our learnings and writing about our thoughts and feelings is another form of pondering and of always remembering him and is an invitation to the Holy Ghost for continued instruction.

I personally bear testimony of the power of this principle. As we take the time to write what we think and feel in relation to studying the scriptures, an additional and increased outpouring of insight will come.⁴



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Keeping a Record

Assignment #1

Skim 1 Nephi and mark every time the word “record,” “write,” “read,” or something similar is written. How many do you find? What do you learn about the importance of making a record?

Assignment #2

Get a scripture journal, or create a file on the computer in which you record scripture insights that are meaningful to you. Write down the things you learn and experiences you have living the principles you read about. Plan a time to go back and read what you write.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Book of Mormon



“I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”—Joseph Smith, Introduction to the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is powerful! I learned about the power of the Book of Mormon during my freshman year of college. My home teachers—Jason Wright and Seth Jeppesen—testified to me about the importance of scripture study and shared with me the following promise from President Ezra Taft Benson:

There is a power in the book [of Mormon] which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of [it.] You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called ‘the words of life’ (see D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.¹

My home teachers invited me to *seriously study* the Book of Mormon and told me that if I did, *a power would flow into my life*. I took their invitation and found out for myself that this promise from President Benson is absolutely true. There is a power that comes from seriously studying the Book of Mormon that does not come in any other way.

Another reason to study the Book of Mormon is that it is the keystone in gaining a testimony.² If you have a testimony of the Book of Mormon, it becomes the foundation on which the rest of your testimony can be built. Let me explain what I mean:

1. If the Book of Mormon is true, then you know that Joseph Smith was a prophet—because why or how would a false prophet translate a true book?

2. If Joseph Smith was a prophet, then you know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true—because why would a true prophet establish a false church?

3. If the Church is true, then you know that it is being led by a living prophet today and that his teachings come from God.

Having a testimony of the Book of Mormon helps everything else fall into place.

How then can you gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon? At the end of the Book of Mormon, as he concludes the record, Moroni makes a promise. Notice what Moroni invites the reader to do:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall *read* these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should *read* them, that ye would *remember* how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall *receive* these things, and *ponder* it in your hearts.

And when ye shall *receive* these things, I would exhort you that ye would *ask* God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall *ask* with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:3–5; emphasis added)

Read, remember, receive, ponder, and ask. These are the things we must do!

A few years ago I had the opportunity to help the missionaries teach the gospel to a young woman. We offered her a copy of the Book of Mormon, pointed out Moroni’s promise, and invited her to pray about what she would be reading. We also bore our testimonies to her that the Book of Mormon is true.

When we met again I asked her if she had prayed about the Book of Mormon.

“Yes,” she said.

“How did you feel when you prayed?” I asked.

“I got a warm feeling inside,” she replied.

And she knew that that warm feeling was the Holy Ghost, telling her that the Book of Mormon is true. You can have this same experience when reading the Book of Mormon. As President Gordon B. Hinckley has said:

Without reservation I promise you that if you will prayerfully read the Book of Mormon, regardless of how many times you previously have read it, there will come into your hearts an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord. There will come a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to his

commandments, and there will come a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God.³

Have you read from the Book of Mormon and prayed about it? If not, I invite you to do so. Will you? I've met a few young people who for a variety of reasons didn't think they should pray about the Book of Mormon. One young woman said, "I think I'll do it later."

Don't do it later. *Now* is the time to ask.

Everyone has a different experience as they pray about the Book of Mormon. Some people pray one time, have a good feeling inside, and that is the beginning of their testimony. Other people pray many times over several years before they receive a witness of the Spirit (President Brigham Young is in that category). Others can't seem to trace a particular time or date that they knew the Book of Mormon was true; their witness was something that grew slowly and imperceptibly.

Though our individual paths to gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon may differ, each of us has been promised that as we study the Book of Mormon and pray about it we will know it is true. I testify that is the case. No matter how many times you have read the Book of Mormon before, you should read it again. Even though in seminary and Sunday School we study a different book of scripture each year, as President Ezra Taft Benson has said, "This four-year pattern, however, must *not* be followed by Church members in their personal and family study. We need to *read daily* from [the Book of Mormon]."⁴

Test the promises you have read concerning the Book of Mormon. Remember the promise made by the Savior: "If any man will *do his will*, he shall *know the doctrine*" (John 7:17; emphasis added). As you read the Book of Mormon, you *will* come to know that it is true.



What about the Other Books of Scripture?

The other books of scripture are extremely valuable. Consider what has been said about them:

The Doctrine and Covenants

*“This Doctrine and Covenants contains the word of God to those who dwell here now. . . . More precious than gold, the Prophet says we should treasure it more than the riches of the whole earth. I wonder if we do? If we value it, understand it, and know what it contains, we will value it more than wealth; it is worth more to us than the riches of the earth” (President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:199).*

The Holy Bible

*“The Bible provides the foundation of our faith: The Old Testament gives the word of Jehovah through His ancient prophets; the New Testament sets forth, in language beautiful and moving, the matchless life and sacrifice of the Savior of mankind” (Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Order and Will of God,” *Ensign*, January 1989, 2).*

*President James E. Faust said that prospective missionaries should particularly study the New Testament (See “What I Want My Son to Know before He Leaves on His Mission,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 41).*

The Pearl of Great Price

*The Pearl of Great Price “contains some of the greatest revelations of God to man” (Elder Mark E. Petersen, in *Pearl of Great Price Institute Student Manual*, 1).*



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
The Book of Mormon

Assignment #1

Have you read the Book of Mormon and prayed about the Book of Mormon to find out if it is true? If you have, write down your testimony of it. If you have not, read the following passages from the Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 11; 3 Nephi 17–19; Alma 32–34; Moroni 10. Pray about what you read and ask with a sincere heart and real intent if the Book of Mormon is true. Record what you feel.

Assignment #2

Gaining or strengthening your testimony of the Book of Mormon is a lifelong process. You may have a rock solid testimony, or perhaps you have prayed about the Book of Mormon and still are not sure if it is true. Either way, write down a plan of what you will do to gain or strengthen your testimony of the Book of Mormon.

CHAPTER SIX

Using the Scripture Study Aids



“I have the conviction that in the generations ahead the publication of the new editions of the standard works, with all of the resource helps they now contain, will emerge as one of the most important events in the Church that we shall witness in our lifetime on the earth.”—Elder Boyd K. Packer¹

When was the last time you looked at a penny? Before you go grab one, first take this quiz about pennies—there are five true or false statements. Speaking of the current version of the penny (the most recent design was 1959), True or False:

The phrase “In God We Trust” is written on it.

The words *E Pluribus Unum* are separated by dots.

Lincoln is facing to the right.

The designer’s initials appear on the penny.

Lincoln is on both sides of the coin.

Turn to page 50 when you’re ready for the answers. I didn’t ace this quiz and was surprised that even though I have handled hundreds of pennies, I hadn’t noticed all that there was to notice. It can be the same way with the scriptures—even though we may have read them many times, there is still much to learn.

The Church has provided some useful tools to help us in our study of the scriptures. These aids include the Topical Guide, Bible Dictionary, Index, the extensive cross reference footnotes, and the maps. Let's take a look at each.

The Topical Guide

The Topical Guide lists scripture references by subject, using key words from the text. It is an excellent resource for finding a lot of information on a particular subject. If you were going to give a talk on prayer, you could look up “Prayer” in the Topical Guide. There you would find 173 references on this subject, as well as 5 other entries in the Topical Guide that would provide you with more information. As you read through the entries in the Topical Guide, you'll notice that the word you are looking up is abbreviated by the first letter of the word. For example, if you are looking up “Faith” you will find the entry, “Alma 32:21 *f* is not to have a perfect knowledge.” The *f*, of course, stands for “faith.”

Another benefit of the Topical Guide is that if you know a key word, it can help you find the whole reference. For example, if you want to know where the phrase “wickedness never was happiness” is found, you look under the heading “Happiness” and read through the entries until you find “Alma 41:10 wickedness never was *h*.”

In total, there are more than 2,800 separate entries in the 598 pages of the Topical Guide—that is *a lot* of information.² And it's right at your fingertips once you've learned how to use the Topical Guide.

The Bible Dictionary

The Bible Dictionary is another great place to go when you are preparing for a talk or a lesson or are trying to find more information about a specific topic. If you look up “Prayer” in the Bible

Dictionary, you will find a page of information about prayer with many interesting insights. For example, the Bible Dictionary teaches us, “The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant, but that are made conditional on our asking for them.”³

The Bible Dictionary also contains information about people, places, events, and things. Consider these questions: “Who was Amos?” “Where is Samaria?” “What is shewbread?” The Bible Dictionary has the answers!

The Index

The Index to the triple combination is similar to the Topical Guide in that it has many scriptural entries arranged topically. Unlike the Topical Guide, the Index only includes verses from the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Some verses that are not referenced in the Topical Guide are included in the Index.

One particularly helpful



The Answer Is in the Index

Doreen felt miserable! Nothing seemed to be going right in her life. One afternoon she decided to look up the word “depressed” in the Index. As she glanced at the verses she found Alma 26:27, which says, “Now when our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.”

*Later Doreen wrote, “As I repeatedly read that scripture, I began to feel my depression disappear. I realized that if I could bear my afflictions with patience, God would grant me success. It was almost like a bright light at the end of a darkened tunnel.” (Doreen Neumann, “The Answer in the Index,” *New Era*, Feb. 1991, 37.)*

Like Doreen, you can find solutions to your problems by searching the Index or the Topical Guide.

feature of the Index is that it tells you a little bit about the places and people mentioned in the triple combination. For example, if you look up “Nephi” in the Index, you will find out how many Nephis there are, as well as information about a city and a land called Nephi.

The Footnotes: Cross References

The footnotes are an extremely valuable aid and provide additional information about the verse you are reading. Let’s take a look at Abraham 3:23, in which Abraham describes the vision he was given of the premortal council in heaven.

“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast ^achosen before thou wast born.”

The italicized letter *a* next to the word *chosen* sends you to the bottom of the page for some additional information. In this case the footnote gives you four other scriptural references to look up—Isaiah 49:1 (1–5); Jeremiah 1:5; Moses 1:25; 3:5—in addition to two entries in the Topical Guide—“Election” and “Foreordination.” (“TG” refers to the Topical Guide. Some verses refer you to “BD,” which means the Bible Dictionary.)

So if you wanted to learn more about what it means to be “chosen before [you were] born,” you could look up these references, which would lead you to further footnotes and additional scriptures. For example, one of the footnote references from Abraham 3:23 takes you to Jeremiah 1:5, which gives you two additional verses and five entries in the Topical Guide pertaining to this subject. Following the footnotes provides an excellent way to deepen your study.

The Footnotes: Explanatory Notes

The footnotes in the LDS edition of the Bible provide another useful aid—explanatory statements that clarify difficult words or phrases. There are four different kinds of statements, and each makes it easier to understand what the verse means. A note saying “HEB” means that what follows is an alternate translation from the original Hebrew (“GR” is an alternate translation from Greek). “IE” means, “in other words,” and “OR” helps us understand words that were common when the Bible was first published but that are now no longer used. Often these explanations make what was said in the verse easier to understand.

For example, in Genesis 22:1, we read that “God did *tempt* Abraham.” I might think, *Why would God tempt somebody?* But if I look at the footnote *a* next to *tempt* I read, “HEB test, or prove.” So another way of translating this verse, using the Hebrew text, is that God was giving Abraham the opportunity to prove himself.

In the June 1981 edition of the *New Era*, an article entitled “Taking Note: Marking the Footnotes in the New LDS Edition of the Bible” lists all of the scriptures that have “HEB” “GR” “IE” and “OR” explanations (there are hundreds!). You may want to find the article at <http://lds.org> and mark all of those footnotes in your scriptures. You’ll find that those scriptures will take on new meaning when you do!

The Footnotes: Joseph Smith Translation (JST)

Joseph Smith made many inspired changes to the Bible, most of which significantly change the meanings of verses. The footnotes in the Bible provide over 550 of these corrections. Words that appear in the JST footnotes that are italicized were added by the Prophet. (Words that are italicized in the regular text of the bible signify words

that were added to the text by the King James translators.) In some instances the Joseph Smith Translation is too long to be included in the footnotes and so you will be directed to the appendix (in the back of the Bible) where you can read these translations.

Consider how a small change made in the Joseph Smith Translation makes a big difference in the meaning of Romans 16:16:

“Salute one another with an holy ^a*kiss*. The ^bchurches of Christ salute you.” (Romans 16:16)

“Salute one another with a holy ^a*salutation*. The ^bchurches of Christ salute you.” (JST, Romans 16:16)

So even though you might hope to use this verse as a clever pickup line, we see that a “holy kiss” isn’t really what Paul was talking about—he was talking about greeting each other in a holy way.

Here is another example of how the Joseph Smith Translation can be helpful:

“Jesus saith unto her, ^aWoman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” (John 2:4)

“Jesus said unto her, ^aWoman, what wilt thou have me to do for thee? that will I do; for mine hour is not yet come.” (JST, John 2:4)

In the regular King James Version it seems like the Savior isn’t being very respectful, as though he’s saying, “Hey! Why are you talking to me? It’s not my time to help you!” But notice the Joseph Smith Translation of this verse: “Woman, what wilt thou have me do for thee? that will I do.” That changes things! And if you also know that the word *woman*, as it was used in the Savior’s day, was a term of deep respect, you’ll see that Savior was actually saying something like, “Honored mother, what do you want me to do for you? Whatever it is, I’ll do it.”

The Footnotes: Putting It All Together

Let's look at one verse of scripture and see how the footnotes add to our understanding of it:

“But I say unto you, That whosoever is ^aangry with his brother ^bwithout a cause shall be ^cin danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, ^dRaca, shall be ^ein danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”
(Matthew 5:22—the Savior is teaching the people in this verse)

The footnotes give us a great deal of information. Footnote *a* tells us where to go to find more information on the subject of *anger*. Without the Joseph Smith Translation found in the footnote *b*, you might think it is okay to get angry if you have a good reason to be—but with the inspired translation we see that the words *without a cause* should be omitted—meaning we should not become angry at all. Footnotes *c* and *e* help us understand what it means to be in danger of judgment or the council.

Footnote *d* helps us liken this verse to our time. You might read verse 22 and think, *I never say “Raca” to anybody; what does this verse have to do with me?* But the footnote tells us that *Raca* is a word that puts somebody down. The more precise meaning is that we should eliminate put-downs from our speech.

Maps

Last but not least, our scriptures provide a number of useful maps and photographs. Recently I was in a class where the teacher explained that when the Israelites left Egypt, it was only about 225 miles to the Promised Land. As I looked at the map I could see that there was a direct route the Israelites might have taken (see Map 3 in the map section after the Bible Dictionary). If they had done so, they probably could have made the trip in a few weeks. However, for

a variety of reasons, the Lord had them go a different way, and they wandered in the wilderness for forty years before reaching their destination. The map helped me visualize the “wandering” the Israelites did and made me want to live in such a way that the Lord wouldn’t need to have me go in circles in my life due to my lack of faith.

Using the Study Aids

The scripture study aids are extremely valuable. Though it may take a little time to get comfortable with them, it is worth the effort. President Howard W. Hunter taught:

We ought to have a Church full of women and men who know the scriptures thoroughly, who cross reference and mark them, who develop lessons and talks from the Topical Guide, and who have mastered the maps, the Bible Dictionary, and the other helps that are contained in this wonderful set of standard works. . . .

Not in this dispensation, surely not in any dispensation, have the scriptures . . . been so readily available and so helpfully

structured for the use of every man, woman, and child who will search them. The written word of God is in the most readable and accessible form ever provided to lay members in the history of the world. Surely we will be held accountable if we do not read them.⁴



One More Aid!

If you find that the scriptures are hard to understand, another aid you can use is the illustrated scriptures. Though these books are usually for children, they may help you learn the storyline of the book—and that can make the scriptures easier to understand.

Let's try one more quiz. It's not about pennies this time, it's about the LDS scripture study aids. True or False?

You should not use the scripture study aids.

The Bible Dictionary comes before the Topical Guide.

JST stands for Just Study Today.

The little letters next to some words are called "scripture notes."

The Index is a great way to find cross references from the Bible.

Turn to page 50 when you're ready for the answers!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Using the Scripture Study Aids

Assignment #1

Using your scripture study aids, find answers to the following questions:

The word *actions* appears once in the scriptures. Use the Topical Guide to find out where.

Look up the word *Faith* in the Index and choose three references to look up. What do you learn?

Who was Eutychus? (See the Bible Dictionary.)

In Isaiah 3:17 it says, "The Lord will discover their secret parts." What does this expression mean?

Helaman 5:12 has several cross references to other verses. Look up at least three of these and see how they increase your understanding of this verse.

In Genesis 14 we learn a little about Melchizedek. What addi-

tional information did Joseph Smith reveal about Melchizedek?
(Hint: see footnote 24a.)

In Luke 7 we learn of the Savior going to visit the city of Nain.
How far was it from Capernaum to Nain?

Assignment #2

Set your own specific goal to improve the way you use the gospel study aids. For example, you might mark all the verses with “HEB” or “GR” footnotes. You could begin the habit of looking up cross references of verses you like as you study the scriptures. You could mark all the Joseph Smith Translations. Choose a goal that is meaningful to you; after you accomplish it, write down what you learned.



*Answers to the Penny Quiz: They are all
TRUE! Get a penny and look closely! :)*

*Answers to the Study Aid Quiz: They are all
FALSE!*

PART TWO



Read with a Specific Purpose

CHAPTER SEVEN

Look For



“And it came to pass that he said unto me: Look! And I looked.”

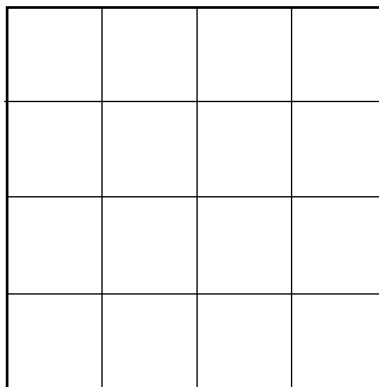
—1 Nephi 11:12

Are you ready to take a quick test? Look at the drawing below—how many squares do you see?

At first you might think that there are 16—but there are actually many more. In fact, there are 30 squares. Can you find them all?

Like the penny quiz, this illustration, taken from Elder Jay E. Jensen’s book *Treasure Up the Word*, teaches us that there is a lot more in the scriptures than we might initially think. We need to look at the scriptures carefully in order to discover all that they contain.

Perhaps the best advice I’ve been given about how to get more out of my scripture study is to read with a purpose—to look for something specific as I read. This helps



me to look at the scriptures carefully. You can have several purposes in your scripture study, many of which are discussed in the following chapters in this section.

In this chapter I will focus on how *looking for* lists, definitions, cause and effect phrases, punctuation marks, and other key words can provide a more exciting purpose in our scripture study.

Scriptural Lists

The Lord and his prophets often teach by using lists, and we can learn much by noticing them. For example, what qualified Ammon and his brothers to teach with such power as missionaries? In Alma 17:2–3 we read, “Now these sons of Mosiah . . . had [1] waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for [2] they were men of a sound understanding and they had [3] searched the scriptures diligently, that they might [4] know the word of God. But this is not all; they had [5] given themselves to much prayer, and [6] fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.” Identifying the list in these verses focused my attention on what I could do to preach with greater power.

Definitions

The Lord often gives definitions in the scriptures. Finding these scriptural definitions can be enlightening. Look for forms of the verb “to be” (such as “is” or “are”) as well as phrases such as “in other words” to find scriptural definitions. For example:

“Therefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, *ye are* as dross . . . being of no worth” (Alma 34:29; emphasis added). Amulek defines somebody who is not charitable as worthless. That may sound harsh, but the example emphasizes the importance of charity.

“Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their

feet; I say, trample under their feet but I would speak *in other words*—they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels” (1 Nephi 19:7; emphasis added). Nephi defines not following the counsel of the Savior as equal to our trampling Him under our feet. Then, so that we won’t misunderstand what he means, Nephi gives us more specific examples of what it means to trample the Savior under our feet. Nephi’s additional explanation has helped me realize the importance of *doing* the things the Savior has asked me to do.

Cause and Effect Phrases

Another way to increase your understanding of the scriptures is to look for statements of cause and effect, such as: “because”; “if . . . then”; “therefore”; or “wherefore.” Here are some examples of what I mean:

“And *because* of the righteousness of [the Lord’s] people, Satan has no power” (1 Nephi 22:26; emphasis added).

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, *If* ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31; emphasis added).

Once you have found these phrases you can ponder how these cause and effect relationships apply in your life. For example, after reading 1 Nephi 22:26, you might think about ways you could increase your personal righteousness so that the devil would have less power in your life.

Question Marks

Another thing you can look for as you study the scriptures is the questions that are asked. Some of them are kind of funny—for example: “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?” (Proverbs 6:9). Other questions provoke contemplation: “Who am I that made

man, saith the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obeys not my commandments?” (D&C 58:30).

There are many types of scriptural questions—some asked by the writer directly to us, and some asked by the Savior. Looking for questions from each of these sources can illuminate a variety of topics. Finding questions is easy (just look for the question marks), and once you find them, you can ponder on how you would answer them.

Other Things to Look For

There are many other things that you can look for as you study the scriptures. For example, try searching the scriptures for promises

that the Lord makes to us. Another phrase you could watch for is “and thus we see” or “and thus.” These phrases often signal an important lesson the scriptural author wants to teach us.

As you study the scriptures, have a purpose in mind. Like

the example with counting the squares, you will find many hidden things when you become skilled at looking for them. Watching for lists, definitions, cause and effect phrases, punctuation marks, and other key words and phrases can add understanding to your study. More importantly they can highlight important lessons the Lord teaches us through the scriptures. Looking for and finding treasures in the scriptures will cause us to declare, as did Nephi, “For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them” (2 Nephi 4:15).



How many question marks do you think there are in the Book of Mormon? (See page 57 for the correct answer.)



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

*Look For**Assignment #1*

Read 1 Nephi 16–17 and look for lists, definitions, cause and effect phrases, question marks, and other key words. Write down what you find.

Assignment #2

Choose something specific to look for as you read through the Book of Mormon. For example, you could read the Book of Mormon looking for all of the questions that are asked. Or you could read looking for every time the scriptures are mentioned. Record what you discover as you read the entire Book of Mormon looking for something specific.



Answer . . .

There are 543 question marks in the Book of Mormon!

CHAPTER EIGHT

One-Liners



“The scriptures contain so many jewels over which we pass too lightly, especially some stunning one-liners.”—Elder Neal A. Maxwell¹

Put yourself in the prophet Jeremiah’s shoes. The Lord told Jeremiah to preach the gospel, and he did. What happened? The people rejected his message, and Jeremiah was put in prison and later spent a day in the stocks. That’s not talking about financial stocks—it’s the kind you stick your head through, and people walk by and throw rotten fruit at you.



The next day, “Pashur [the ruler of the people] brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then [Jeremiah said to Pashur], ‘The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib’” (Jeremiah 20:3). Wow—

“Magor-missabib.” Talk about name calling. Don’t call your little sister that!

Jeremiah went on to write about how frustrated he was. It seemed so unfair that he was punished when what he had done was what the Lord wanted him to do. The persecution for preaching the gospel had become so intense that Jeremiah decided he would stop speaking the word of the Lord. Just as he had made up his mind, Jeremiah said, “But his word was in mine heart as *a burning fire shut up in my bones*, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9; emphasis added).

God’s word was so powerfully placed in Jeremiah’s heart that in spite of the consequences, he could not keep from preaching the gospel. Reading that passage makes me hope to study and live in such a way that God’s word is like a fire in *my* bones.

The phrase “a fire in my bones” is a scriptural one-liner. A one-liner is a short, simple phrase that carries a lot of power—and the scriptures are full of them. A great way to study the scriptures is to search for these powerful phrases. Consider the following examples:

“The battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47).

“Get thee hence” (Matthew 4:10).

“Ye ought to search the scriptures” (Alma 33:2).

“Ye must study it out in your mind” (D&C 9:8).

Each of these one-liners carries a deep meaning, particularly when you understand what is happening in the verses surrounding them. For example, in 1 Samuel 17, the giant Goliath is defying and belittling the armies of Israel, and none of the Israelites has the courage to answer his challenge. David, a young shepherd, volunteers to fight Goliath. Since we know the outcome of the story, perhaps we do not reflect long enough on what it would have been like to be David. Imagine that you were on that battlefield. Everyone you

know, including the king and your brothers, are afraid of Goliath. How would you feel?

While standing alone, facing a literal giant, David told Goliath that he was not afraid. “For the battle is the Lord’s,” David said. What courage! When I am in a situation where the obstacles seem insurmountable, I can remind myself that “the battle is the Lord’s” and trust in His power.

Elder Jay E. Jensen of the Seventy, in his excellent book *Treasure Up the Word*, explained how to find one-liners. He wrote, “1. Study, search, and examine words and phrases prayerfully and humbly. . . . 2. Ignore existing punctuation marks and verse and chapter breaks. . . . 3. Put periods in a sentence where there are none. . . . 4. After you have isolated a phrase, ask yourself whether those words express an idea much bigger than the words themselves.”²

I saw a teacher use these techniques in a class one day. He was teaching from Joseph Smith–History 1:20. Notice that even though it is a long verse, by ignoring punctuation and inserting a period, the teacher isolated a one-liner (the italicized phrase):

He again forbade me to join with any of them; and many other things did he say unto me, which I cannot write at this time. When I came to myself again, I found myself lying on my back, looking up into heaven. When the light had departed, I had no strength; but soon recovering in some degree, I went home. And as I leaned up to the fireplace, mother inquired what the matter was. I replied, “Never mind, all is well—I am well enough off.” I then said to my mother, “*I have learned for myself* that Presbyterianism is not true.” It seems as though the adversary was aware, at a very early period of my life, that I was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of his kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me?

Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me,
almost in my infancy? (emphasis added)

I have learned for myself. Joseph Smith set the example for us in not living off of somebody else's testimony, but instead finding out the truth for ourselves.

Several scriptural one-liners have influenced me for good throughout my life. Once I was debating whether I should do a certain thing. I knew what the right choice to make was, but I was wavering a little bit. I

prayed and asked Heavenly Father to help me find a verse that could give me direction. I turned to Doctrine and Covenants 87:8, which says, "Stand ye in holy places, and *be not moved.*" The phrase "be not moved" jumped out at me and has become a one-liner that reminds me to stand firm when I am tempted to do wrong.

Another one-liner that has influenced me comes from Alma 27:27. This verse talks about the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, the Lamanites who had been converted by the sons of Mosiah. The scriptures say that "they were perfectly honest." What does it mean to be *perfectly honest*? Many times when I have been faced with seemingly gray areas, I have asked myself, "What is the perfectly honest thing to do?" This one-liner has helped me make many good decisions.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught, "The scriptures contain so many jewels over which we pass too lightly, especially some stunning one-liners. The compressed truth in these terse verses defies our full



Let's Practice!

Before you keep reading this chapter, back your eyes up and reread Joseph Smith–History 1:20. Can you find another one-liner in this verse?

comprehension. Moreover, such divine declarations come without detailed explanations but are laden with so many implications.”³

Watch for one-liners as you study the scriptures. Write down those that are most meaningful to you and ponder how you can apply them in your life.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

One-Liners

Assignment #1

Do the activity “One-Liners” in Appendix A.

Assignment #2

Spend an hour studying the scriptures looking for one-liners. Write down at least ten (hopefully more) one-liners and why they are significant to you.



One More Note

I was in a class where the teacher challenged us to read the entire Doctrine and Covenants specifically looking for one-liners and underlining them in our scriptures. I took the challenge. Not only did I find some amazing one-liners, I also developed my ability to use this important scripture study tool. You might want to try this too!

CHAPTER NINE

Principles, Part I



“The scriptures have been written to preserve principles for our benefit.”—President Marion G. Romney¹

While serving as a missionary, my companion, Elder Miller, and I were asked to make a list of approved music for the missionaries to listen to. Before this time, the rule in our mission had been: “You can listen to any music written by church members”; however, the mission leaders felt that some of this music was too much like popular music for missionaries to be listening to it. So my companion and I began making a list of approved CDs. Our mission president approved the list, and we prepared to explain the new rule and distribute the list at the next round of zone conferences.

It just so happened that these zone conferences coincided with the visit of a General Authority to our mission. We met with him shortly before zone conference and showed him our list of approved CDs to get his opinion on what we had done. I expected that he would compliment us on our work. Instead he looked at our list and said, “Can I make a suggestion?”

“Of course,” we said.

“Rather than having this complicated list of CDs that you always have to update and change, you could use a principle, such as, *Missionaries should only listen to music that would be appropriate for sacrament meeting.*”

My companion and I found ourselves nodding. Even though this meant all our work had been for nothing, we could see the value of using a principle instead of a definitive list of do’s and don’ts. If each missionary applied the principle of “only listen to music that is appropriate for sacrament meeting,” they would be able to choose for themselves which of their music fits that description. And when a new CD came out we wouldn’t have to decide whether or not to add it to the list, because the principle would guide each missionary. This principle was easy to apply and made it easy to decide if a given

CD was appropriate or not.

What exactly are principles? Elder Richard G. Scott has explained that “Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances.”²

One of the most useful practices in my scripture study is to look for principles. How can we find principles as we study the scriptures? Some principles are easy to discover because the



Search for Principles!

“As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles” (Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 86).

“The most important [thing] you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures. Search them diligently . . . Master the principles” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 47).

“The scriptures have been written to preserve principles for our benefit” (Marion G. Romney, *Ensign*, Sept. 1980, 4).

scripture points to them with a phrase such as “because” or “therefore.” For example, in Mosiah 5:15, King Benjamin says:

Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all.

I found a principle by watching for the key word *therefore*—“I should be steadfast and immovable and constant in doing good things.” This principle has many applications and helps me *consistently* choose (instead of occasionally choosing) to study my scriptures, say my prayers, be kind to my siblings, or do other good things.

Many principles are plainly spelled out in the scriptures. For example, “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10) or “the righteous need not fear” (1 Nephi 22:17).

Principles are found not only in the standard works. The *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet is full of them also! Consider the following:

“Ask yourself, ‘Would I feel comfortable with my appearance if I were in the Lord’s presence?’”³

“Do not attend, view, or participate in entertainment that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way.”⁴

“Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage.”⁵

“Your dress before, during, and after church meetings should show respect for the Sabbath.”⁶



Don't Forget!

Remember the definition of a principle from Elder Scott: "Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances" ("Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge," Ensign, November 1993, 86).

All of these statements are "concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances." As I learned to find principles from the scriptures, the depth of my scripture study deepened dramatically. Keep reading to find out how **you** can find principles in the scriptures.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Principles, Part I

Assignment #1

In your own words, write down what a principle is.

Assignment #2

Read the talk by Elder Richard G. Scott entitled "Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge" (*Ensign*, November 1993, 86–88, also available at <http://lds.org>).

After you read this talk, set a goal for yourself to improve your scripture study based on one of the principles in the talk.

CHAPTER TEN

Principles, Part II



“It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle.”—Elder Richard G. Scott¹

The scriptures contain many gospel principles, but sometimes they are not immediately evident. As a prospector pans for gold, we must search them out. And if we are obedient and conscientious, the Lord will allow us to “find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19).

Before discussing how to find these truths, let’s make sure you can recognize a principle. Remember Elder Scott’s definition? A principle is “a statement of concentrated truth” that can be applied in many different



Note: This chapter is designed to help teach you how to find principles and requires work. Learning how to find principles is like learning to ride a bike—it’s not easy at first, but when you get the hang of it, it’s a lot of fun.

circumstances that helps us make sound decisions. Keeping this definition in mind, complete the following exercise.

Exercise: Defining Principles

Circle the statements that you think are principles.

1. If I obey with exactness, I will be successful.
2. If I do bad things, then I will be less able to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost.
3. When I listen to good music, I will be more likely to feel the Holy Ghost.
4. It is easier to maintain good habits than to get into bad habits and then try to switch back to good habits.
5. I should strengthen myself in the areas in which I am weak.
6. If I want to know if a teaching is true, I should live the teaching—then I will know.
7. I will be held accountable for the things I say.
8. I should not seek to excuse or justify myself based on the actions of others.
9. If I do not forgive, then I will have committed a greater sin than the person who offended me.
10. Where much is given, much is required.
11. When I wake up in the morning, I should offer a prayer of gratitude.
12. I should not do anything that comes close to committing sexual sin.

I hope you don't feel tricked. As you may have discovered, all twelve of these statements are principles—statements of truth that we can apply in many different ways. One of the hallmarks of a good principle is that it is easy to apply. Take another look at the list. Can you think of personal applications each might have for you?

Notice two other aspects of the twelve principles:

They were expressed in complete sentences. Although you might be able to phrase some principles in just one word, I find that complete sentences are easier to apply.

They were also short sentences. If a principle becomes too long it can be difficult to understand. For example, compare the following three principles:

Obedience (Alma 57:21–22).

If I obey with exactness, I will be successful (Alma 57:21–22).

In order to live a celestial life and to prepare adequately to meet my Maker, I must strive to harmonize my life with each commandment and in so doing purify myself in every respect (Alma 57:21–22).

Although each of these could be considered a statement of a principle, the first isn't really a "statement." It is one word, and that word doesn't convey what the immediate application might be. The third principle is too wordy—it is so difficult to read that many will not be able to apply it. The second option is succinct, direct, and applicable.

Another important point about the principle "If I obey with exactness, I will be successful" is that it focuses on a unique aspect of Alma 57:21. Many verses teach the importance of obedience; however, Alma 57:21 is unique—it is the only place in the scriptures where the word *exactness* appears.

You probably noticed that many of the above principles were expressed in a similar format. That is: "If I _____, [then] _____." (Such as in: "If I do bad things, I will be less able to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost.")

Another format for stating many principles is: "When I _____, [then] _____." (Such as in: "When I

listen to good music, I will be more likely to feel the promptings of the Holy Ghost.”)

Principles don't *have* to be put in this format, but I have found that, especially at first, it makes it easier both to find and apply principles. In addition, using the first person (“If I . . .” instead of “If we . . .” or “if you . . .”) makes it easier to apply the principle to myself.

Some verses are already written in an “if–then” format. For example, in a revelation intended for Martin Harris, the Lord declared: “*If* he will bow down before me, and humble himself in mighty prayer and faith, in the sincerity of his heart, *then* will I grant unto him a view of the things which he desires to see” (D&C 5:24; emphasis added).

Other verses can be easily rewritten to express a principle in an “if–then” or “when–I” format. For example, in Alma 30:60 we read: “The devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell.” The principle defined by this statement might be expressed: “*If* I want support at the last day, *then* I should not follow the devil” or “*When* faced with temptation, *I* should remember that Satan will not support me in the end.”

Watching for principles can significantly deepen your scripture study and make the scriptures easier to apply. How can you find principles? The following three suggestions will help:

- Read between the lines.
- Pause to ask questions.
- Rewrite the principles in your own words.

First—read between the lines. Elder Richard G. Scott has said: “As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate [the principles] from the detail used to explain them.”²

An example of reading between the lines, or separating the

principles from the story line, can be found in 3 Nephi 11. After His resurrection, Christ visited the people in the Western Hemisphere. After descending, He declared his identity to the Nephites. Then, he invited each of them to come and feel the prints of the nails in His hands and in His feet. In verses 14 and 15 we read:

[The Savior said to the people], Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

This was a beautiful and moving experience. Now let's try to separate out some of the details of the account, and find a principle. There were 2,500 people in the multitude (see 3 Nephi 17:25). That's a lot of people! And yet Christ invited each of them to approach Him individually, or as the verse says, "one by one." A principle from these verses could be: "Christ cares about me individually," or, "If I feel discouraged, then I can remember the Savior loves me, individually."

To discover what is buried between the lines often requires reading the scriptural passage *more than once*. Most likely, the first time you read a chapter you will be so focused on understanding the story line and who is doing what that you will be less able to

separate principles from the details. I find that when I read a chapter once to understand and then a second and third time looking for principles, I find many treasures that I missed the first time through.

A second thing we should do in order to find hidden principles is to pause in our reading and ask ourselves questions such as: “What can I learn from this situation?” “What is the author of this passage trying to teach?” or “Why was this verse included in the scriptures?”

Taking the time to pause and ask yourself questions will increase your ability to find hidden principles (for more on this subject, see chapter eleven, “Asking Questions”).

A third method you can use to identify principles is to take the ideas from the scriptures and put them in your own words. This helps you pull principles from the verses and put them in a form that is meaningful to you. You might write down these principles in the margins of your scriptures. You might be hesitant to write in your scriptures, but it is okay—they are *your* scriptures! Writing can help you formulate your thoughts and articulate principles.

Let’s practice doing what we’ve discussed in the previous two chapters. Before you continue, make sure you have your scriptures and a pen. We’re going to read Alma 47, which tells about Amalickiah, a wicked man who tried to become king of the Nephites. When Amalickiah was rejected by the Nephites, he went to stir up contention among the Lamanites. I know it’s a little extra work to go get your own scriptures, but trust me, it will be worth it. Before you continue reading this book, read Alma 47—read the whole chapter to get an understanding of what’s happening.

• • •

Did you finish? Okay. Let’s focus on verses 10–18, although we could pick any verses from the chapter and discover great principles.

Reread Alma 47:10–18, watching for principles. Remember to separate the principles from the detail used to explain them. Ask yourself some questions. Write down the principles you find in your scriptures. Then I'll tell you what principles I found in these verses, but try it on your own before reading further.

• • •

Ready? Before we go on, remember that we are to liken the scriptures to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23). So, if you found the same principles I found, great! But if you found different principles, that's also great! The important thing is that you find principles that help you in the situations you face. As I reread these verses, a question I asked myself was, "What words or phrases stand out?" I've italicized these words, and in most cases they helped me identify principles.

Verse 10

"And it came to pass that *when it was night* he sent *a secret embassy* into the mount Antipas, desiring that the leader of those who were upon the mount, whose name was Lehonti, that *he should come down to the foot of the mount*, for he desired to speak with him."

Principle: When someone tries to get me to do things "in the dark" or "in secret" I should be extra cautious.

Principle: Satan and his followers will try to get me to "come down" (or lower my standards).

Verse 11

"And it came to pass that when Lehonti received the message he durst not go down to the foot of the mount. And it came to pass that *Amalickiah sent again* the second time, desiring him to come down. And it came to pass that Lehonti would not; and *he sent again the third time.*"

Principle: I need to guard against repeated temptation.

Verse 12

“And it came to pass that when Amalickiah found that he could not get Lehonti to come down off from the mount, *he went up into the mount, nearly to Lehonti’s camp*; and he sent again the fourth time his message unto Lehonti, desiring that he would come down, and *that he would bring his guards with him.*”

Principle: If Satan can’t get me to “go all the way down” (a big sin), then he will try to get me to come down just a little (begin doing little sins).

Principle: Satan will try to lure me into feeling safe in his territory.

Verse 13

“And it came to pass that when Lehonti had come down with his guards to Amalickiah, that Amalickiah desired him to come down with his army in the night-time, and surround those men in their camps over whom the king had given him command, and that he would deliver them up into Lehonti’s hands, if he would make him [Amalickiah] a second leader over the whole army.”

Principle: If I am offered a deal that seems too good to be true, I should be extra cautious. (Ask yourself, why would Amalickiah offer to surrender?)

Verses 14–16

“And it came to pass that Lehonti came down with his men and surrounded the men of Amalickiah, so that before they awoke at the dawn of day they were surrounded by the armies of Lehonti. And it came to pass that when they saw that they were surrounded, they plead with Amalickiah that he would suffer them to fall in with their

brethren, that they might not be destroyed. *Now this was the very thing which Amalickiah desired.* And it came to pass that he delivered his men, contrary to the commands of the king. *Now this was the thing that Amalickiah desired, that he might accomplish his designs in dethroning the king.”*

Principle: The devil is tricky—don’t think you can outsmart him!

Verses 17–18

“Now it was the custom among the Lamanites, if their chief leader was killed, to appoint the second leader to be their chief leader. And it came to pass that Amalickiah caused that *one of his servants* should administer poison *by degrees* to Lehonti, *that he died.*”

Principle: Satan often uses others to accomplish his evil work.

Principle: Satan works “by degrees,” gradually tempting us to do worse and worse things.

Principle: If I don’t protect myself from even small amounts of spiritual poison, then I may die spiritually.

Wow, that was fun! We only looked at nine verses from one chapter in the Book of Mormon and still found many principles that we can apply in our lives. I hope you can see that the scriptures are full of principles.

Now that we have all of these principles, we should take time to ponder and reflect on how they could apply in our lives and what things we could *do* to put them into practice. Consider the following application of just one of the principles from Alma 47.

Principle: If I am offered a deal that seems too good to be true, I should be extra cautious.

Application: When I was a kid, I was obsessed with the idea of becoming rich and constantly came up with moneymaking schemes.

Sometimes those schemes got me into trouble. In fourth grade, after Christmas vacation, I was talking with one of my classmates (whom I will call Brian) about the presents we had received. Brian told me that he was disappointed in his present. “It was a one hundred dollar bill,” he said. “I really only needed seven dollars though.”

“Well, I’d be happy to trade you seven dollars for your one hundred dollars,” I said.

“Really?” he said. He seemed excited. “Bring seven dollars tomorrow, and I’ll trade you.” We even wrote a contract.

I brought the money. I can still remember sitting on the bus, making the trade. Imagine my chagrin when I handed him my seven dollars, and he handed me a Monopoly one hundred dollar bill. Too bad I hadn’t yet found the principle from Alma 47—if a deal seems too good to be true—it probably is!

Here’s another example: recently I got a letter in the mail that said, “Make money by being a couch potato!” A man was trying to sell me his “secret” workbook on how to become fabulously rich while doing nothing. Fortunately, I remembered the principle and didn’t fall for it!

The scriptures are full of principles to help you follow the Lord and increase your spirituality. Get excited about finding principles, and record the principles you find and how you apply them. Remember the words of Elder Richard G. Scott: “As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles.”³



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
Principles, Part II

Assignment #1

Complete the two exercises on principles in Appendix A.

Assignment #2

As you read your scriptures each day, look for principles. Write down the principles you find either in the margins of your scriptures or in a separate notebook. Take time to ponder how you can apply the principles you discover.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Asking Questions



“You will be taught more easily as you approach the scriptures if you search with a question and with a determination to act on the answer. We can receive what seems to us new truth when we go back to the same scripture with new questions.”

—Elder Henry B. Eyring¹

Rachel had grown up in the Church and received many small witnesses that the Church was true. But during high school she moved to a new school, and many of her friends began asking her difficult questions about the Church. As she was beginning to doubt her testimony she decided to read the scriptures with this question in mind: “Heavenly Father, is this the true church?”

As she was studying, she came across John 9:27, which says, “He answered them, I have told you already. . . .” When she read those words she felt peace sweep over her, as though the Lord were talking directly to her. She realized that He had *already* told her that the Church is true—and receiving this confirmation strengthened her testimony.

While answers do not always come immediately, one of the best

ways to study the scriptures is to ask questions. Elder Russell M. Nelson taught, “Achieving scriptural guidance is aided by posing pertinent questions.”² There are many types of questions you can ask—consider the following:

Questions about the context. (What is happening in the scriptures?)

Questions about application. (What can I learn from these verses?)

Questions that put you into the scriptures. (What would it have felt like to have been there?)

Questions you want answered for your personal decision making. (What should I do?)

First, you may want to ask yourself questions about what is happening in the scriptures. For example, after finishing a chapter, can you answer the following questions: Who was speaking in this chapter? What is the story line? Approximately when did this event take place? Answering these types of questions will help you understand what you are reading—and understanding usually comes before application and will help you liken the scriptures to yourself.

Other types of questions you can ask about the scriptures are questions that help you apply what you are reading to your life. For example, Mosiah 14:7 teaches about the Savior. It says, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth.”

I could ask myself, “What can I learn from this verse?” Something that impresses me is that even though the Savior suffered intensely, he did not get angry or complain. (See also Matthew 26:63, and Matthew 27:12.) Pondering this verse might inspire me to complain less.

Another type of question that is valuable is a question that helps you put yourself in the scriptures. For example, after reading 3 Nephi

11 you might ask yourself, “What would I have felt if I had been there and had the opportunity to have a *one on one* experience with the Savior? Asking this type of question helps the scriptures become more real and makes them easier to apply.

We can also ask the Lord for personal guidance and direction in our lives and expect that He will answer us through our study of the scriptures. Elder Henry B. Eyring taught, “Sometimes I go to the scriptures for instruction. I go with a question, and the question usually is ‘What would God have me do?’ or ‘What would He have me feel?’”³

Elder Robert D. Hales said, “When we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures.”⁴

Susan tried putting this principle into practice. She was

wondering if God really knew and loved her. She prayed and felt peace. Later, as she was studying her scriptures, she found Doctrine



Go to the Scriptures with a Question

Christy, a college student, was called to be the Young Women president in her ward. She felt overwhelmed by the calling, and her bishop invited her to pray about it. As she pondered this calling, she decided to search the scriptures to help her learn what she should do. She opened her scriptures and turned to John 15. As she read the chapter she found verse sixteen, in which the Savior states, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”

She felt like this was the Lord’s answer to her question about whether she should serve—He had chosen her! She said, “I will never forget the peace I felt that Sunday afternoon when I read in the scriptures [that] He wanted me to work in the Young Women organization.”

and Covenants 6:22–24, which says, “Cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God? And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth have you not received a witness?”

As Susan read these words she felt the Lord’s love and knew that He was answering her question.

Although answers from the scriptures may not always come instantaneously, they do come. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained, “We often hear . . . that the scriptures have the answers to all of our questions. Why is this so? . . . Reading . . . the scriptures will . . . put us in a position where we can obtain inspiration to answer any doctrinal or personal question, whether or not that question directly concerns the subject we are studying in the scriptures. That is a grand truth not understood by many. . . . Again, even though the scriptures contain no words to answer our specific personal questions, a prayerful study of the scriptures will help us obtain such answers.”⁵

Many people have found answers to personal questions by reading the scriptures. You will too!

Asking questions can be a powerful way to get more out of your scripture study. You can ask yourself questions about what is happening in the scriptures, questions about why things are happening, and questions that put you into the scriptures. You can also begin your scripture study with a personal question in mind and expect to find new insight as you study. Remember the command and the promise—“*Ask*, and ye shall receive” (3 Nephi 27:29; emphasis added).



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Asking Questions

Assignment #1

Do the activity “Asking Questions” in Appendix A.

Assignment #2

This chapter suggests different types of questions you can ask during scripture study. Select one type and practice asking yourself questions during the next three weeks of your scripture study.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Answering Questions



“I will never forget what I felt as I watched President Lee answer every single question from the scriptures!”—Elder David A. Bednar¹

At a youth conference, Julia attended a class on scripture study where she learned that it could be helpful to start her scripture study with a question in mind. But when she began her scripture study that night, she didn’t have any questions. As she prayed to start her studying, she felt prompted to ask, “What is heaven and how do we get there?”

With this question in mind, she looked up some references in the Topical Guide and found some verses that she was really excited about. Just as she finished saying a closing prayer for her scripture study, her phone rang. It was Andrea, one her friends from another church. “I’ve got a question for you,” Andrea said. “What does your church believe about heaven?”

Julia was shocked and thrilled—she had just studied this! Julia was able to use the scriptures she had just read to answer Andrea’s question.

Elder David A. Bednar shared an experience about answering questions. He was a new missionary, and along with many other new missionaries was invited to a special meeting in the temple with President Harold B. Lee, then a member of the First Presidency. President Lee invited the missionaries to ask him questions on any gospel topic. Elder Bednar was amazed to watch President Lee answer each question by using the scriptures. Speaking of this experience, Elder Bednar later wrote:

I knew I would never have the command of the scriptures that he did, but then and there in the Salt Lake Temple I resolved to study and use the scriptures in my teaching and follow the example of President Lee. And that commitment as a new and inexperienced 19-year-old missionary has blessed my life in ways that cannot be counted or adequately described.²

A great purpose you can have in your scripture study is to look for answers to specific questions. These could be questions that you have or questions that other people ask you. Suppose you were wondering:

- “What happens to us when we die?”
- “How can I increase my faith?”
- “How can I discern between good and bad choices?”
- “How can I know if I’ve repented of my sins?”
- “Where can I turn when nobody understands what I am going through?”

Finding an answer directly from the scriptures is helpful because you don’t have to worry about people giving you their opinions—you will have the scriptural response. It also feels great to find an answer for yourself. When you have a question, look for an answer in the scriptures.

You can also go to the scriptures to find answers to the questions friends ask you. For example, as a junior high school student I had friends ask me why Mormons believed that there was more than one heaven (they were talking about the degrees of glory). I was able to use 1 Corinthians 15:40–42 (a scripture mastery verse) to answer their question.

Now, when I talk about using the scriptures to answer other people's questions, I am *not* talking about “Bible bashing” (arguing about the scriptures). One missionary wrote about a bashing experience. He and his companion were teaching an investigator when the investigator's friend began challenging their message. The missionary wrote, “I had to blast him with Matthew 7:21.” Later the missionary recounted how the Spirit was not with them while they were contending. Our goal isn't to “blast” anybody with the scriptures, but to help answer their questions by using the scriptures.

Learning the seminary scripture mastery verses will help you answer questions. When you know these 100 verses you can explain to your friends why you don't break the law of chastity (Genesis 39:9), how the Bible foretells the Book of Mormon (Ezekiel 37:15–19; John 10:16), how they can know that the Book of Mormon is true (Moroni 10:4–5), and explain the doctrine of baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29; D&C 137:7–10). All that is just from six of the one hundred verses!

A young woman named Pamela was learning the scripture mastery verses. She worked particularly hard on Joseph Smith–History 1:15–20 (the longest one). One afternoon Pamela was talking with some friends, and they asked her a question about Joseph Smith. She said, “Let me tell you about his experience!” Pamela was able to use the scriptures to directly answer their



The Most Worldly Looking Girl

Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy shared an experience about using the scriptures to answer a question (Searching the Scriptures, 33–35).

Elder Cook was on an airplane, sitting next to a woman whom he described as “probably the most immodestly dressed, most worldly looking girl [he had] ever been around.”

They began to talk, and once the woman found out that Elder Cook was LDS, she began to chew him out, saying that she had lived with many different men and that the Church’s teachings on the law of chastity were ridiculous! After she finished, she asked, “What do you think about all that?”

Elder Cook said that he didn’t think she really wanted to know what he thought, but she insisted on an answer. He said, “I’ll give you better than [what I think]. I’ll give you what the Lord said about it.”

He opened his scriptures and read from Doctrine and Covenants 63:16, which says, “He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear.”

After Elder Cook bore his testimony to the young woman she began to cry. In fact, for the next half hour she sobbed and would not respond to Elder Cook. As the plane landed and the woman got off, she whispered quietly, “You are right, Mr. Cook.”

Elder Cook said, “I . . . know . . . that the Lord spoke to her that day. I certainly could not have touched her that way. I believe those words of the Lord, as found in the scriptures, penetrated that young woman’s heart, and she knew that what I had said was true.”

Like Elder Cook did, you can prepare yourself to answer questions from the scriptures. This will help the Spirit testify of their truthfulness.

question. She said, “There was such a great feeling in the room as I quoted Joseph Smith’s actual words to them.”

You might be surprised at all the questions the scriptures answer! Suppose a teenager wonders if the music she listens to is having an effect on her spirituality. She could find an answer in 1 Samuel 16:23. (Go ahead. Look it up!) Perhaps somebody wonders if the scriptures have anything to say about abortion. Though the word “abortion” doesn’t appear in the scriptures, Doctrine and Covenants 59:6 speaks directly to this issue.

Quite simply, the scriptures have the answers to most of the questions we ask—all of them, actually, if we know where to look. When you study, look for answers to questions you have or questions that others have asked you. You could also pause as you study the scriptures and ask yourself, “What question(s) could be answered by these verses?”

How powerful would it be if as a member missionary you could answer your friends’ questions directly from the scriptures! Now is the time for us to learn how to use the scriptures to answer the questions of life.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Answering Questions

Assignment #1

Make a list of five gospel-related questions that your friends or family members have asked you. Spend some of your scripture study time looking up answers to the questions. Create a file on your

computer or get a notebook where you can refer to these scriptures when you are asked the same questions.

Assignment #2

Think of some questions you would like to have answered. Search the scriptures and see if you can find answers to your questions. If you can't, ask a parent or leader to help you find one.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Searching Topically



“Study topically as well as chronologically.”

—Elder M. Russell Ballard¹

On my first day in the mission field I woke up early in the morning and flew from Salt Lake to Denver. There I received training from my mission president and met my new companion; I was excited to see what my first day in the mission field would bring. As I was loading my luggage into the car, I heard a missionary say to my senior companion, “If you guys don’t have anything planned tonight, you can come with us to a member’s house. We’re going to watch some Church videos, and you can show them to your greenie.”

My heart sank. Not because he had called me a greenie, but because before I left on my mission my grandfather gave me two pieces of advice: “Work hard” and “Be obedient.” I wasn’t sure if watching Church videos at a member’s house was being obedient or not, but it certainly did not seem like working hard. Later that afternoon my companion and I talked about our plans, and we decided that we would go tracting instead of watching the movies. It felt like the better thing to do.

I realized on that first day in the mission field that I would have many opportunities to *not* be obedient and to *not* work hard. So I decided to learn more about my grandfather's advice by doing a topical study on work and obedience. By the end of my mission I had accumulated several pages of scriptures on these subjects. The scripture references came from the Topical Guide as well as other verses I found in my personal study. I also found many quotes on these topics by reading the *Ensign*. Any time I would find a quote on work or obedience I would copy it into my study notebook.

Topical study—searching the scriptures with the purpose of finding all the passages about a single subject—can result in the some of the most enjoyable scriptural feasts. Remember the story I shared in the Introduction about the bully? As a boy I looked up several scriptures to give me courage when I was afraid. That could be described as a “topical study” on fear. As another example, in Appendix C you will find a list of verses that emphasize the importance of scripture study. This list grew out of a topical study on the importance of scripture study.

Elder M. Russell Ballard said, “Study topically as well as chronologically. Both approaches have merit, but we need to go to the Topical Guide or the index from time to time and read all that the Lord has said on repentance, or faith, or some other principle.”²

How do you begin a topical study? It is simple. Pick a subject you are interested in. It could be almost anything—faith, repentance, tithing, baptism, love—and look it up in the Bible Dictionary. You may also find information in the books *True to the Faith* or *For the Strength of Youth*. Once you have a basic understanding of your subject, turn to the Topical Guide. Scan the verses listed and find some that seem interesting or relevant to your study. Read those verses and then look for cross-references that go along with them. Write down

word-for-word, verses that seem to be particularly applicable. When you are finished, you should have several scriptures! You may want to do a search on <http://lds.org> for talks that pertain to your topic and copy relevant quotes into your study notes.

Once you have gathered together several verses on a specific topic, you might find it helpful to create a scripture anchor.

A scripture anchor is a key scripture where you can write other references that relate to that particular topic. For example, I was recently teaching a class on the importance of temple marriage. For me, an “anchor verse” on the importance of marrying in the covenant is Deuteronomy 7:3–4 (a scripture mastery passage). Because I will always remember that Deuteronomy 7 talks about marrying in the covenant, I have listed the other scriptures I found on this subject in the margins of my scriptures by verses 3 and 4. Now, if somebody asks me a question about the importance of a temple marriage, I can simply turn to this scripture anchor, and I will have several scriptures immediately available.

Another useful way you can synthesize your topical study is to create a scripture chain.

The purpose of a scripture chain is to link together related verses. After you have done a topical study, select five of the verses you have found that are particularly meaningful to you. Then put them in an order that, to you, makes sense. For example, if I were studying the Atonement I might select these five scriptures:

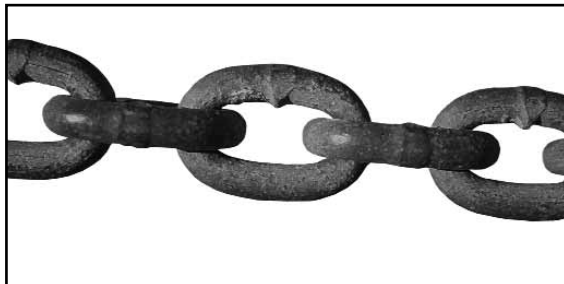
Luke 22:39–44

2 Nephi 9:6–12

Alma 34:8–9

Alma 7:11–12

Alma 31:31–38



I would then chain these verses together by drawing a little chain by Luke 22:39–44, drawing the number 1, and then listing 2 Nephi 9:6–12. This would tell me that Luke 22:39–44 is the first in a chain and tell me where to go to find the next link. I would continue to mark my scriptures in this manner until getting to Alma 31:31–38, which would send me back to Luke 22:39–44.

Ideally your scripture chains will have a logical order to them. In the example I just used, the first verse describes what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. The rest of the verses talk about different aspects of the Atonement—the resurrection is part of the Atonement, (2 Nephi 9:6–12), the Atonement can cover our sins (Alma 34:8–9), as part of the Atonement the Lord took on our pains and sicknesses (Alma 7:11–12), and through the Atonement we can receive strength to do things beyond our mortal powers (Alma 31:31–38). One of the advantages to a chain like this is that if you are ever called on to give a talk, and you don't have any time to prepare, you'll have a talk ready to go!

A friend of mine gave me a valuable suggestion that can be helpful for either scripture chains or scripture anchors. He told me to write down my anchor verses (or the first verse in a chain) in the back of my scriptures—creating my own index so to speak. This helps me quickly identify scriptures that are meaningful to me on specific topics. A personal index could look something like the example of “Scripture Anchors” shown in the box.

<i>Scripture Anchors</i>	
<i>Obedience</i>	<i>1 Nephi 3:7</i>
<i>The Atonement</i>	<i>D&C 19:16–19</i>
<i>Marrying out of the Covenant</i>	<i>Deuteronomy 7:3–4</i>
<i>Forgiveness</i>	<i>D&C 64:9–11</i>
<i>Joy</i>	<i>2 Nephi 2:25</i>
<i>God and Christ—Separate Beings</i>	<i>Acts 7:55–56</i>

Studying the scriptures topically can be very informative, as well as provide some spice and variety to your scripture study. If you are spending your daily scripture study time reading chronologically, perhaps you could block out an additional hour on Sundays to do topical scripture study. Pick a subject you are interested in, and start searching!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Searching Topically

Assignment #1

Do a topical study on studying the scriptures. Record in one place scriptures and quotes you find that teach the importance of scripture study. Pick one of these scriptures and use it as a scripture anchor, where you can write down all of the verses you find on the importance of scripture study.

Assignment #2

Select a topic that you want to learn more about. Do a topical study to find out more about it. Create a scripture chain or anchor to help you remember, and coordinate these verses.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Patterns and Themes



“Look for . . . patterns . . . in the scriptures.”

—Elder David A. Bednar¹

I love riddles. See if you can solve the following:

What do the following four words have in common: *sequoia*, *facetious*, *abstemious*, *pneumonia*?

What’s the pattern to these numbers? 8, 5, 4, 9, 1, 7, 6, 3, 2, 0

What do the numbers 3, 7, 8, 40, 50, and 60 have in common that no other whole numbers have?

(For answers see page 98.)

The key to solving many riddles (including those above) is to be able to *find the pattern*. Finding patterns in our scripture study is also very important. Elder David A. Bednar taught that in addition to reading the scriptures from beginning to end and studying them topically, we should specifically search the scriptures looking for patterns. He said:

Both reading from beginning to end and studying by topic are prerequisites to the third basic method of obtaining living

water from the scriptural reservoir. . . . *Searching* in the revelations for connections, patterns, and themes builds upon and adds to our spiritual knowledge by bringing together and expanding these first two methods; it broadens our perspective and understanding of the plan of salvation.

In my judgment, diligently searching to discover connections, patterns, and themes is in part what it means to “feast” upon the words of Christ. This approach can open the floodgates of the spiritual reservoir, enlighten our understanding through His Spirit, and produce a depth of gratitude for the holy scriptures and a degree of spiritual commitment that can be received in no other way.²

How can we find these scriptural patterns? Elder Bednar described one method. He said, “As I study the scriptures [I frequently] search for phrases. . . . Then I sort and group or cluster them by themes or common features. I learn a great deal by looking for patterns.”³

As an example, Elder Bednar talked about a time when he was preparing to give a talk on “The Gathering of Israel.” He found every time the word *gather* was used in the scriptures. Then, as he read through all of those verses, he began to find patterns; he sorted and organized the verses based on the different patterns he found.

Let me share with you an example of a pattern I found while reading Alma 27. When Ammon needed direction, he “inquired of the Lord” (verse 11). I was interested in the phrase “inquired of the Lord,” and using an electronic copy of the scriptures, I searched for all the instances in the scriptures that the phrase, “inquire(d) of the Lord” is used. (It occurs thirty-six times.) As I read through those references I discovered a pattern—I found that when people inquire

of the Lord about their problems, He gives them help. Consider the following:

When Lehi was leading his family through the wilderness, “he did inquire of the Lord,” and “the voice of the Lord came unto” him, giving him the direction he needed (1 Nephi 16:24–25).

When Alma needed inspiration in a military conflict, he “inquired of the Lord concerning the matter” (Alma 16:6). Again, the Lord told Alma what he needed to know.

When Jacob needed to know what to say to the people, he “inquired of the Lord” and “the word” of the Lord came unto him (see Jacob 2:11).

Inquiring of the Lord did not happen only in ancient times. When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery went to “inquire of the Lord” about the ordinance of baptism, they received an answer in a most marvelous way! (see Joseph Smith–History 1:68.)

Finding the pattern throughout the thirty-six times the phrase “have ye inquired of the Lord” is used, helped drive this principle deeper into my heart. Later I began looking for related phrases that used the word *inquire*. That search led me to Doctrine and Covenants 6:14, which reads: “Behold, as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit.” So even though complete answers may not come immediately, as we inquire, we *will* receive instruction.

It is clear that inquiring of the Lord leads to valuable guidance. So imagine Drew, a young man who wonders if he should try out for the wrestling team. Or Jenny, who just graduated from college and has a good job. She isn’t dating anybody, and has no good dating prospects—so she wonders if she should move to another city. Then there is Christian—he wants to go to college and has been accepted to three schools. But he isn’t sure which school he should attend.

Each of these individuals—and each of us—could benefit from following the scriptural pattern of inquiring of the Lord.

As you study your scriptures, be alert for phrases that seem to be repeated. When you find such a phrase that sticks out to you, search for similar phrases (electronic scriptures really help—you can buy them from <http://ldscatalog.com> or use them online at <http://lds.org>).

The more you study topically and sequentially, the more likely it will be that you will find patterns in the scriptures. As time goes on, you can also make connections between verses that have similar themes, but not necessarily the exact same phrases. This kind of scripture study is exhilarating! As you study the scriptures, look for patterns and themes—you will find that your depth of knowledge increases.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Patterns and Themes

Assignment #1

Carefully investigate this set of parallel scriptures: Joseph Smith–History 1:11–20 and Enos 1:1–5. What similarities or patterns do you notice between these events?

After you have found several similarities, read the following sets of scriptures. What patterns do you find within these verses, particularly considering what you read in Joseph Smith–History and Enos?

3 Nephi 1:10–13

Luke 22:39–44

Mosiah 26:13–15

3 Nephi 19:19–27

Can you think of other scriptures that would relate with these?

Assignment #2

As you study the scriptures, be alert to themes or patterns you find. If you find a phrase that intrigues you, use an electronic copy of the scriptures to find other places that this phrase is used. Record the connections you make.

Answers to the Riddles

Q: What do the following four words have in common: *sequoia*, *facetious*, *abstemious*, *pneumonia*.

A: Each word contains all five vowels (a, e, i, o, u).

Q: What's the pattern to these numbers? 8, 5, 4, 9, 1, 7, 6, 3, 2, 0

A: They are listed in alphabetical order (eight, five, four, nine, one, seven, six, three, two, zero).

Q: What do the numbers 3, 7, 8, 40, 50, and 60 have in common that no other whole numbers have?

A: They are the only numbers that have five letters in them.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Putting Pieces Together



“Effort to study the scriptures and unite common concepts from like scriptures will qualify one to receive further inspiration and guidance through pondering the scriptures.”—Elder Richard G. Scott¹

Suppose I told you I was going to give you a brand new Mercedes this Saturday. But when I bring the car to your house to put it in your garage, you are surprised to find that what I am giving you are the *pieces* to the car. So now you have all the pieces necessary to put together your new car—the engine, brakes, steering components—everything!

What would you do with this gift? Would you take the carburetor and put it on your desk to show people? “Hey, how do you like my new carburetor?” Probably not! You would want to put the car together. (But if you’re like me you would probably need some help!)

Elder Richard G. Scott used this analogy to show how we can gain valuable insights from our scripture study by putting several scriptures together to make a more valuable whole. There are two parts to this method:

- Analyze and unite related scriptures.

- On a sheet of paper, state or summarize the truths found in those scriptures.

This approach to scripture study is similar to searching in the Topical Guide and looking for patterns and themes (see chapters 13 and 14). Let's work through an example together. Suppose we want to know how we can gain more from our scripture study. Our goal is to put together several related verses to make a powerful statement of truth.

We'll start with this statement:

If I am going to analyze and unite related scriptures as Elder Scott suggests, I need to find verses that will help me learn how to get more out of my scripture study. I could start by asking myself, "Do I know of any scriptural accounts where somebody seemed to get a lot from their scripture study?"

Can you think of any examples?

One that comes to mind is the account written in Joseph Smith–History 1:12. You're familiar with this verse—after reading James 1:5, Joseph Smith wrote: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again . . ."

So one thing I can do to get more from my scripture study is *reflect on them again and again* (that is, ponder the words I



In order to get more out of my scripture study, I must:



In order to get more out of my scripture study, I must:

Ponder the things I learn (Joseph Smith–History 1:12).

read). Let's make this the first scripture in our statement.

Notice that you do not have to use the exact words in the scripture. Elder Scott explained that you may need to sometimes “alter [the words] so they fit into the format of what an individual should do. That needs to be done carefully so as not to lose the power of the doctrine.”²

If I cannot think of another scripture example, I could look up “Scriptures, Study of” in the Topical Guide and scan the entries looking for verses that would help me learn how to get more from my study. The sixth entry jumps out



In order to get more out of my scripture study, I must:

Ponder the things I learn (Joseph Smith History 1:12).


Prepare my heart before I read (Ezra 7:10).

Act on what I learn from the scriptures (Ezra 7:10—note the phrase “and to do it”).

at me, Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” This verse gives me a couple ideas—I’ll add them to the list.

Continuing through the Topical Guide, I find the following verses that all have a common theme:

“They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11).



In order to get more out of my scripture study, I must:

Ponder the things I learn (Joseph Smith–History 1:12).

Prepare my heart before I read (Ezra 7:10).

Act on what I learn from the scriptures (Ezra 7:10—note the phrase “and to do it”).

Search the scriptures (Acts 17:11; Jacob 7:23; 3 Nephi 10:14).

Make time for daily study (Acts 17:11).

“They searched the scriptures” (Jacob 7:23).

“He that hath the scriptures, let him search them” (3 Nephi 10:14).

Toward the end of the Topical Guide entry, I notice a reference to Doctrine and Covenants 138:1. This verse describes how President Joseph F. Smith was “pondering” the scriptures as a pre-



In order to get more out of my scripture study, I must:

Ponder the things I learn (Joseph Smith–History 1:12; D&C 138:1).

Prepare my heart before I read (Ezra 7:10).

Act on what I learn from the scriptures (Ezra 7:10—note the phrase “and to do it”).

Search the scriptures (Acts 17:11; Jacob 7:23; 3 Nephi 10:14).

Make time for daily study (Acts 17:11).

Treat the scriptures like a treasure (Joseph Smith–Matthew 1:37).

lude to his receiving a revelation. So I can add that reference to the one from Joseph Smith–History. In the last reference in the entry under this heading, I notice the phrase, “treasureth up my word” (Joseph Smith–Matthew 1:37). This tells me that I need to *treasure* the scriptures and really value my time studying them.

Before going on, I should point out that there are many more insights that could be gained from reading other verses listed in the Topical Guide. But in the interest of brevity, let’s suppose that I’ve exhausted all of the scripture stories I know, and

I’ve selected all the pertinent verses from the Topical Guide. Where can I find additional verses of scripture to add to my statement of truth?

Maybe I will hear something at a church meeting. For example, suppose that next Sunday I hear a speaker quote 1 Nephi 19:23:

“I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning.” Aha! Another verse to add to the list.

As I continue to gather verses that relate to scripture study, I’m able to build a more complete statement of truth. Just like you’d rather have a car than the pieces of a car, putting the verses together makes for deeper understanding. And there are many other statements of truth you can substantiate with scriptures. Here are some suggestions for starting points (the first four are suggestions that Elder Scott gave):

“To have the Atonement work in my life, I must . . .”

“To exercise the power of the priesthood more effectively, I must . . .”

“To benefit more from the ordinances of the temple, I must . . .”

“To be a better father [or daughter, or brother/sister], I must . . .”

“In order to pray more effectively, I must . . .”

“To better fulfill my calling, I must . . .”

“In order to more effectively share the gospel, I must . . .”

“In order to have charity, I must . . .”

This method of scripture study may seem hard to do, and it is



In order to get more out of my scripture study, I must:

Ponder the things I learn (Joseph Smith—History 1:12; D&C 138:1).

Prepare my heart before I read (Ezra 7:10).

Act on what I learn from the scriptures (Ezra 7:10—note the phrase, “and to do it”).

Search the scriptures (Acts 17:11; Jacob 7:23; 3 Nephi 10:14).

Make time for daily study (Acts 17:11).

Treat the scriptures like a treasure (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37).

Liken the scriptures to my life (1 Nephi 19:23).

true that it does take work and effort; but as Elder Richard G. Scott said at a missionary conference I attended, “The more we struggle, the more we remember.”

Uniting verses together to create statements of truth is well worth the effort! Start putting those pieces together!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Putting Pieces Together

Assignment #1

Elder Richard G. Scott gave an extended example of how to unite principles of truth in a talk he gave to seminary teachers. You can read this talk at <http://www.ldsces.org/cesconference/DandC/98090%20Elder%20Scott%20Talk.pdf> (last accessed March, 2007). Read it and see what you can learn from his example (it is much better than mine).

Assignment #2

Create your own unified statement of principle. Choose something you would be interested in studying (such as, “In order to improve my prayers I must . . .” or “In order to apply the Atonement in my life I must . . .”) and find several scriptures that you can unite to give yourself greater understanding.

PART THREE



Deepening
Your Scripture
Study

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Likening the Scriptures to Ourselves



*“I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit
and learning.”—1 Nephi 19:23*

As a seminary student, Elizabeth learned about Joseph, who resisted the immoral advances of Potiphar’s wife. Elizabeth marked a phrase in her scriptures that described what young Joseph did when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph: he “fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:12). Elizabeth’s seminary teacher stressed the importance of this scripture and encouraged the students to remember it.

Months passed and things began to go poorly in Elizabeth’s life. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer, and her family moved so that they could be closer to the hospital where her mother would be treated. Elizabeth entered college and met a guy named Ron. Although Ron wasn’t a member of the Church, he was nice, and being with him helped Elizabeth forget about her problems. She later described her experience:

[Ron] came to church with me regularly. But soon he was suggesting that we spend the night together, since that was the

way his relationships usually progressed. I repeatedly told him about my religious conviction against this, but he didn't give up. . . .

Then one night, in one of my weakest times, I started to rationalize. I believed that Ron loved me, and I knew he could take care of me. I suddenly felt very secure in his arms. Then I heard a voice in my head that said, “. . . fled, and got him out.” I was startled that I would remember that phrase after all that time. Then the voice seemed to come even louder, “. . . fled, and got him out.” Without another thought I literally fled from the room and the situation.¹

Even though Elizabeth lived thousands of years later than Joseph in Egypt, she was blessed to be able to liken the scriptures to a real need in her life.



Likening the scriptures helps us bridge the gap between the *then and there* of the scriptures, and the *here and now* of daily life. Another way of looking at likening is that it is applying what you are reading in your life. Likening is a way of drawing upon the power and significance of the scriptures.

When I was fifteen, I attended a class at Especially for Youth that helped me discover and liken a principle that I hadn't seen before. In

Alma 59, we learn about a city named Nephiah. The Nephites were in possession of this city, but because they didn't guard it sufficiently, the Lamanites took over the city. Captain Moroni was not happy with this loss. We read: "And now as Moroni had supposed that there should be men sent to the city of Nephiah, to the assistance of the people to maintain that city, and knowing that *it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites than to retake it from them, he supposed that they would easily maintain that city*" (Alma 59:9; emphasis added).

The teacher of the class pointed out this principle: *It is easier to maintain something than to lose it and try to get it back.* I immediately saw real-life applications. It is easier to never smoke than to start and then try to stop. It's easy to maintain a habit of good language, than to develop a swearing habit and try to break it. As I thought of ways that I could maintain the good habits I had, I was likening this principle in my life.

A couple of years later I became excited about politics. I realized that this principle could be likened to politics as well. It is easier to maintain good laws than to have bad laws and try to change them later. This too was likening the scriptures. We liken the scriptures when we relate the principles and circumstances from the scriptures to our day and time.

Something that helps me liken the scriptures to my life is to pause in my study and ask myself, "What experiences have I had that relate to what I am reading?" For example, in Doctrine and Covenants 85:10 it says, "As the Lord speaketh, he will also fulfil." The principle I got from the verse was, "If God promises something, it will happen." I had an experience as a missionary that helped me liken this verse to my life.

My companion and I were praying about which street we should

tract. We felt the Spirit whisper that there was somebody for us to teach, *that afternoon*, on the street we were currently on. So we knocked on every door on that street. And nobody let us in. It would have been easy for us to make an excuse: “Well, we tried” or “Maybe



Golden Questions for Likening

“What experiences have I had that relate to what I’m studying?”

“What can I do in my life now to apply what I am learning?”

it wasn’t the Spirit that we felt” or “We knocked on every door; sorry, Heavenly Father, it’s not our fault.”

But we had confidence that Doctrine and Covenants 85:10 would be likened in our lives. So we went around the street and tracted it *again*, knocking on the doors of people who had not

answered the first time. This second time we got in and taught a first discussion. The Lord did fulfill His promise. If I wanted to more fully liken this verse to my life, I could ask myself, “What must I do today so that God can fulfill the promises He has made to me?”

The scriptures can be likened to every situation in life. A friend of mine was teaching early morning seminary in an inner-city neighborhood. Many of his students had had very difficult lives and as a result had become very tough. (He once told me that his wimpiest student was twice as tough as my strongest student!)

One day my friend overheard a student talking to his friends about his intention to join a gang. This wasn’t a “wanna-be” gang; it was a hard-core gang that did really evil things. My friend wondered, *How can I reach out to my student?* He knew that if he directly told him not to join a gang that it would probably have the opposite effect.

As my friend pondered this situation, he thought of a way to help his student liken the scriptures—by teaching a lesson about the



Likening Jonah and the Whale

Nearly everyone knows the story of Jonah and the whale. But you've probably never been swallowed by a great fish. So how could you liken this story to your life?

After the Lord told Jonah to preach to the people in Nineveh, we read that "Jonah rose up to flee . . . from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). I could ask myself, "When have I, or somebody I know, tried to flee from the presence of the Lord?"

It reminds me of a seminary student who told me that when he listened to a certain type of music, he had an uncomfortable feeling inside. "But," he said, "I kept listening to the music, and then that uncomfortable feeling left!" Unfortunately, the music he listened to was figuratively causing him to "flee from the presence of the Lord."

Later we read that Jonah repented and did "according to the word of the Lord" (Jonah 3:3). I could liken this verse by asking myself, "What is it that the Lord wants me to do today?" And then do it!

Gadianton robbers. He never mentioned gangs, but he gave the students time to ponder how they could apply the principles from these chapters in their own lives. Later, the troubled student approached my friend and told him that he had decided not to join a gang because he did not want to be like the Gadianton robbers.

There is power in likening the scriptures to ourselves. Likening helps us achieve one of the ultimate goals of scripture study—to apply what we read in our lives. Whether you are struggling with a broken heart, worried about the future, or simply want to keep doing your best, likening the scriptures to your life will give you added strength to do the right things.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
Likening the Scriptures to Ourselves

Assignment #1

In Ether 6 it talks about a journey that the Jaredites took. Read Ether 6:1–12 and look for ways you can liken what happened to the Jaredites to what happens to you as you go through the journey of life.

Assignment #2

Develop the habit of taking time at the end of your scripture study to liken the scriptures to yourself. Ask yourself, “What experiences have I had that I can relate to what I’m studying?” and “What can I do in my life now to apply what I am learning?” For the next month, conclude your scripture study by pondering and writing about how you can liken what you read to your life.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Marking



“Always have a marking pencil ready as you study. Make notations in the margins. Write cross-references. Make the scriptures yours by marking them.”—Elder M. Russell Ballard¹

A few days after our family had moved to a new house, I was putting my son Levi (then 3 years old) to bed. About ten minutes later I came back to check on him and found that he had taken a pen and scribbled on his leg. It was practically black! I said, “Levi, why did you color all over yourself?”

He said, “Because those moving men had marks on their hands.”

I realized that he was referring to the men who had moved our furniture into the house. It had been a few weeks since they had been there, but Levi had apparently remembered that they had tattoos on their hands.

I held up my hands for him to see. “Dad doesn’t have marks on his hands,” I said.

“You need to get some marks,” Levi replied.

We know that we *shouldn’t* get tattoos, or mark our bodies, but when it comes to scripture study, marking is an excellent idea! Elder

Henry B. Eyring shared an experience in which marking his scriptures helped him dig more deeply in the scriptures:

Just last month I learned again the power that comes from trying harder to have the scriptures opened to our hearts. It began when I noticed the scriptures of a man sitting next to me in a meeting. He opened them as the discussion progressed, and I could see that they were marked, as I had done, but with a difference. He had placed colored tags on the edges of pages, keyed to the colors in which he had marked the scriptures. I asked him after the meeting to tell me about it. He showed me the front of his scriptures where he had placed a typed page. On that page were topics about the gospel, each with a line under it. And he had placed the colored markers on the edge of the scriptures, one color for each topic, so that he could study all the scriptures that were helpful to him on that topic.

Within a day I had purchased an inexpensive set of scriptures. But it took more than a few days and more than a few prayers for me to know the topics that would open the scriptures anew for me. . . . I would not urge you to buy a new set of scriptures, nor to get colored tags and colored pencils, nor to choose the topics that I chose. But I plead with you to return to the scriptures in some way that opens your mind and heart to be taught.²

One young person did something similar to what Elder Eyring talked about. He chose a different color for each of the missionary lessons and began marking his scriptures, searching for verses that related to them. When he found a verse that related to a missionary discussion, he marked it in the appropriate color. Someone preparing

to serve a mission could get a copy of *Preach My Gospel* and do the same thing.

In the above quote, Elder Eyring said, “I plead with you to return to the scriptures in some way that opens your mind and heart to be taught.” Marking the scriptures has done that for me throughout my life. When I was a child, I just read the scriptures. Then somebody gave me a red pencil and told me to mark the verses I liked. That worked well for a couple of times reading through the scriptures—but pretty soon I would have pages that were all red!

Then I started to use a pen to underline key words and phrases—I was much more selective about what I marked. Some time later, I began writing principles in the margins of the scriptures. Each of these markings helped invigorate my scripture study. I have used other marking systems as well, and each has helped me gain



Just Mark It!

Mark your scriptures in a way that is comfortable for you. I know one young woman who marks the scriptures by drawing symbols that relate to what she is reading about. For example, she drew a broken heart by Doctrine and Covenants 59:8, which talks about a “broken heart and contrite spirit.” Next to Doctrine and Covenants 52:10 (“let them go two by two”) she drew two stick figures representing missionaries.

You can also write phrases in your margins, such as “endure to the end” or “Second Coming,” to remind yourself what the verses are about. This can be a helpful way to remind yourself what it is that you have studied. Many times I have read notes I have written to myself in the margins and remembered a scriptural insight I had completely forgotten about!

more from my scripture study. You may find that the way you mark your scriptures changes over time—and that is fine. Following a specific program is not as important as using marking to help you more easily locate the things you want to remember. Doing so will make your scripture study more meaningful.

Some of the previous chapters of this book suggest ways that you could mark your scriptures. For example, creating a scripture anchor is a form of marking, in which you collect a variety of cross-references. You could also write principles in the margins or open spaces of your scriptures or put brackets around one-liners.

There are many ways to mark your scriptures. Some people like to highlight footnotes they have found helpful. Others write quotes from General Authorities next to relevant verses. The *Preach My Gospel* manual contains some excellent counsel regarding scripture marking. As you consider these recommended systems, ask yourself, *Which of these methods do I wish to use?*

“Marking your scriptures is not only a way to help relocate a reference, but doing so helps you ponder or think more deeply about a passage or doctrine of the gospel. You can mark your scriptures in many ways. Find a method that works for you. Below are some suggestions for marking scriptures:

- Use pencils or colored markers. Avoid using pens that bleed through the paper.
- Shade, underline, bracket, or outline part of a verse, an entire verse, or a group of verses.
- Avoid excessive marking. The benefit is lost if you cannot understand your markings because you have made too many notes, lines, and colors.
- Underline only a few key words to highlight the verse, section, or chapter.

- Circle or underline key words and then use straight lines to link closely related words.
- When a series of points in a verse or passage are related, number the points in the margin or text.
- Use the footnotes as a resource for marking and interpreting the scriptures.
- Place a symbol (such as a check mark) in the margin for key verses you feel are critical to remember” (*Preach My Gospel*, p. 24).

Speaking of check marks, President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a marking invitation to church members: “May I suggest that you read it again and take a pencil, a red one if you have one, and put a little check mark every time there is a reference to Jesus Christ in [The Book of Mormon]. And there will come to you a very real conviction as you do so that this is in very deed another witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.”³

Have you tried this yet?

Will you prayerfully ponder whether using some of the suggestions in this chapter would help you improve your scripture study? Remember, there is no perfect way to mark the scriptures—just find methods that help you understand what you have read and remember what you learned. I testify that marking your scriptures in ways that are meaningful to you will deeply enhance your study of the scriptures.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
Marking Your Scriptures

Assignment #1

Write down the methods you use for marking your scriptures. Are there other methods from this chapter you think you should start using? If so, which ones?

Assignment #2

If you haven't already, take President Hinckley's invitation to read the Book of Mormon and mark every reference to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Visualizing



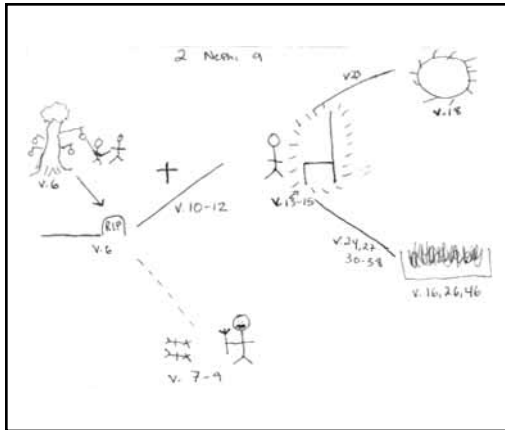
“Can you imagine . . . ?”—Alma 5:16

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. In fact, many people learn visually and are able to better understand the scriptures when they can visualize what is happening. Although reading the scriptures is primarily a literary activity, there are many things we can do to create visual aids to help us better understand the scriptures. In addition, being able to hear, smell, or taste the scriptures can increase the depth of your understanding.

Draw It

Sometimes it can be helpful to draw or sketch what you are reading. Once, while reading 2 Nephi 9, I found myself getting confused. There were so many things being described in the chapter that I couldn't keep it all straight, so I decided to draw it. I'm not a good artist, and I don't even really like to draw; nevertheless, as I drew 2 Nephi 9, I developed a deeper understanding. Let me show you what I mean.

Because I flunked art in elementary school (I really did!), I should probably explain my drawing. As I drew what I read, I saw



that Jacob was explaining the plan of salvation. He talked about how because of the Fall (see Adam partaking of the fruit) all would die, and if it weren't for the Resurrection (v. 10–12), we would all be angels to the devil (v. 7–9). But because of the Atonement, all of us will be brought to stand

before the judgment seat of God (v. 13–15). If I do the things described in verses 24, 27, and 30–38, I will wind up with torment as a lake of fire and brimstone (v. 16, 26, 46). But if I do what it says in verse 23, I can receive the glory discussed in verse 18.

As I said, art is not my strength—but as I sketched the events described in 2 Nephi 9, I understood them better. I saw that there were different paths I could take, and drawing where each one led strengthened my desire to follow the Lord's ways.

Do you want to try your skills at drawing something? If I were a better artist I think it would be fun to draw this phrase from 2 Nephi 4:28: “Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin.” What would somebody look like if they were drooping in sin? How about 2 Nephi 4:31: “Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin?” How would you draw that?

Imagine It

One thing you can do to make the scriptures come alive is visualize what you are reading. For example, when you picture the trial of Abinadi before wicked King Noah, what comes to mind? If you're like me, you may imagine Arnold Friberg's famous painting that appears in some editions of the Book of Mormon. However, the

scene could have been totally different. Perhaps Abinadi was a young man. Or maybe Noah, instead of being fat and ugly, was really good-looking. Imagining the scene helps me relate to the story and makes me feel more connected to it. Stephen R. Covey wrote, “See in your mind’s eye the characters and events portrayed in the scriptures. Such an . . . effort will help you understand the situation that produced the teaching. Then you can relate that situation to yours and distill the universal principle that may apply in both.”¹

You can also use your imagination by putting yourself in the situation or event being described. The prophet Alma asked, “Can you



In Your Mind’s Eye . . .

Bishop H. David Burton gave this account of visualizing what the last hours of the Savior’s mortal life were like:

“I can envision Jesus bearing the heavy crossbeam as the procession winds its way along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, through the massive wall at the city gate, to a place called Golgotha. I can hear women weeping and Jesus offering words of warning. . . .

“In my mind’s eye, I can see the executioners going about their abhorrent, heartless tasks. I can hear the Savior, in the spirit of compassion, appealing for his crucifiers as he uttered, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). . . .

*“Picture in your minds a weeping mother and a devoted disciple invited past the centurion to the foot of the cross. Jesus, in his agony, looked down upon them and said to Mary, with an economy of words, ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ and, looking steadily at John, said, ‘Behold thy mother!’ (John 19:26–27)” (“Courage to Harken,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 66).*

imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, [at the day of judgment]: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?” (Alma 5:16). You might picture yourself in that situation and ask yourself, *Based on the way I’m living right now, is it possible the Lord would say that to me?*

Similarly, in general conference, Elder Henry B. Eyring quoted several verses that describe standing before God at the day of judgment (Mosiah 2:33, 38, 40). He then said, “For me, the power of that warning *is the picture it forms in my mind* of that time when we will each stand before the Savior after this life to be judged.”²

Measure It

Noticing measurements can also help you visualize things from the scriptures. For example, how big was Noah’s ark? The Lord told Noah, “The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits” (Genesis 6:15). Using the Bible Dictionary, I found out that a cubit was about eighteen inches. I did some math then went outside to mark how big the ark would be. It was huge! Visualizing how big the boat was helped me appreciate more the sacrifice, faith, and obedience Noah demonstrated in building it.

Use Your Senses

The scriptures provide you with many opportunities to utilize your senses. For example, you could use your sense of taste to help you further understand many scriptural passages. You probably know the story of Daniel and his friends refusing to eat the king’s meat (see Daniel 1). The scriptures tell us that instead of eating meat and drinking wine, they ate pulse. Using the footnotes you can figure out what pulse is and even make some of it yourself.

Or as you read about the Passover you could eat some of the ceremonial foods. Tasting the “bitter herbs” (see Exodus 12:8—try eating horseradish) can help you better imagine the Passover ceremony and understand its meaning.

Sometimes it can be helpful to “listen” to the scriptures. Once I sat in a pitch black room while listening to a dramatization of the sounds of a fierce storm and people screaming in terror (see 3 Nephi 8). Listening to what it might have been like on the American continent when the Savior was crucified brought a new and deeper understanding of those chapters.

The scriptures are more than just words on a page. The people they are about *actually* existed. We can make their experiences more concrete in our minds and thereby more fully appreciate what they experienced by imagining, drawing, measuring, and using our senses. As we do so, our understanding of and love for the scriptures will deepen.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Visualizing

Assignment #1

This chapter discusses drawing 2 Nephi 9, measuring Noah’s Ark, and tasting various scriptural foods. Do one of these activities and write down what you learn.

Assignment #2

Select one of the visualization techniques mentioned in this chapter and use it every day for a week. Record what you learn.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Three Rs



“Please . . . read more slowly and more carefully and with more questions in mind. . . . Ponder, [and] examine every word, every scriptural gem. . . . Hold it up to the light, and turn it, look and see what’s reflected and refracted there. . . . Such an examination may unearth a treasure hidden in a field: a pearl of great price; a pearl beyond price.”—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland¹

- F**ill in the blank—“If at first you don’t succeed, _____.”
- a. pretend you never tried.”
 - b. find somebody you can blame.”
 - c. don’t try sky diving.”
 - d. get somebody else to do it for you.”
 - e. try, try again.”

Of course you know that if you at first you don’t succeed, you should try, try again. This simple but important idea is related to the three Rs of successful scripture study. These Rs are:

Read a chapter once.

Read the same chapter a second time.

Read it again!

If at first you don't understand a chapter, read it again! Reading a chapter a second and third time may sound a little strange, but as President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught: "I remind you that repetition is a law of learning."²

When I was a seminary teacher, I learned that in preparing to teach a chapter of scriptures to others, I needed to read it a minimum of three times. Sometimes, after the first reading, I would think, *This is a pretty boring chapter; I don't know what we're going to do in class!*

The second time I read the chapter I would find some interesting principles or details that I had missed the first time. By the time I finished the third reading of the chapter, I would think, *Wow, there is so much good stuff in this chapter, I don't know how we're going to have time to discover it all!*

Similarly, as you read a chapter three times, you will gain much more from what you study. Read a chapter once to get an overview of what the chapter is talking about. Then read it a second time, looking for phrases that stand out to you, for principles, and for ways that you can apply what you are reading. But don't stop there! Reread the chapter, looking for insights you missed the first two times through. You can use the other scripture study techniques you've learned as you read and reread. What do the footnotes tell you? How can you liken what you are reading to your life? Take time to visualize!

Recently I rediscovered the power of reading a section of scripture several times over. I was reading Joseph Smith—History, verses 6–17. The first time I read it I enjoyed it, but I didn't get a lot of new insights. Maybe something similar has happened to you. You read the scriptures, and it seems like it's the same thing you have read before. But I read the verses again, and then again. I tried to practice the advice given by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland at the beginning of this chapter. As I read and reread I began to see things that I had never seen before.

I'd like you to try this with me. Prayerfully read Joseph Smith–History 1:6–17 *three times*. The first time read it quickly to get an overview of what is happening. Then read it two more times. In your second and third readings, follow Elder Holland's advice: "Read more slowly and more carefully. . . . Ponder, [and] examine every word, every scriptural gem" (Summer 1992, CES Satellite Broadcast, 4).

Use your own scriptures for this activity. Then come back and I'll share with you some insights that I found.

6. For, notwithstanding the great love which the converts to these different faiths expressed at the time of their conversion, and the great zeal manifested by the respective clergy, who were active in getting up and promoting this extraordinary scene of religious feeling, in order to have everybody converted, as they were pleased to call it, let them join what sect they pleased; yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real; for a scene of great confusion and bad feeling ensued—priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions.

Comment: If I'm not careful I can ruin good friendships by getting in arguments and causing contention.

Comment: Even though some of Joseph Smith's family joined the Presbyterian church, Joseph didn't. He wanted to have his own testimony. Similarly, I should gain my own testimony of the Church.

7. I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined that church, namely, my mother, Lucy; my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia.

8. During this time of great excitement my mind was called up to serious reflection and great uneasiness; but though my feelings were deep and often poignant, still I kept myself aloof from all these parties, though I attended their several meetings as often as occasion would permit. In process of time my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them; but so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

9. My mind at times was greatly excited, the cry and tumult were so great and incessant. The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others.

Comment: I don't need to tear down other churches and prove them wrong.

10. In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

Comment: Joseph Smith focused on what he should do. I can do the same thing.

11. While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack

Comment: When Joseph Smith was looking for answers he turned to the scriptures.

wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

12. Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.

Comment: When I read the scriptures I should think about what I read over and over again.

13. At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to “ask of God,” concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

Comment: Some times it takes time to learn what we should do.

14. So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt. It was on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. It was the first time in my life

Comment: If I am too anxious or preoccupied with my problems I might forget to pray about them.

that I had made such an attempt, for amidst all my anxieties I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

Comment: Joseph Smith emphasized the importance of praying vocally.

Comment: Joseph planned to pray in a private place. I should too.

Comment: When I pray, I should kneel.

Comment: Sometimes when we try to do good things, we face opposition just like Joseph Smith did.

Comment: When I have problems I should pray to God with all of my power.

Comment: Sometimes it isn't until the last moment that the Lord intervenes.

15. After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

16. But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

17. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*

Comment: If I remain true then I will be able to live with these glorious individuals.

Comment: God knows my name.

Okay, what insights did you gain? What did you learn? I wish we were talking so we could discuss what we felt or noticed in these verses. But I bet you found some great stuff! And you probably noticed some things I missed. That's why it can be a great thing to teach a friend or family member about the Three Rs. Then you can read the same section of scripture together and share your insights with each other.



My Friend Enlightened Me!

A friend of mine shared an insight she gained from the verses you just studied. Even though I had read Joseph Smith–History many times, I hadn't found it! She highlighted a phrase in verse 6: ". . . it was seen that the seemingly good feelings of both the priests and the converts were more pretended than real."

My friend explained that she wondered if sometimes she was the same way at church. She said, "Sometimes it seems like we might 'pretend' to have good feelings for each other, or to be nice to each other at church, but deep in our hearts, we don't really care enough to help others."

Since I heard her comment, I've often asked myself if I am really showing love to those around me or if my good feelings are "more pretended than real."

Making the effort to read a chapter or other passage of scripture three times in a row is a powerful way to expand your understanding. You will find that prayerfully rereading will bring new insights to chapters you thought you already knew everything about! If you don't get much out of a chapter the first time you read, take my advice—read, read, read again!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

The Three Rs

Assignment #1

Pick a chapter from the scriptures that you are already familiar with. Read that chapter three times—slowly and carefully, prayerfully looking for new insights. Write down the different things you learn each time you read.

Assignment #2

Do a “Three Rs” with a family member or friend. Each of you read the same section of scripture three times and then share with each other what you learn.



Take Time to Read

*“You should care more about the amount of time you spend in the scriptures than about the amount you read in that time. I see you sometimes reading a few verses, stopping to ponder them, carefully reading the verses again, and as you think about what they mean, praying for understanding, asking questions in your mind, waiting for spiritual impressions, and writing down the impressions and insights that come so you can remember and learn more. Studying in this way, you may not read a lot of chapters or verses in a half hour, but you will be giving place in your heart for the word of God, and He will be speaking to you” (Elder D. Todd Christofferson, “When Thou Art Converted,” *Ensign*, May 2004, 11).*

*“As we seek the Spirit, our scripture reading becomes more reflective. We rediscover the virtue of slow reading. There is more reading aloud as, perhaps, the scriptures were meant to be read” (Elder Douglas L. Callister, “Seeking the Spirit of God,” *Ensign*, November 2000, 30–31).*

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Hymns



*"The song of the righteous is a prayer unto me,
and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads."*

—Doctrine and Covenants 25:12

The hymns have helped me many times in my life. While serving as missionaries in downtown Denver, my companion and I would frequently need to ride our bikes in the snow and slush. One day as we rode down a major street in Denver, packed snow was on the ground and it was pouring freezing rain. Cars drove by, spraying us with slush, and it was a miracle that we survived. Later that day, as I inwardly moaned about the terrible weather, my thoughts turned to the pioneers and the extreme trials they must have faced. Thinking of the pioneers brought to my mind the hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints." The words of the second verse filled my soul with courage.

Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?

'Tis not so; all is right.

Why should we think to earn a great reward

If we now shun the fight?¹

That's right, I thought. I can't earn a great reward if I'm not willing to valiantly fight right now.

Those words gave me strength to endure harsh weather that afternoon, and they have helped me in other situations. When the going gets tough I hum a verse of “Come, Come, Ye Saints” and feel strengthened.

Now you might wonder, *What is a chapter on hymns doing in a book about scripture study?* That's a fair question. And the answer is that in a very real sense, hymns are scripture. This statement by the First Presidency appears in the preface of our LDS hymnal: “We hope the hymnbook will take a prominent place among the scriptures and other religious books in our homes.”²

The Lord has told us, “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12).

What blessings come from singing the hymns? Actually, there are many. The Preface to the hymnbook lists over a dozen specific blessings that result from singing the hymns, including:

- “The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord [and] create a feeling of reverence.”
- “Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end.”
- “Music has boundless powers for moving families toward greater spirituality and devotion to the gospel.”
- “Hymns can lift our spirits, give us courage, and move us to righteous action. They can fill our souls with heavenly thoughts and bring us a spirit of peace.”
- “Hymns can also help us withstand the temptations of the adversary.”³

Let me share another occasion in which the hymns gave me needed comfort and guidance. At the time I was a senior at BYU, and I was trying to make a decision about a career path. One job that looked particularly good was with a consulting firm in Boston, but I wasn't sure it was the right thing.



Hymns in the Cockpit

Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke to the youth about the importance of the hymns. He told of how his brother Leon was a fighter pilot in World War II. While engaged in combat, his plane was hit several times and was going down. Remarkably, Leon was able to stay calm and maneuvered the plane back to land for a crash landing. All on board survived.

Leon later explained to Elder Packer how he had been able to stay cool under pressure. "He said, 'I have a favorite hymn . . . and when things got rough I would sing it silently to myself, and there would come a faith and an assurance that kept me on course.'"

That is part of the power of the hymns (see President Boyd K. Packer, "The Spirit of Revelation," Ensign, Nov. 1999, 23–25).

After taking a trip to Boston, I went to church the next week still feeling bewildered and confused about what I should do. I arrived early and sat down as the prelude music was being played. The pianist was playing the hymn, "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," and as I thought about the words, warmth filled my soul. Listening, I realized that wherever I went would be the right place as long as I was willing to do what the Lord wanted me to do. I don't remember a thing about what was said in sacrament meeting that day, but the playing of that hymn brought the Spirit to me in such a way that I still haven't forgotten it.

One of the blessings associated with singing or listening to the hymns is that they help us control our thoughts and resist

temptations. If a bad thought pops into your mind, you can chase it away by mentally singing a hymn you have memorized. If you haven't already picked a hymn that helps channel your thoughts away from temptation, I invite you to do so!

In addition to your regular scripture study, you might find it helpful to read through the hymnbook and mark phrases or verses that stand out to you—the same way you would do with your scriptures. Notice too that below each hymn there are scriptural references cited—a scripture that might have inspired the poet or that relates to the message of the hymn. Looking up these verses adds to the meaning of the hymn or enhances our understanding. Remember the blessings associated with singing or listening to the hymns. They are sacred. Even if you are not a musical person, you will be blessed as you learn, study, and sing them!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

The Hymns

Assignment #1

Read “The Spirit of Revelation” by Elder Boyd K. Packer that is mentioned in this chapter (available at <http://lds.org>). Write down a goal for yourself after you read this talk.

Assignment #2

Choose three of your favorite hymns and look up the scriptures that relate to them. Record what you learn.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Words of the Prophets



“The most important reading we can do is any of the words of the prophet . . . contained each month in our Church magazines. Our marching orders for each six months are found in the general conference addresses.”—President Ezra Taft Benson¹

I imagine that I invite you to sit in one of these four chairs. Which would you choose? Since the chairs all look the same it probably would not make that much difference. But what if I told you that if you sit in the correct chair you will receive a bag of money, but if you sit in one of the wrong chairs you’ll get a dozen eggs thrown at you? You might want to know which is the right chair to sit in!

Go ahead, pick a chair . . . Which did you pick? (See page 144 to



find out if you got the money or the eggs in the face.) If you picked the wrong chair, I’m not going to throw eggs at you. Of course I’m not going to give you a bag of money if you picked the right chair, either!

Here's the point—there is no way, given the information you had, that you could have known which chair to choose. In real life there are also situations in which we may not know the right thing to do, but we have inspired leaders to guide us and help us make decisions. We revere the prophets, *seers*, and revelators who lead the Church because they can see things that we cannot!

We can liken the prophets and apostles to the “watchmen on the tower” referred to in Doctrine and Covenants 101:45–54. This section contains a parable about a certain nobleman who planted twelve olive trees in a choice spot of ground. He instructed his servants to build a tower and post watchmen to protect against the approach of enemies who would break down the olive trees or steal the fruit. But the servants rationalized that it was a time of peace and that the money that would be needed to build a tower and hire the watchmen was a needless expense. As far as they could see, there was no enemy to fear.

Sadly, their enemies attacked, and because the people were not warned, they suffered greatly. The nobleman chastised the careless servants, saying: “The watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer” (D&C 101:54).

The parable reminds us that when we follow the prophet, we avoid many dangers that we could not have seen on our own. Furthermore, the words of the prophets are scripture! (see D&C 68:4).

Knowing what the prophet says and following his direction is vitally important. Once I asked an institute teacher named Randall

Wright for some advice on rearing children. “There’s just *one* rule,” Brother Wright told me, “and that is, ‘follow the prophet.’”

He pointed me to Doctrine and Covenants 21:4, which reads, “Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me.” The word *his* in this verse refers to the prophet.

Brother Wright explained that this revelation was given on April 6, 1830; therefore, on the day the Church was organized, the Lord commanded the people to follow the prophet. We should all make that our rule!

General conference is perhaps the best opportunity for us to hear the words of the living prophets. The ideal thing would be to attend all the sessions of the conference and take notes. Then we can later read, reread, and listen again to these talks. At the end of a recent general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “When the *Ensign* magazine comes out in November, with all of the conference messages, please don’t just throw it aside with the comment that you have heard it all, but read and ponder the various messages. You will find many things that you missed when you listened to the speakers.”²

Another excellent source for reading the words of living prophets is to read the transcripts of the devotionals they have given at Brigham Young University. These talks are available at <http://speeches.byu.edu>. There are hundreds of talks available for free downloads as .pdf or .mp3 files. Most of these talks were given to audiences of 18–23-year-old faithful members of the Church. Even if you’re a little younger than 18, I think you will find that these talks have powerful applications to your life. You can search the talks by speaker or topic—so select a General Authority or a topic you are interested



A Conference Quiz

Take the following simple quiz to find out how well you know the living prophets and their words:

“Could you tell me the names of the three members of the First Presidency and the names of each of those who comprise the Quorum of the Twelve?”

“If we were to hold up a picture of these Brethren, would you recognize each of them? We rarely pay close attention to someone we do not recognize or know.”

“Could you share with me the counsel given by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles from the most recent general conference?”

“Perhaps more important, could you share with me a recent decision where you changed something in your life because of counsel received from one of these 15 men?” (Elder Neil L. Andersen, CES Fireside, March 2007).

How did you do? If we don’t know the answers to these questions, we might want to study more deeply the general conference messages published online and in the Church magazines!

in and start learning! There’s also BYU-Idaho’s collection of devotionals available at <http://web.byui.edu/presentations>. There are some incredible talks, again for *free* downloading! Check them out!

The pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* also contains timely teachings from modern prophets. Consider the following counsel:

“You should not blame your circumstances, your family, or your friends if you choose to disobey God’s commandments.”³

“Even in your most difficult times, you can find much to be grateful for.”⁴

“Be willing to work diligently and make sacrifices to obtain learning.”⁵

And that’s just one sentence from each of the first three chapters! You might find it a useful exercise to reread the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet and mark it as you would your scriptures. What principles do you find? What one-liners do you uncover? How can you apply these teachings to your life? Share what you find with your parents. And remember, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught, “You . . . who are already 18 or older, if you don’t have this booklet anymore, make sure to get one, keep it, and use it. This little booklet is a gem for any age group.”⁶

Making the choice to follow the prophets’ counsel—no matter what the consequence—is an extremely important decision. When we do not follow the prophets it weakens our ability to follow in the future. As Elder Henry B. Eyring explained,

[It is a fallacy] to believe that the choice to accept or not accept the counsel of prophets is no more than deciding whether to accept good advice and gain its benefits or to stay where we are. *But the choice not to take prophetic counsel changes the very ground upon which we stand. It becomes more dangerous. The failure to take prophetic counsel lessens our power to take inspired counsel in the future. . . .*

Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm’s way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety.⁷

You may notice that at times the prophets seem to repeat their



Follow and Be Blessed

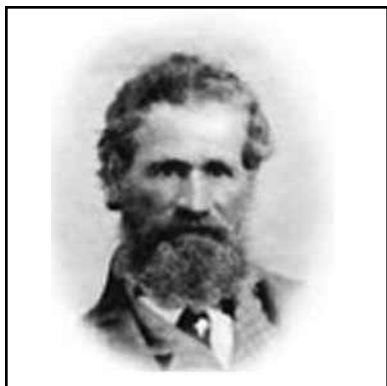
When the Saints were forced to leave Nauvoo, a pioneer named Charles Shumway was the first to cross the river. As they journeyed west Charles and his family were camped several miles west of Winter Quarters in an area which was inhabited by Pawnee Indians while waiting for the other Saints to catch up with them.

Late one night in October of 1846, they were sitting by a fireplace in a cabin which they had occupied. A loud thumping knock rattled the door and a voice called, "Shumway!" Two men came in with a message from Brigham Young—to move immediately back to Winter Quarters.

The men said that reliable intelligence sources had been received that the Sioux Indians were about to attack the Pawnees and that it was time to leave. Charles might have been tempted to wait until the morning. But he obeyed quickly. He and his family quickly got the teams of oxen and all of their possessions loaded in the wagons and long before daylight, began moving away from the Indian camps. The company of pioneers traveled in fear that they would meet Indians along the trail, but they never saw any.

After they had traveled for nearly twelve miles and found their wagons on a low rise where they could see many miles to the west, they looked back to the west and above the horizon, they saw billows of smoke! The Sioux had attacked and the fort and all the rest of the buildings on both banks of the Lupe River were on fire. The entire Pawnee campsite where the Shumways had been was on fire.

*In later years, when remembering the close encounter with the warring Indian tribes, Charles would tell his family that this experience had taught them to listen to the words of the prophet of God and follow without question (from <http://shumway.org/june1998.htm>, accessed 4 Feb. 2003; also in Kenneth W. Godfrey's book, *Charles Shumway, A Pioneer's Life*, 106–107. Story paraphrased in some parts.).*



Charles Shumway

counsel. When you find these themes, consider yourself blessed. As Elder Henry B. Eyring has taught, “We have been warned with counsel of where to find safety from sin and from sorrow. One of the keys to recognizing those warnings is that they are repeated.”⁸

For example, consider the many warnings modern prophets have given regarding the dangers of steady dating in high school. President Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth president of the Church, said: “A vicious, destructive, social pattern of early steady dating must be changed. . . . The change of this one pattern of social activities of our youth would immediately eliminate a majority of the sins of our young folks.”⁹

President Ezra Taft Benson, the thirteenth president, said,

Avoid steady dating with a young man prior to the time of his mission call. If your relationship with him is more casual, then he can make that decision to serve more easily and also can concentrate his full energies on his missionary work instead of the girlfriend back home.¹⁰

President Howard W. Hunter, the fourteenth president of the Church, wrote,

When should a young man or a young woman commence steady dating? I am sure you will agree that *it is not a good idea for a young man and a young woman to begin steady dating until they have arrived at the marriageable age. . . .* There is plenty of time after high school to go steady.¹¹

President Gordon B. Hinckley, the fifteenth prophet of this

dispensation, counseled in the priesthood session of general conference:

When you are young, *do not* get involved in steady dating. When you reach an age where you think of marriage, then is the time to become so involved. But *you boys who are in high school don't need this, and neither do the girls.*¹²

I have occasionally heard people rationalize their behavior—insisting that they are an exception to these teachings of the modern prophets. I have also seen people choose to follow this counsel, even though it was hard. In each case, those who followed the prophet were blessed, and in many cases the disobedient experienced difficulties they could have avoided. Time and experience have shown me that the words to the Primary song are right—“Follow the prophet, he knows the way!”

The prophets speak to us, to our day and current needs. They are called seers because they see things we can't see and warn us of impending danger. Their words are to us as scriptures. I testify that as we read and follow the counsel of the living prophets, we will be blessed over and over again.



P. S.

Earlier in the book we talked about the “Three Rs.” One member of the quorums of the Seventy said he gets the general conference talks on CD and listens to them three times so that he can better understand the messages of the speakers. Not a bad idea! (You can download the audio files at <http://lds.org>.)



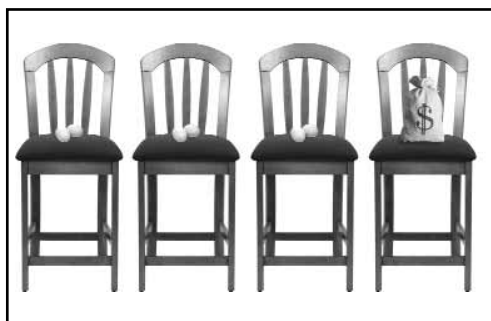
YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
The Words of the Prophets

Assignment #1

Read the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet and mark it as you would your scriptures. What principles do you find? What one-liners do you uncover? What stands out to you? What goals do you feel inspired to set? Share what you find with your parents.

Assignment #2

Go to or watch all the sessions of the next general conference and take notes on each speaker. Did you get more out of conference than you usually do? Review your notes one month later and evaluate how well you are applying their teachings in your life.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Memorizing



"I suggest that you memorize scriptures that touch your heart and fill your soul with understanding."—Elder Richard G. Scott¹

A young woman named Alejandra shared an experience that helped me understand the power of memorizing scriptures. As a seminary student she memorized the scripture mastery verses. When she went to college, most of her friends did not share her standards; they frequently invited her to participate in activities that were not appropriate. Normally, Alejandra declined, but one evening she was feeling particularly lonely. *Maybe it wouldn't hurt to go with them one time*, she thought. As she was trying to decide whether or not she should go, the words from a scripture mastery verse came to her mind. She decided not to go.

That night, Alejandra's friends were drinking and driving, and a terrible car accident occurred. Alejandra was so grateful to have memorized a scripture that came to her mind in her time of need.

The Savior also used scripture to resist temptation. As Christ was preparing in the wilderness for his mortal ministry, after he had been

fasting and drawing closer to God for forty days, Satan came and tempted him three times. In each case the Savior responded by quoting scriptures (see Matthew 4: 1–10).

Consider how the following quotes from modern prophets teach the importance of memorization:

“I suggest that you memorize scriptures that touch your heart and fill your soul with understanding. When scriptures are used as the Lord has caused them to be recorded, they have intrinsic power that is not communicated when paraphrased. Sometimes when there is a significant need in my life, I review mentally scriptures that have given me strength. There is great solace, direction, and power that flow from the scriptures, especially the words of the Lord.”²

“I have a vision of thousands of missionaries going into the mission field with hundreds of passages memorized from the Book of Mormon so that they might feed the needs of a spiritually famished world.”³

“What a great blessing it would be if every member of the Church memorized the Articles of Faith and became knowledgeable about the principles contained in each. We would be better prepared to share the gospel with others.”⁴

It is clear that we *should* memorize passages of scripture. This will help us to be better able to share the gospel and provide us comfort and direction even when we do not have our scriptures with us. What are some ways we can memorize scriptures? One way to do it is to find a way to work memorization into idle moments of your lives. I know one young man who carries around verses of scripture written on 3 x 5 cards. If he is ever waiting in line or between activities, he studies the scriptures he is trying to memorize.

One of my institute students had a job that required him to stand in one place for long periods of time while waiting for

customers to come to him. During the lulls between customers, he was free to do whatever he wanted, so long as he stayed at his post. He used the downtime to memorize “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” He was able to memorize the whole proclamation in just three weeks.

The idea of memorizing while you are working is not new. As a young man, President Spencer W. Kimball had to milk cows every morning and every night. He used this time to memorize the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, and other scriptures. President Kimball didn’t have time to waste—and neither do you!⁵

Using a tape or digital recorder can also help. You could record yourself reciting scriptures you want to memorize and then listen to the recording while traveling to school or work. As you practice saying the verses along with the tape recording, you learn them. I know people who have memorized pages of scriptures using this approach.

There are many other ways to memorize scriptures. Consider this:



“Hey!” You may be wondering. “What’s a plate of cookies doing in this book?” It’s here to prove a point—think about it . . . is your mouth watering? Are you thinking about how you’d like to bite into one of those tasty cookies? Were you thinking about cookies a few minutes ago?



More Free Downloads!

Did you know you can download audio files of the scripture mastery verses from <http://ldscs.org>? Now that’s putting an mp3 player to good use!

My point is that visuals can be powerful. So you could post scriptures you'd like to memorize in places you see often. Seeing them regularly will help keep them fresh in your mind.

You could also write down the first letter of each word in a quote and use that visual to help you learn the scripture until you don't need the card any more.

Some think that it is a lot of work to memorize scriptures. And it's true—it is! But it is work well worth it. Consider the following quote from Elder Boyd K. Packer and how it applies to the effort of memorizing verses of scripture.



But It's Too Hard!

Sometimes you may think that it's too hard to memorize scriptures. You can do it! Often when people say they can't memorize, they mean they haven't consistently tried to memorize scriptures. The message of this poem definitely applies to memorization!

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Beginners are many, but enders are few.*

*Honor, power, place, and praise
Will come, in time, to the one who stays.*

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it too;
For out of the bend and the sweat and the smile
Will come life's victories, after awhile.*

(Author Unknown)

If you want . . . to play the piano, it is good to expose [yourself] to music. This may give [you] a feel for it and help greatly in [your] learning. But this is not enough. There is the practice and the **memo-
rization** and the practice and the practice and the practice before [you] can play it well. . . .

So it is with the gospel. One may have a feel for it. But some time one must *learn* the doctrine. Here, too, **rote learning practice**, and

memorization . . . all become essential. There is no royal road to learning.⁶

Have you ever had a song just pop into your head? How would you like that to happen with the scriptures? It can happen. Begin with the scripture mastery verses. Find other verses that touch your heart. Make a regular time for scripture memorization—and start today!



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Memorizing Scriptures

Assignment #1

If you are participating in seminary or institute, select two scripture mastery verses from the book you are studying and memorize those scriptures this week.

Assignment #2

Memorize “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” using the techniques discussed in this chapter or some of your own. (You might find it helpful to break it up by memorizing a paragraph at a time.) Once you have it memorized, share it with your parents and two other people.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Studying with Your Family



“If, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. . . . Righteousness will increase.”

—President Ezra Taft Benson (quoting Marion G. Romney)¹

Some missionaries have interesting experiences as they visit people in their homes. Ethan, one of my roommates in college, shared the following experience. He said:

I had been in the mission about three months when my senior companion told me we were going to have dinner with a family that were great friends of the missionaries but had never joined the church. They served us *Pozole* (a Mexican soup of hominy and pork). It was a *huge* serving and I was nervous I would not be able to finish (as good as it was). But I did—and I was stuffed. When I finished, they asked if I wanted more, and since I had been taught in the MTC that you could offend investigators if you didn’t say yes, I said, “Yes, but just a little.” Well, they gave me another *huge* bowl.

Now I knew I was going to offend them because there was no way I would be able to finish it. I prayed as I ate every bite and somehow with the Lord's help I finished the second enormous bowl. I felt like I was going to pop, but at least they would not be offended. Of course, when I finished that bowl, they asked if I wanted more. This time I told them that I was full, but my companion said "Oh no, he wants more, give him more!"

I protested, but my companion kept insisting that I wanted more. So, you guessed it, I got a third *huge* bowl. My faith was not sufficient enough to finish the third bowl, but I hope they weren't offended.

I never had any crazy food experiences on my mission, but I did learn a lot from visiting the homes of Church members. There was one family I liked to visit because every time I went to their home I felt a special spirit. On one occasion I asked the father what brought such a good feeling into his home. He replied that they read the Book of Mormon every day as a family. Later I learned that President Ezra Taft Benson had said, quoting President Marion G. Romney:

I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to that counsel. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and

charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness.²

President Benson also taught,

These promises—increased love and harmony in the home, greater respect between parent and child, increased spirituality and righteousness—are not idle promises, but exactly what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he said the Book of Mormon will help us draw nearer to God.³

Once I learned about these promises, I understood that the family I loved to visit was simply obeying the prophet and receiving the associated blessings. My wife, Lani, and I have also seen the blessings that come from having regular scripture study in our family. One day we memorized the scripture “Before ye seek for riches, seek ye the kingdom of God” (Jacob 2:18) and explained to our children that we should put spiritual things ahead of temporal concerns. A few weeks later, while I was eating breakfast, our four-year-old son marched into the kitchen and said, “Dad, you are putting riches before the kingdom of God!”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You are eating breakfast before we’ve had scripture study!”

I was grateful our son wanted to put scripture study first. Do your parents try to have regular family scripture study? If so, how well do you support them? When I was fourteen, my mother instituted a “Book of Mormon Hour” to help us do some extra studying on Sundays. I must not have been a very enthusiastic participant because the next year it was shortened to a “Church History Half Hour!”

When your parents say, “Time for scripture study,” do you say, “Hooray!” or do you try to hide? If your parents forget to have

scripture study one day do you remind them or are you happy they forgot? Your attitude toward family scripture study makes a big difference—not only in whether or not it happens, but also in what you'll gain from it.

One of the most important family study times is family home evening. The prophets have specifically asked that we reserve Monday night as a special time together. President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “I have received not a few invitations to participate in community Monday gatherings of one kind or another. I have uniformly turned down these invitations with appreciation, but with the explanation that I have reserved Monday as family home evening time. I earnestly hope that each of you will do the same.”⁴

Are you doing your part to be available on Monday night?

For the Strength of Youth teaches, “Participate in family activities and traditions, including family prayer, family home evenings, and family scripture reading. . . . Set a good example for other family members.”⁵

As a teenager, I sometimes felt that it was my parents' responsibility to make sure family scripture study time happened. I know now that I was wrong. It was my responsibility too. I hope you are



What If . . .

What if your family doesn't have scripture study or Family Home Evening? Talk with your parents individually and see if they would be willing to start. Tell them you are willing to create a schedule for family scripture study. If your parents will not participate, you could try what Carly did—she organized daily scripture study with her younger siblings. If nobody in your family will study with you, prayerfully determine what you can do to compensate. The Lord will guide you.

wiser than I was—and I hope that you and I will do all we can to help our families study the gospel together.



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX
Studying with Your Family

Assignment #1

If your family does not regularly study the scriptures together, talk to your parents about organizing daily family scripture study. Discuss how long you should read together and what time of day would work best. Help your family have scripture study for twenty-one days in a row.

Assignment #2

If your family already has regular scripture study, prayerfully determine what you could do to be a better participant. Follow through on the promptings you receive.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Getting More from Your Scripture Classes



"It's important that you know this. The inspiration you may draw from [your church meetings] depends only partly in the effort [the speakers] have expended in the preparation of their sermons. It depends much more considerably on what preparation you have made for their message."—Elder Boyd K. Packer¹

The story is told of a woman on a two-hour layover in a busy airport. She bought a bag of cookies and a book to help pass the time. She became engrossed in her book and was startled when she looked up and saw the man next to her reach into her bag of cookies and take one. She glared at him and took a cookie out of the bag. He simply smiled at her.

For the next several minutes the man continued to take cookies from the bag. Every time he took one, she did too. Finally, there was just one cookie left. He took it out of the bag, broke it in half, and gave one of the halves to her.

The woman was furious and was about to say something when she heard her flight being called. She went to the gate, amazed that the man had been so rude. Once she was settled into the flight, she

reached into her bag to get her book. As she did, she found the bag of cookies she had bought. Suddenly she realized that *she* had been eating *his* cookies!²

Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation—one in which you thought something is “their fault” when really it was your own? I think this may happen to us in religious classes or in sacrament meetings. A person might think: *This class is so booring! I can't learn anything from this teacher!* People who think this make it seem as though what they get out class depends 100% on the teacher. But this is not true!

One time a man asked President Spencer W. Kimball, “What do you do when you find yourself in a boring sacrament meeting?” There was silence for a moment, and then President Kimball said, “I don't know. I've never been in one.”³

What do you think about that? You may think, *He's never been to my ward!* (Just kidding!)

Elder Gene R. Cook, who related this story, remarked, “That's interesting, isn't it? That tells me that the real meeting was between President Kimball and the Lord . . . If you enter a meeting with your heart prepared to be written upon by the Lord, then that will happen.”⁴

Notice the sentence, “If you enter a meeting with your heart prepared to be written upon by the Lord, then that will happen.” What that means to me is that when I go to a meeting, it is my responsibility to make sure that my heart is prepared to be written on by the Lord. When you go to a meeting, it is your responsibility to have your heart prepared.

One of the saddest things I see is a young person, sitting in sacrament meeting, his or her head resting on the back of the bench in

front of them, bored out of his or her mind, sleeping or wishing they could be asleep, totally tuned out to what is being said or sung.

How can you prevent that from happening to you? How can you prepare your heart to be written upon by the Lord? There are many ways; I will suggest eight: Remember—you can choose to make your scripture classes spiritually POWERFUL:

Pray for yourself and the speaker

Open your scriptures

Write what you learn

Be Early

Raise your hand to participate

Sit toward the **F**ront

Be **U**nselfish

Look for applications

First, **P**ray for yourself, as well as the teacher, that both of you will have the Spirit. Elder Henry B. Eyring said, “You may not know who your Sunday School teacher . . . will be next Sunday, . . . but you can . . . pray specifically that the Holy Ghost will come to them as they prepare to teach and again as you sit at their feet to listen. . . . I know it works. . . . I think you can have faith and confidence that you will never need to hear an unprofitable sermon or live in a ward where you are not fed spiritually.”⁵

One young woman shared the following experience: “[I attended a class] and thought it was the most boring class. [I said that] I wasn’t going to go to it again . . . [but I did, and I] prayed for that speaker . . . and I also prayed for myself that I [could] . . . get what I needed



Have POWERFUL Family Study!

You can also use this same formula to make your family scripture study more powerful!

to learn from his teachings. I had two pages of notes from his class and learned a lot.”

Second, **Open** your scriptures and turn to the verses you are learning about. You will find that you learn much more if you are ready to mark in your own scriptures the verses that are most meaningful to you. Sometimes it can be tempting to not bring your own scriptures to class. Don't do that! Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught, “The more class members read their scriptural reading assignments . . . [and] bring their scriptures to class, . . . the more will be their inspiration, growth, and joy as they try to solve their personal concerns and challenges.”⁶

Third, **Write** down the things you learn. In a school class you would take notes if you expected to really learn, right? A scripture class works the same way. Elder Richard G. Scott taught, “Were I a teacher of young students, I would have them commit to apply this principle: I will seek to learn by what I hear, see and feel. *I will write down the things I learn and will do them.* . . . Every student who consistently does that will be blessed by inspired direction in life.”⁷ When we make the effort to have paper and pen ready to take notes, we send a signal to the Lord that we want to learn. Remember too that the most important thing is to write down the *feelings* you receive from the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, be **Early**. When I arrive early, I feel more prepared to learn. I have time to pray and meditate. The following quote also helped me understand the importance of arriving early:

We have noticed a growing trend in the Church, but especially among young adults, to arrive late at sacrament meeting, priesthood, and other meetings. . . . Occasionally, there may be a legitimate excuse for not arriving on time (such as an emergency appendectomy), but in most cases it is because you

simply plan poorly or do not care enough. The ideal would be to arrive five or ten minutes early so you can sit in the chapel quietly listening to the prelude music and preparing yourselves to worship. . . . When you arrive late, it not only interrupts the reverence of others, but it is a sign of your own disrespect and apathy.⁸

Fifth, **Raise your hand**—participate and share your thoughts and feelings on what you are learning. Elder Richard G. Scott explained, “When you . . . raise [your] hand to respond to a question, [you] signify to the Holy Spirit [your] willingness to learn. That use of [your] moral agency will allow the Spirit to motivate and give [you] more powerful guidance . . . Participation allows [you] to *experience* being led by the Spirit.”⁹

Sixth, sit toward the **Front**. Not only does sitting toward the front help *prepare* your heart, I believe it says something about *where* your heart is. Elder Henry B. Eyring once asked President Kimball how he could know if a person had truly repented. One of the questions President Kimball asked about the person’s conduct was, “Does he sit [toward the] front [in his church meetings]?”¹⁰

I’m not saying that if you sit in the back, you are a sinner, but just as President Kimball observed, when you arrive and where you sit does signal the interest you have in being in the meeting and probably your willingness to participate spiritually. Hanging out on the back row, passing notes, whispering, and text-messaging friends isn’t exactly the way to gain the most from the meeting. In my experience as a teacher, I’ve noticed that in most cases, those who want to learn the most sit toward the front. Those who do not want to participate sit toward the back. Where you choose to sit makes a difference!

Seventh, be **Unselfish**. Sometimes people go to class with the

idea, “What can *I* get out of this class. What is in it for *me*?” Instead, ask yourself, “How can I help *others*? *Who in this class* needs help?” There may be a student who needs a ride, or someone who nobody sits next to. Maybe your teacher needs help. Perhaps he or she is just learning how to teach teenagers and is actually intimidated by the class! When we unselfishly help others, we learn ourselves. You can also think about how you could teach what you are learning about to others. Elder Boyd K. Packer explained, “If we learn in order to serve, to give to others, . . . we will find the acquisition of subject matter much easier.”¹¹

Finally, **Look** for how you can apply what you are learning.



Ask Yourself . . .

If you find yourself getting bored in church or seminary, ask yourself if you are making it a POWERFUL experience:

Have I Prayed for myself and the teacher?

Have I Opened my scriptures?

Am I Writing down what I learn?

Am I Early to class?

Have I Raised my hand to participate?

Am I in the Front of the class?

Am I Unselfishly looking for opportunities to help others?

Am I Looking for ways I can apply what I'm learning?

Studies have shown that we learn best when we *do* what we are learning about. If you are in a class on forgiveness, think about who in your life you could forgive. If the subject is prayer, ask yourself, “What will I do today to make my prayers more meaningful?”

We have the opportunity to participate in some wonderful scripture classes. If you are in high school, please attend seminary—even if seems too early or difficult to fit it into your schedule. Make it happen. Personally study the book of scripture you are learning about in class. If you are a young single

adult, please go to institute. Attending these religious classes provides you with a significant opportunity to increase your spiritual strength. President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “We urge all for whom [seminary and institute are] available to take advantage of it. We do not hesitate to promise that your knowledge of the gospel will be increased, your faith will be strengthened, and you will develop wonderful associations and friendships.”¹²

Speaking of church classes, did you know that you can take free online scripture classes through BYU? Check them out at <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/courses/freecourses.cfm>

What we get out of church meetings, including seminary and institute classes, is our responsibility. As President Spencer W.



A Three-Step Process

The following three-step process has helped me accept responsibility for my gospel learning. It goes like this:

Have a complaint.

Turn it into a statement of what I want.

Take responsibility for making what I want happen.

For example, let's say I'm in a Sunday School class and I find myself thinking, "This is so boring!" I take that complaint and turn it into a statement of what I want. "I want to be spiritually fed." Then I take responsibility for making that happen. I start taking notes, I pray for the teacher, I get out my scriptures, and so forth. Suppose I'm thinking, "This is so boring!" There's my complaint. So I ask "What do I want?" And I think, "I want to be home in bed, not at church!" Then I have to take responsibility for the fact that my desires are not in harmony with what God wants them to be.

Kimball has observed: “If the service is a failure to you, you have failed. No one can worship for you; you must do your own waiting upon the Lord.”¹³

To paraphrase Elder David A. Bednar, it’s not about “going to class.” It’s about getting the scriptures taught in that class to sink deep in your heart.¹⁴

Go beyond just showing up. Make your scripture classes **POWERFUL!**



YOUR SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX

Getting More from Your Scripture Classes

Assignment #1

Write a talk on the topic, “How we can get more out of our scripture classes.” Give your talk in church or to a family member or friend.

Assignment #2

For one month, practice making your scripture classes a **POWERFUL** experience. Pray for yourself and the teacher, Open your scriptures, Write what you learn, be Early, Raise your hand, sit toward the Front, be Unselfish, and Look for application. Do you notice a difference in what you get out of your classes?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

How Is YOUR Scripture Study? (A Quiz)



Is your scripture study where it should be? Take the following quiz and find out! Instructions: Select the answer that best fits you.

1. I study the scriptures on my own at least
 - a. Ten minutes a day
 - b. Thirty minutes or more each day
 - c. Twice a week
 - d. Once a year

2. When I study the scriptures I _____ pray for guidance.
 - a. Sometimes
 - b. Always
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Never

3. I usually study the scriptures
 - a. Anywhere
 - b. In a quiet, secluded place
 - c. While watching television

4. I have read _____ of the talks from the most recent general conference.
 - a. Half
 - b. All
 - c. One
 - d. What is general conference?
5. When I study the scriptures I usually have
 - a. All four books of scripture
 - b. A marking pen or pencil
 - c. The remote for the TV to change channels
 - d. All of the above except c
6. I study the scriptures
 - a. Because I know I should
 - b. Because I love God and His words
 - c. Because I feel guilty if I don't
 - d. To impress the people in my Sunday School class
7. The little letters and things at the bottom of the pages are called
 - a. Scripture notes, and I always use them
 - b. Footnotes, and I sometimes use them
 - c. Footnotes, and I always use them
 - d. Scripture notes, and I sometimes use them
8. I have at least _____ scriptures memorized.
 - a. Three (plus the Articles of Faith)
 - b. All 100 scripture mastery passages plus others
 - c. Two
 - d. I'm not good at memorizing, so I don't even try

9. For me, music and scripture study are
 - a. Two things I enjoy
 - b. Related, since I memorize hymns because they are scripture
 - c. Related, since my music drives away the Spirit and the scriptures bring it back
 - d. Two things I detest

10. A prophet named Joseph is mentioned in the
 - a. Bible
 - b. Book of Mormon
 - c. Pearl of Great Price
 - d. All of the above

11. As I read the scriptures, I usually
 - a. Ponder and pray about what I read
 - b. Write down spiritual impressions I received
 - c. Throw them at my dog
 - d. All of the above except c

12. When I go to my scripture classes (such as Sunday School), I
 - a. Bring my own scriptures and follow along with the class
 - b. Do my best to participate
 - c. Complain that the class is boring
 - d. All of the above except c

13. When I go to my scripture classes (such as Sunday School), I
 - a. Come late
 - b. Talk to my friends
 - c. Pray for the teacher
 - d. All of the above except c

14. In addition to searching the scriptures sequentially, I also search

- a. My textbooks
- b. The scriptures topically
- c. My favorite novels
- d. All of the above

15. I liken the scriptures

- a. To my friends' lives
- b. To my life
- c. I actually don't understand the scriptures

16. Principles are

- a. Good things
- b. Statements of truth I gain from the scriptures
- c. The people at school that get me in trouble
- d. All of the above

17. I study the scriptures

- a. By myself
- b. In classes with others
- c. With my family or roommates
- d. All of the above

18. If someone asks me a doctrinal question, I

- a. Tell them to talk to the missionaries
- b. Call my dad
- c. Open my scriptures and show them the answer
- d. Tell them they don't really want to know about my church

19. Chemish wrote part of the

- a. Bible
- b. Pearl of Great Price

- c. Book of Mormon
 - d. This is a trick question, there is no such person
20. When we have family scripture study I usually
- a. Grumble, but come
 - b. Enthusiastically participate
 - c. Sleep
 - d. Run away

Total Your Score

Questions #1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 20: a = 2 points, b = 4 points,
c = 1 point, d = 0 points

Questions #3 and 15: a = 1, b = 4, c = 0

Questions #5, 11, and 12: a = 2, b = 2, c = 0, d = 4

Question #7: a = 1, b = 2, c = 4, d = 0

Question #10: a = 1, b = 1, c = 1, d = 4

Questions #13 and 19: a = 0, b = 0, c = 4, d = 0

Question #14: a = 0, b = 2, c = 0, d = 2

Question #16: a = 1, b = 4, c = 0, d = 1

Question #17: a = 2, b = 1, c = 1, d = 4

Question #18: a = 1, b = 1, c = 4, d = 0

If your score is between 70 and 80: Great work. Keep it up!

If your score is between 55 and 70: You're doing well, how can you improve?

If your score is between 40 and 55: It looks like you're trying, what are some goals you will set to improve your study of the scriptures?

If your score is below 40: You should consider reading this book again! What are some ways you could improve your scripture study?

Conclusion



“Behold, I speak unto you.”
—*Doctrine and Covenants 23:1*

In the Introduction I wrote about a list of scriptures I compiled that had helped me overcome my fears. The last scripture that appears on that list is Doctrine and Covenants 23:1, which says, “Behold, I speak unto you, Oliver, a few words. Behold, thou art blessed, and art under no condemnation. But beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation.” I’m not sure what that verse has to do with overcoming fear, but I’m glad I included it—because it reminds me of one way I can apply the scriptures to my life.

On the piece of paper I wrote on, I changed one word: *Oliver*. I wrote instead, “Behold, I speak unto you, John . . .”

You see, when I was about ten years old, I heard a man named Paul Rytting give a talk in sacrament meeting in which he suggested substituting your own name for the name of the person in the scriptures. Consider the following examples:

“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in

the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: [INSERT YOUR NAME], thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abraham 3:23).

“When [I] fall [I] shall rise again” (D&C 117:13).

“[I] believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, [I] may say that [I] follow the admonition of Paul—[I] believe all things, [I] hope all things, [I] have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, [I] seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13).

“Behold, it is expedient in me that my servant [INSERT YOUR NAME] should write and keep a regular history” (D&C 47:1).

This idea from Brother Rytting works today! Although there are obviously some verses where this technique might not apply, we can take the messages from the scriptures and liken them to ourselves. The fact is the Lord can and does speak to *you* personally through the scriptures.

Now will you or I ever learn all there is to know about the scriptures? The answer is no. The scriptures are deep enough to continue to provide spiritual nourishment no matter how old you are and how many times you have read them. The following quotes assure me that all of us still have much to learn:

*“In the last few days, I have found things [in the scriptures] I had never seen there before because, in my extremity, the Lord showed me things that He had prepared long ago to help me.”*¹

*“Since last October I have reflected repeatedly upon the phrase ‘the tender mercies of the Lord.’ Through personal study, observation, pondering, and prayer, I believe I have come to better understand . . . the Lord’s tender mercies.”*²

“It is not unusual for one of us in the Quorum of the Twelve to say, ‘I saw this teaching more clearly than ever before in this verse of scripture.’”³

If these mighty apostles continue to find new depth in their scripture study, surely there is plenty more for you and me to discover. As we study with specific purposes in mind, our knowledge will grow in ways we may not currently understand.

I love the thought expressed by President Spencer W. Kimball that we need to discover and rediscover the scriptures throughout our lives.⁴ I take that to mean that we need to constantly improve our scripture reading so that it is truly nourishing.

I hope the ideas in this book will help you continually ignite your scripture study—not just once, but again and again. If you find yourself in a scripture study rut, try using a different method of study. For example, if you’re tired of reading from start to finish, try some topical study. If you’ve looked up all the topics you’re interested in, look for powerful one-liners. Try going to the scriptures with some questions in mind, or make a more focused effort to find principles and liken the scriptures to your life. Studying the scriptures takes consistent effort, and using variety in your approach may help as well.

I conclude with the two quotes that have inspired me to make my scripture study more of a feasting experience—I hope they do the same for you.

I plead with you to return to the scriptures in some way that opens your mind and heart to be taught. . . . The Savior gave us the scriptures, paid by prophets at a price we cannot measure, so that we could know Him. Lose yourself in them. Decide now to read more and more effectively than you have ever done before.⁵

The scriptures are called “the words of life” and . . . when you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.⁶ . . . The most important [thing] you can do . . . is to immerse yourselves in the scriptures.⁷

I hope that when it comes to the scriptures, we’ll always want a second helping!

THE SCRIPTURE TOOLBOX CERTIFICATION

Have you worked to master the tools in this book? I would love to send you a certificate to recognize your efforts. If you have met the following three requirements, let me know, and I will mail you a special certificate. Here are the requirements:

1. Do at least one of the assignments for each chapter in the book.
2. Teach a family member or friend about each chapter in the book.
3. Write me a short note telling me which assignment was most helpful to you and why.

You can send mail to me at:

John Hilton III
c/o Deseret Book Company
Publishing Department
P. O. Box 30178
Salt Lake City, Utah 84130

I hope to hear from you!

APPENDIX A

Practice Activities



Finding One-Liners

Read the following verses and write down a one-liner that you find from the verse. Also write down why you think this one-liner is important.

Example: John 21:16: “He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”

One-liner: *Feed my sheep.* This phrase helps me remember to strengthen others.

2 Samuel 11:1: “And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.”

One-liner: _____

1 Corinthians 3:16: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

One-liner: _____

Doctrine and Covenants 9:8: “But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.”

One-liner: _____

Enos 1:4: “And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.”

One-liner: _____

Moses 6:32: “And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good.”

One-liner: _____

3 Nephi 23:11: “And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?”

One-liner: _____

Ephesians 5:8: “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

One-liner: _____

Genesis 39:7–8: “And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand.”

One-liner: _____

Nehemiah 6:3: “And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?”

One-liner: _____

Alma 34:38: “That ye contend no more against the Holy Ghost, but that ye receive it, and take upon you the name of Christ; that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and worship God, in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you.”

One-liner: _____

Matching Principles

Look up each of the following verses and match them to one of the principles below.

Example: 1 Samuel 16:23 goes with the principle “When I listen to good music, I will be more likely to feel the Holy Ghost.”

1 Samuel 16:23	<u> C </u>
John 7:17	<u> </u>
1 Nephi 18:11–12	<u> </u>
Doctrine and Covenants 59:6	<u> </u>
Doctrine and Covenants 82:3	<u> </u>
Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–11	<u> </u>
Alma 39:4; 39:13; 42:30	<u> </u>
Alma 48:7–9	<u> </u>
Matthew 12:36	<u> </u>
Alma 57:21–22	<u> </u>
Alma 37:37	<u> </u>
Alma 59:9	<u> </u>

- A. If I obey with exactness, I will be successful.
- B. If I do bad things, I will be less able to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost.
- C. When I listen to good music, I will be more likely to feel the Holy Ghost.
- D. It is easier to maintain good habits than to get into bad habits and then try to switch back to good habits.
- E. I should strengthen myself in the areas in which I am weak.
- F. If I want to know if a teaching is true, I should live the teaching—then I will know of its truthfulness.
- G. I will be held accountable for the things I say.
- H. I should not excuse or justify myself based on the actions of others.

- I. If I do not forgive, then I have committed a greater sin than the person who offended me.
- J. Where much is given, much is required.
- K. When I wake up in the morning, I should offer a prayer of gratitude.
- L. I should not do anything that comes close to committing sexual sin.

Finding Principles

Read the following verses and write down a principle that you find from each verse. You can find more than one. (For examples see chapter ten.)

Alma 24:17–18

And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords, and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth.

And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood; and this they did, vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother they would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness they would labor abundantly with their hands.

Your Principle(s)

Alma 14:26–28

And Alma cried, saying: How long shall we suffer these great ^aafflictions, O Lord? O Lord, ^bgive us strength according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto ^cdeliverance. And they

broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them.

And it came to pass that so great was their fear that they fell to the earth, and did not obtain the outer door of the ^aprison; and the earth shook mightily, and the walls of the prison were rent in twain, so that they fell to the earth; and the chief judge, and the lawyers, and priests, and teachers, who smote upon Alma and Amulek, were slain by the fall thereof.

And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for the Lord had granted unto them ^apower, according to their faith which was in Christ. And they straightway came forth out of the prison; and they were ^aloosed from their ^bbands; and the prison had fallen to the earth, and every soul within the walls thereof, save it were Alma and Amulek, was slain; and they straightway came forth into the city.

Your Principle(s)

Jacob 2:18–19

But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to ^ado good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to

liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

Your Principle(s)

Asking Questions

There are many questions you can ask yourself while reading the scriptures. As you read the following six verses, try to ask at least one of the following types of questions:

Questions about the context. (What is happening in the scriptures?)

Questions about application. (What can I learn from these verses?)

Questions that put you into the scriptures. (What would it have felt like to have been there?)

Questions you want answered for your personal decision making. (What should I do?)

Write the questions you ask in the margins.

1 Nephi 19:1–6

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them.

And I knew not at the time when I made them that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates; wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those first plates of which I have spoken; wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates.

And after I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord.

Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this have I done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord.

And an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter; and then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have spoken; and this I do that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people.

Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred. And now, if I do err, even did they err of old; not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the weakness which is in me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.

APPENDIX B

Answers to Practice Activities



Answers to Finding One-Liners

Note—*there are many possible answers. I am only giving one—if you found a different one that is okay, too!*

2 Samuel 11:1: “But David tarried.” If I remember the bad things that David did because he tarried, then I can avoid being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

1 Corinthians 3:16: “Ye are the temple of God.” I must know that my body is a temple!

Doctrine and Covenants 9:8: “Study it out in your mind.” When I am faced with an important decision, I need to make the best decision I can and then ask the Lord if I am right.

Enos 1:4: “I kneeled down.” When I pray, I should kneel down.

Moses 6:32: “Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled.” God will help me preach the gospel.

3 Nephi 23:11: “How be it that ye have not written this thing?” I need to write down the spiritual experiences I have, so that the Lord doesn’t ask *me* this question!

Ephesians 5:8: “Walk as children of light.” I need to remember who I am, and act accordingly.

Genesis 39:7–8: “But he refused.” When I am faced with temptation, I should immediately say no!

Nehemiah 6:3: “I am doing a great work.” Because Nehemiah was doing “a great work” he didn’t lower himself to other activities. Being involved in good things can help me avoid bad ones.

Alma 34:38: “Live in thanksgiving daily.” I must always be grateful—*living* in thanksgiving.

Answers to Matching Principles

1 Samuel 16:23	<u>C</u>
John 7:17	<u>F</u>
1 Nephi 18:11–12	<u>B</u>
Doctrine and Covenants 59:6	<u>L</u>
Doctrine and Covenants 82:3	<u>J</u>
Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–11	<u>I</u>
Alma 39:4; 39:13; 42:30	<u>H</u>
Alma 48:7–9	<u>E</u>
Matthew 12:36	<u>G</u>
Alma 57:21–22	<u>A</u>
Alma 37:37	<u>K</u>
Alma 59:9	<u>D</u>

Answers to Finding Principles

Note—because the scriptures contain many principles, you may have found different principles than I did. That is okay!

Alma 24:17–18

Principles I Found:

If I have items that are destructive (bad movies, music) I should get rid of them.

When I repent I should bury my sins “deep in the earth” by making permanent changes in my life.

To fully repent I need to completely turn away from my former sins.

Alma 14:26–28

Principles I Found:

When I cry to the Lord, He will answer me.

When I pray, I should pray for increased strength to handle my trials.

If I make wrong choices, I will feel fear and will not succeed.

Jacob 2:18–19

Principles I Found:

When I am faced with a choice between seeking the world or God, I should put God first.

If I receive riches, then I should use them to bless the lives of others.

Answers to Asking Questions

Note—*you may have written down different questions than I did. That's fine! My hope is that reading the questions I wrote will help clarify what "asking questions" might look like.*

Directions: There are many questions you can ask while reading the scriptures. As you go read the following six verses try to ask at least one of each of the following types of questions:

Questions about the context. (What is happening in the scriptures?)

Questions about application. (What can I learn from these verses?)

Questions that put you into the scriptures. (What would it have felt like to have been there?)

Questions you want answered for your personal decision making. (What should I do?)

Write the questions you ask in the margins.

1 Nephi 19:1–6

1. AND it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them.

Comment: *What can I learn from this?* I can learn that when the Lord commands, I should *do*.

Comment: *Who is writing? When is this taking place? What plates is Nephi talking about?* Nephi is writing; the year is approximately 580 B.C. He's talking about the large plates of Nephi.

Comment: *Is he talking about the same plates or different plates?* Nephi is now talking about the small plates (what we have today as 1 Nephi—Omni), and how the Lord commanded him to make two sets of records.

2. And I knew not at the time when I made them that I should be commanded of the Lord to make these plates; wherefore, the record of my father, and the genealogy of his fathers, and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness are engraven upon those first plates of which I have spoken; wherefore, the things which transpired before I made these plates are, of a truth, more particularly made mention upon the first plates.

Comment: *What can I learn from this?* I can learn that even just as Nephi kept God's commandments, even though he did not know all the reasons he was supposed to make a second set of plates, I can be obedient, even if I don't know all the reasons why.

3. And after I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord.

Comment: Suppose that I began my scripture study asking the question, *What is something I should improve on in my life?* The frequent references to making a record might prompt me to be more serious about keeping a journal.

4. Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this have I done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord.

5. And an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter; and then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have

spoken; and this I do that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people.

6. Nevertheless, I do not write anything upon plates save it be that I think it be sacred.

And now, if I do err, even did they err of old; not that I would excuse myself because of other men, but because of the weakness which is in me, according to the flesh, I would excuse myself.

Comment: *What would it feel like to be Nephi, writing a record that you knew millions would read? What kind of pressure did he feel to write well? I think that Nephi must have felt that he had a weighty calling, not just as a prophet to his people, but as somebody writing to us in the latter days. Thinking about Nephi actually making and writing the plates and taking this assignment seriously, makes me want to read his words more carefully.*

APPENDIX C

Scriptures about Scriptures



Blessings of Scripture Study

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Blessing from Scripture Study</i>
Luke 24:32	And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?	Feeling the Holy Ghost
Rom. 15:4	For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.	Having hope
2 Tim. 3:15	From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.	Wisdom

Blessings of Scripture Study (continued)

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Blessing from Scripture Study</i>
JS-M 1:37	Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived.	Discernment so as not to be deceived
JS-H 1:12	Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart.	Gain needed inspiration
Ps. 19:7	The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.	Conversion, knowledge
2 Tim. 3:16-17	All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.	Instruction and perfection
2 Ne. 3:15	[The scriptures] shall bring my people unto salvation.	Salvation
Alma 37:8	[The scriptures] have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls.	Help us repent and bring the knowledge of God
Alma 37:44	The word of Christ . . . will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss.	Show us how to find eternal happiness

Blessings of Scripture Study (continued)

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Blessing from Scripture Study</i>
Hel. 3:29–30	The word of God . . . shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery . . . And land their . . . immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven.	Avoid the traps of the devil and go to heaven
Hel. 15:7	The holy scriptures . . . leadeth . . . to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart.	Faith, repentance, change of heart
D&C 84:85	Treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man.	You will know what to say when you need it
Deut. 17:19	He shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them.	Learn to respect God, and keep the commandments
D&C 76:19	And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened.	Gain deep spiritual insight

Blessings of Scripture Study (continued)

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Blessing from Scripture Study</i>
2 Ne. 25:23	For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God.	Believe in Christ; draw closer to God
Alma 17:2–3	[They] had searched the scriptures diligently . . . and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.	The ability to preach with power
1 Ne. 15:24	Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.	Protection from the devil
2 Ne. 32:3	The words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.	Guidance in all areas of life

Warnings If We Don't Read the Scriptures

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Scripture</i>	<i>Warning if we don't read</i>
Matt. 22:29	Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.	You will make mistakes
Luke 16:31	If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.	You will be less likely to receive revelation
John 5:47	But if ye believe not [Moses'] writings, how shall ye believe my words?	We will reject the Savior
D&C 41:12	These words are given unto you, and they are pure before me; wherefore, beware how you hold them, for they are to be answered upon your souls in the day of judgment.	We will account at the day of judgment how we treat the scriptures
2 Ne. 33:14	And you that will not . . . respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.	We will be condemned

Admonishments to Study the Scriptures

Deut. 17:19	<i>Read</i> therein all the days of his life
Deut. 31:7	Thou shalt <i>read</i> this law
Josh. 1:8	<i>Meditate</i> therein day and night
2 Kgs. 23:2	<i>Read</i> . . . words of the book of the covenant
Neh. 8:8	<i>Read</i> in the book in the law of God
Ezra 4:10	<i>Search</i> . . . in the book of the records of thy fathers
Psalm 1:2	In his law doth he <i>meditate</i> day and night
Psalm 119:48	I will <i>meditate</i> in thy statutes
Psalm 119:78	I will <i>meditate</i> in thy precepts
Isa. 34:16	<i>Seek</i> ye out of the book of the Lord
John 5:39	<i>Search</i> the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life
Acts 17:11	<i>Searched</i> the scriptures daily
1 Tim. 4:15	<i>Meditate</i> upon these things
2 Tim. 2:15	<i>Study</i> . . . the word of truth
1 Ne. 15:25	<i>Give heed</i> unto the word of the Lord
Jacob 7:23	They <i>searched</i> the scriptures.
W of M 1:3	I <i>searched</i> among the records
Mosiah 1:7	Remember to <i>search</i> them diligently
Alma 14:1	The people . . . began to repent, and to <i>search</i> scriptures
Alma 17:2	They had <i>searched</i> the scriptures diligently
Alma 33:2	Ye ought to <i>search</i> the scriptures
3 Ne. 10:14	He that hath the scriptures, let him <i>search</i> them

- 3 Ne. 20:11 They are written . . . therefore *search* them
- 3 Ne. 23:1 Ye ought to *search* these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye *search these things diligently*
- 3 Ne. 23:5 *Search* the prophets
- D&C 1:37 *Search* these commandments
- D&C 11:22 *Study* my word
- D&C 26:1 Let your time be devoted to the *studying* of the scriptures
- D&C 33:16 The holy scriptures are given of me for *your instruction*
- D&C 88:18 *Seek ye diligently* and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; *seek learning, even by study and also by faith*

The Writing and Preservation of the Scriptures Come from God

- 2 Ne. 29:11 men . . . shall write the words which *I speak*
- Mosiah 1:5 kept and *preserved* by the *hand of God*
- Alma 37:4 kept and *preserved* by the *hand of the Lord*
- Alma 37:14 which *he* will keep and *preserve* for a wise purpose
- Neh. 8:8 read in the book in the *law of God*
- Isa. 34:16 Seek ye out of the book *of the Lord*
- D&C 11:22 study *my* word
- D&C 33:16 holy scriptures are given *of me* for your instruction

- JS-M 1:37 whoso treasureth up *my* word, shall not be
deceived
- Deut. 8:3 man doth not live by bread only, but by every
word that *proceedeth out of the mouth of the
LORD* doth man live
- Ezek. 37:16 *write* upon it, for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim
- Rev. 21:5 he said unto me, *Write*: for these words are true
- 2 Ne. 29:11–12 write the words which *I speak*
- D&C 76:80 *Lord commanded us* to write
- D&C 90:32 *write* this commandment
- Moses 2:1 write the words which *I speak*
- D&C 18:34 These words are not of men nor of man, *but of
me*; wherefore, you shall testify *they are of me* and
not of man; *For it is my voice* which speaketh
them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit
unto you, and *by my power* you can read them
one to another; and save it were by my power
you could not have them; Wherefore, *you can tes-
tify that you have heard my voice, and know my
words*

APPENDIX D

Powerful Talks on Scripture Study



The following talks all come from the *Ensign* or the *New Era* and can be accessed through <http://lds.org>. Click on “Gospel Library” and then “Magazines.”

Bednar, David A. “Because We Have Them before Our Eyes,” *New Era*, April 2006.

Benson, Ezra Taft. “The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, January 1988.

———. “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of our Religion,” *Ensign*, November 1986.

———. “The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986.

Eyring, Henry B. “A Discussion on Scripture Study,” *Ensign*, July 2005.

Hunter, Howard W. “Reading the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, November 1979.

Jensen, Jay E. “Remember Also the Promises,” *Ensign*, November 1992, 80.

Ludlow, Daniel H., Luene L. Ludlow, and Michelle Ludlow. “Taking Note: Marking the Footnotes in the New LDS Edition of the Bible,” *New Era*, June 1981.

Packer, Boyd K. “The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ—Plain and Precious Things,” *Ensign*, May 2005.

———. “Using the New Scriptures,” *Ensign*, December 1985.

Scott, Richard G. “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” *Ensign*, November 1993.

The following talks are from Church Educational System fire-side addresses, and can be had at <http://ldsces.org/cesfiresides.asp> or <http://speeches.byu.edu>

Ballard, M. Russell. “Be Strong in the Lord, and in the Power of His Might,” 3 March 2002.

Bednar, David A. “A Reservoir of Living Water,” 4 February 2007.

Tanner, Susan W. “The Scriptures—More Precious Than Gold and Sweeter Than Honey,” 11 September 2005.

The following talk is from a Brigham Young University-Idaho Devotional, and can be found at http://www.byui.edu/Presentations/Transcripts/Devotionals/1998_01_06_Bednar.htm

Bednar, David A. “Understanding the Importance of Scripture Study,” 6 January 1998.

In addition, the following two books have significantly influenced my scripture study and helped me in the writing of this book:

Cook, Gene R. *Searching the Scriptures*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997.

Jensen, Jay E. *Treasure Up the Word*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997.

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Chapter One: Why Study the Scriptures?

1. Janet Thomas, "The End Is Not Yet," *New Era*, July 1986, 18.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, "Studying the Scriptures," fireside given November 24, 1985.
3. Tamara L. Johnson, "Never Fear," *New Era*, September 1998, 51.
4. Wendy L. Watson, "Let Your Spirit Take the Lead," in *The Power of His Redemption: Talks from the 2003 BYU Women's Conference* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 326.
5. David A. Bednar, "Understanding the Importance of Scripture Study," Ricks College, 6 January 1998.
6. Howard W. Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," *Ensign*, November 1979, 64.

Chapter Two: Making Time for Scripture Study

1. Howard W. Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," *Ensign*, November 1979, 64.
2. Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," 64.
3. Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," 64; emphasis added.
4. Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," 64.

5. Harold B. Lee, *Teachings of Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints), 59.

6. Thomas S. Monson, "The Search for Jesus," *Ensign*, December 1990, 4.

7. Boyd K. Packer, "Using the New Scriptures," *Ensign*, December 1985, 49 (emphasis added).

8. M. Russell Ballard, "Be Strong in the Lord, and in the Power of His Might," CES Fireside for Young Adults, 3 March 2002.

Chapter Three: Go PRO

1. *Preach My Gospel*, 17.

2. Howard W. Hunter, "Reading the Scriptures," *Ensign*, November 1979, 64.

3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Life's Obligations," *Ensign*, February, 1999, 5.

4. Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 151.

5. *Preach My Gospel*, 17.

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1. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, November 1986, 7.

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Chapter Six: Using the Scripture Study Aids

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3. LDS Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Prayer,” 753.
4. Howard W. Hunter, “Eternal Investments,” Address to Religious Educators, 10 February 1989.

Chapter Eight: One-Liners

1. Talk given by Neal A. Maxwell, “Unto This Very Purpose,” 5.
2. Jay E. Jensen, *Treasure Up the Word* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 95–96.
3. Talk given by Neal A. Maxwell, “Unto This Very Purpose,” 4–5.

Chapter Nine: Principles, Part I

1. Marion G. Romney, “Records of Great Worth,” *Ensign*, September 1980, 4.
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3. *For the Strength of Youth*, 16.
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6. *For the Strength of Youth*, 32.

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3. Scott, “Acquiring Spiritual Knowledge,” 86.

Chapter Eleven: Asking Questions

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Studying and Teaching the Old Testament,” *Ensign*, January 2002, 32.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Living by Scriptural Guidance,” *Ensign*, November 2000, 18.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “A Discussion on Scripture Study,” *Ensign*, July 2005, 22.

4. Robert D. Hales, "Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation," *Ensign*, November 2006, 26–27.

5. Dallin H. Oaks, "Studying the Scriptures," fireside given 24 November 1985.

Chapter Twelve: Answering Questions

1. David A. Bednar, "Because We Have Them before Our Eyes," *New Era*, April 2006, 4.

2. Bednar, "Because We Have Them before Our Eyes," 4–5.

Chapter Thirteen: Searching Topically

1. M. Russell Ballard, "Be Strong in the Lord, and in the Power of His Might," CES Fireside for Young Adults, 3 March 2002.

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Chapter Fourteen: Patterns and Themes

1. David A. Bednar, "Understanding the Importance of Scripture Study," Ricks College Devotional, 6 January 1998.

2. David A. Bednar, "A Reservoir of Living Water," CES Fireside for Young Adults, 4 February 2007.

3. David A. Bednar, "Come unto Christ," Ricks College Religious Symposium, 29 January 2000.

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1. Elizabeth Cottrell, "Scripture Lifeline: V.I.S.," *New Era*, March 1990, 26.

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3. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 7.
4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “To Men of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, November 2002, 58.
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About the Author



John Hilton III is grateful for teachers who when he was a youth, taught him to feast on the scriptures. A religious educator with degrees from Brigham Young and Harvard Universities, he has published several titles with Deseret Book, including *The Dog Ate My Scriptures* and *I Lost My Phone Number, Can I Have Yours?* He and his wife, Lani, have four children and live in Miami, Florida.

For more information, visit <http://johnhiltoniii.com>

