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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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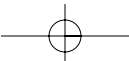
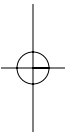
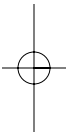
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You probably read the scriptures every day, or at least try to. Have you ever found yourself reading the scriptures, but not really getting anything out of it? The purpose of this book is to explain how you can deepen your scripture study. Written 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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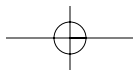
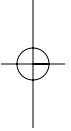
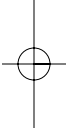
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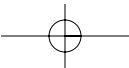
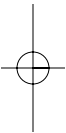
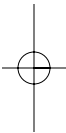
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Introduction



"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

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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.

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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

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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!

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

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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.

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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.”

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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).

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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.

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