Scripture Study Methods and Skills

Name substitution: To help you relate doctrines and principles from the scriptures to your life, substitute your name for a name in the scriptures. Try using this scripture study skill with Peter’s name in Matthew 16:15–17.

Cause and effect: To help you identify gospel principles in the scriptures, look for “if–then” and “because–therefore” relationships. Try using this skill with Matthew 6:14–15.

Scripture lists: The scriptures often contain lists of things such as instructions or warnings. When you find lists, consider numbering each element. Try using this skill with Galatians 5:22–23.

Contrasts: The scriptures often contrast ideas, events, and people. These contrasts emphasize gospel principles. Look for contrasts in single verses, in chapters, and across chapters and books. Try this skill with Matthew 5:14–16.

Visualization: Look for descriptive details that can help you create a mental picture as you read. Imagine being present at certain events. This can strengthen your testimony of the reality of what you read in the scriptures. Try this skill with Matthew 8:23–27.

Symbolism: Words such as like, as, or likened unto can help you identify symbols. Look beyond a symbol by exploring its nature and pondering its attributes. Scripture study aids such as footnotes, the Bible Dictionary, and the Topical Guide or Guide to the Scriptures can help you interpret some symbols. Try using this study skill with Matthew 13:24–30.

Cross-references: Often, one scripture passage can explain or clarify a phrase or concept found in a different passage. Link scripture passages to each other by using the footnotes, the index, or the Topical Guide or Guide to the Scriptures to help unlock the meaning of a scripture passage. Practice this skill by reading John 10:16 and then following the cross-reference in footnote a to 3 Nephi 15:21. How does reading 3 Nephi 15:21 help you better understand the meaning of John 10:16?

Pondering: Pondering includes thinking, meditating, asking questions, and evaluating what you know and what you have learned. Pondering often helps us understand what we need to do to apply gospel principles. Ponder how you might apply the truths in Hebrews 12:9.

Applying: As you identify and understand doctrines and principles found in the scriptures, you can gain deeper knowledge by acting on the truths you have discovered. Jesus Christ said that “if any man will do [Heavenly Father’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Look for opportunities to apply what you learn as you study the scriptures on your own.