

Scripture Study Skills

Definitions: Some of the words that ancient prophets used are not familiar to us. The Bible Dictionary, footnotes in the scriptures, and a regular dictionary can help us learn the definitions of words and recognize synonyms to those words. Try using this scripture study skill with the word *Messiah* in 1 Nephi 10:4–17.

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 Nephi's name in 1 Nephi 1:1.

Cross-references: Often, one scripture passage can explain or clarify a phrase or concept found in a different passage. To help unlock the meaning of a scripture passage, link scripture passages to each other by using the footnotes, the index, the Topical Guide, or the Guide to the Scriptures. Practice this skill by reading 3 Nephi 12:28 and then reading Doctrine and Covenants 42:23. How does Doctrine and Covenants 42:23 add to your understanding of 3 Nephi 12:28? In the margin next to 3 Nephi 12:28, consider writing a note to see Doctrine and Covenants 42:23.

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 2 Nephi 1:9.

Key words: Words and phrases like behold, wherefore, because, nevertheless, or “thus we see” are invitations to stop and look for specific messages. Try using this skill with Helaman 6:35–36.

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 Alma 26:22.

Setting: Determining who is speaking in a scripture passage, whom he or she is speaking to, what he or she is speaking about, and when and where the event is occurring can increase your understanding of the scripture context. Try using this skill by looking for the setting for Alma 32:21–43 in Alma 31:1, 6–11 and 32:1–6.

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 2 Nephi 2:27 and Alma 48:1–17.

Visualization: Look for descriptive details that can help you create a mental picture as you read. Imagine being present at events described in the scriptures. This can strengthen your testimony of the reality of what you read in the scriptures. Try this skill with Enos 1:1–8.

Symbolism: Words and phrases 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 Helaman 8:14–15, including the footnotes to those verses.



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. As you ponder during your personal scripture study, consider asking questions such as the following: What does the Lord want me to do with this knowledge? How will my life be better if I do this? Try using this study skill by pondering how you could apply the principle Nephi teaches in 1 Nephi 17:3.

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.

