

THE SCRIPTURES, "GREAT RESERVOIRS OF SPIRITUAL WATER"

from **MORMON DOCTRINE** by Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Any message that comes from God to man by the power of the Holy Ghost is scripture. If it is written and accepted by the Church, it becomes part of the scriptures or standard works: The Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. **These four volumes of scriptures are the standards, the measuring rods, the gauges by which all things are judged.** Since they are the will, mind, word, and voice of the Lord, **THEY ARE TRUE.** The truth of all things is measured by the scriptures. Latter-day revelation identifies scripture as that which is spoken under the influence of the Holy Ghost (D&C 68:1-4)

from **TEACHINGS OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH: Harold B. Lee, Chapter 7**

A. Why we should study the scriptures.

Just as water was and is today essential to the physical life, so is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ essential to the spiritual life of God's children. . . Great reservoirs of spiritual water, called scriptures, have been provided in this day and have been safeguarded that all might partake and be spiritually fed. . . The scriptures are purest at their source; the purest word of God is that which comes from the lips of the living prophets.

B. How study of the Book of Mormon helps us develop and maintain our spirituality.

If one wants to get close to God, he can do it by reading the Book of Mormon.

C. Ways in which the scriptures provide a standard of truth.

If we hear someone teaching something that is contrary to what is in the scriptures, each of us may know whether the things spoken are false--it is as simple as that. But the unfortunate thing is that so many of us are not reading the scriptures. We do not know what is in them.

D. Why we should use the scriptures when we teach the gospel.

We are not set apart to teach notions or guesses at truth. We are set apart to teach the principles of the gospel as found in the four standard works. . . There are those who have seemed to forget that the most powerful weapons the Lord has given us against all that is evil are, by His own declarations, the plain, simple doctrines of salvation as found in the scriptures. But if you do not know the standards, you have no adequate measure of truth.

E. How we grow in testimony and spirituality by diligent study of the scriptures.

If you're not reading the scriptures daily, your testimonies are growing thinner, your spirituality isn't increasing.

- Let there be study of the scriptures at least thirty minutes of each day.
- Allow yourself an hour of prayerful meditation where you can tune in with God and discuss problems that are too much for human understanding, too great for human strength.
- Let no day pass without reading from these sacred books.

from **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES: BRINGING POWER TO YOUR PERSONAL AND FAMILY STUDY**
by Elder Gene R. Cook

Why do we struggle so much with ourselves and our families to read as regularly as we ought to and to search the scriptures?

- The Lord says no man can serve two masters. Jesus repeatedly submitted His will to the will of the Father. Often we pit our will against the Father's will.
- We often feel too busy.
- The scriptures are difficult to understand; it's hard to learn what they are really saying.
- Little things get in the way. You don't notice that studying scripture would take care of the little things.
- Television or computers. We are too busy using our time elsewhere.
- We are afraid of the scriptures. We don't understand their language.
- We've heard all that scriptures says before. We've read it, and, besides, the books are too long.

These excuses can be boiled down to just two:

UNBELIEF--deep down many don't believe that scriptures can help us solve problems we are facing. If we had faith, we would be reading them more.

PRIDE--This attitude says, I don't want to admit to others how little I know, so I pretend I already know enough, without anyone finding out how unskilled I am with the scriptures.

The Lord has given us an answer to each of these objections:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26)

The Lord will bless us with understandings, with answers, with impressions as we search his word with diligence. We need to have our minds fully engaged in the reading process.

PONDERING: A good way to explain the principle of pondering is to use an example like the following scripture:

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. —Ether 12:27

How do you ponder that verse?

- Look up cross references--*weakness* or *humble* or *grace* or *sufficient*.
- Use the Topical Guide--Find other scriptures using the above words.
- Pull the verse apart into small phrases which you can then examine in your mind. "If men come unto me. . ."
How does one come unto Christ? Is it just a matter of getting baptized or making covenants? Or must we also come unto Him with all our hearts?
- Pondering is a form of prayer. Pondering and prayer are so tightly linked that when I start to ponder, I automatically offer a silent prayer: "Help me understand this, Heavenly Father. Help me to know what this means. I'm anxious to change. Help me to understand what I should do next."

ASK QUESTIONS AS YOU READ

The scriptures are an answer book. Every verse has one or more answers to important questions. You must ask questions, over and over again to combine the Lord's answers with the right questions to learn more deeply.

Using Ether 12:27 again, "***If men will come unto me...***" (see above);

... I will show unto them":

How will the Lord "show unto" me? When will he "show unto" me? Why would he show something to me? Has he shown me something already and I didn't pay attention?

... I give unto men weakness":

What is weakness? How can I find out? Do I have that? Have I always had that? Do I have weakness I'm not even aware of? How do I get rid of it? Why does it say weakness instead of weaknesses? Is there a difference? Why would the Lord, who loves me, give me weakness anyway?

... that they may be humble":

What is humility? Why does the Lord want me to be humble? How can I know when I'm humble? What do I need to do differently to have the humility the Lord desires in me?

... my grace is sufficient for all men":

What is grace? How do I obtain more of it? What does it mean to have "sufficient" grace?

SEEKING PATTERNS in the scriptures helps us to search them more deeply. It gives greater understanding of how the Lord speaks, and it helps us to see more clearly how the scriptures are constructed.

Pattern #1: **The Lord's Definitions**: **Truth** = "Truth is a knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come (D&C 93:24). Now when you read *truth*, you'll understand what He had in mind.

Humility = Having an awareness of our dependence on Christ.

Chains of hell = Alma 12:11--"And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. How this is what is meant by the **chains of hell**."

Use of Be verb--(is, are, am, was, were) = Indicates that verse is going to give a definition. "Truth is a knowledge of things as they are. . ."

Pattern #2: **Doctrinal Lists**: Verses give excellent lists in answer to questions.

Lamoni's father asked, "How do I obtain eternal life? How do I become born again?" Aaron answers:

- if thou desirest this thing
- if thou wilt bow down before God...call on his name in faith
- if thou wilt repent of all thy sins----**THEN** shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

Pattern #3: **Cause and Effect**--If you will do your part by keeping my commandments, here's what I will do."

Pattern #4: **If and Then**--"*If* men come unto me, I will show them their weaknesses. . . *then* I will make weak things strong"

Pattern #5: Words for **Emphasis, Attention, or Focus**--"*It came to pass*" or "*Behold*" or "*even*."

Pattern #6: **Antecedents**--(The noun the pronoun stands for): "*It* is a hard thing which I have required of them, but behold I have not required *it* of them; *it* is a commandment of the Lord (1 Ne. 3:5)

Pattern #7: **Literal Reading**: The scriptures are literal. We must remember that.

Pattern #8: **Summary Phrases**--"*and thus we see*" gives us the bottom line, the moral.

Pattern #9: **Similes**: "The desert shall blossom as a rose."

Pattern #10: **Absolutes**--(such as *always, never, all, none, every* and so forth) The Lord means these precisely.

CAUTION: I have given these patterns because they've been helpful to me, but what if you lived and died and didn't know anything about these patterns? It would not matter **because if you will be prayerful, and if you will humble yourself, the Lord will lead you along, and he will give you what you need to know.**

**HUMBLE YOURSELF AND PRAY AS YOU READ THE SCRIPTURES.
If you will do that, the Lord will teach you the rest.**