



Enriching Your Study of the Doctrine and Covenants



A. Roger Merrill (center), president; Daniel K Judd (left), first counselor; and William D. Oswald, second counselor.

This year presents the wonderful opportunity for each of us to receive great blessings by studying the Doctrine and Covenants—a marvelous book of revelation that was written in our day and for our day.

BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL GENERAL PRESIDENCY

Sometimes referred to as the Lord's handbook of the Restoration, the Doctrine and Covenants contains "the tender but firm voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking anew in the dispensation of the fulness of times."¹

Many members have already discovered a great love for this book. One sister said, "The specific revelations to individuals in the Doctrine and Covenants are helpful. I feel I can relate to them." Another commented, "The Doctrine

and Covenants helps me relate to situations I'm facing because it is not so ancient." One brother said, "I like the Doctrine and Covenants because it helps me understand the priesthood."

We testify that the Doctrine and Covenants is truly the Lord's voice in our time to each child of God and that great blessings come to those who study it. We also offer four suggestions to make your study this year a rewarding experience and suggest some ways in which Sunday School can help.

Read the Book from Cover to Cover

The *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Class Member Study Guide* encourages members to "read the Doctrine and Covenants from beginning to end"² during 2009, as well as to complete each Sunday's reading assignments, which are arranged by topic.

Studying in this manner helps us understand the context of the sections studied as well as the sections themselves. It also prepares us to participate in a rich discussion in Sunday School class—which, in turn, will provide added insight and inspiration for us to use in our personal and family lives.

In your daily scripture study, you may find it helpful to set aside one or two days each week to preview specifically what will be discussed in class and then continue your reading of the Doctrine and Covenants from beginning to end.

Read with Questions in Mind

Brother Renzo Molly Barrios Matias, of Guatemala, learned the power of using scripture study to receive personal revelation for his own life.



Powerful gospel teaching and inspired learning occur when teachers and learners understand that the real teacher in any Church class is the Holy Ghost and that classroom participation invites the Spirit to bear witness.

“After Hurricane Mitch passed through Central America in 2001 and left everything in desolation, I had many questions,” he says. “Seeking answers, I went to a friend I greatly respect. He said, ‘Read the scriptures. You will find the best answers to your questions in them.’”

“This revolutionized my life,” says Brother Matias. “After studying the scriptures for quite a long time, I began to find answers to my questions. I was able to see that my life did have meaning. It was then that I decided to serve a full-time mission.”

Soon Elder Matias was serving in the Honduras Tegucigalpa Mission, helping others discover the power of scripture study.

Reading with specific questions

in mind invites the Lord to inspire and direct us in our challenges and opportunities. You may want to write down questions to prayerfully include in your scripture study. As you receive answers, you may feel inspired to share that insight in Sunday School. Class members are edified as they hear one another appropriately bear witness of how the Lord uses the scriptures to provide personal guidance and inspiration.

Search for Connections, Patterns, and Themes

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has suggested that in all our scripture study, we seek for *connections*, *patterns*, and *themes*.³

An example of a *connection* in the Doctrine and Covenants is the link between our obedience and promised blessings. “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). Our scripture study becomes more meaningful as we recognize this connection and resolve to act on what the Lord has commanded us to do.

One *pattern* in the Doctrine and Covenants is woven into the very nature of the book itself. As the introduction indicates, “These sacred revelations were received in answer to prayer, in times of need, and came out of real-life situations involving real people.”⁴ The revelations were personal and answer specific questions concerning things that Heavenly Father knew would “be of the most worth” (D&C 15:6; 16:6) to each individual.⁵ This pattern of seeking and receiving personal revelation is one that we can follow in our own lives.

One of the most common *themes* in all of scripture is “Seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (D&C 88:63). Themes such as this encourage us to accept greater responsibility for our own learning as we read and ponder God’s words.

While the Doctrine and Covenants doesn’t always read as a story, it is woven together with connections, patterns, and themes. One of the blessings of discussing scripture together in Sunday School is that we

become more aware of these insights as we share our own and listen to the insights of others.

Seek to Be Edified and Rejoice Together

The Lord has said that when Church members both learn and teach one another by the Spirit, “both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22). Powerful gospel teaching and inspired learning occur when teachers and learners understand that the real teacher in any Church class is the Holy Ghost and that classroom participation invites the Spirit to bear witness.

In the February 2007 worldwide leadership training on teaching and learning, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles invited us to assume greater responsibility for learning the gospel. He then demonstrated how inspired teachers can invite class members to become active rather than passive participants in class discussions.

Elder Holland said, “If we will help the learner assume responsibility for learning, and if we will testify of the truths that we have taught, God will confirm to our hearts and to the hearts of our students the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁶

As class members prayerfully study during the week and then together read from the scriptures and share insights, the Holy Ghost will bear witness and carry “unto the hearts” (2 Nephi 33:1) of each class member specifically what he or she needs to know and do (see 2 Nephi 32:3–5).

A Personal Invitation

As we study and learn from the Doctrine and Covenants this year, our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will be strengthened and our testimony of Joseph Smith as God’s prophet of the Restoration will increase. The Lord will open our understanding, and the scriptures will become an even more integral part of our lives.⁷

At the beginning of this new year, we invite you to join with us as we joyfully “search these commandments [in the Doctrine and Covenants], for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled” (D&C 1:37). ■

NOTES

1. Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
2. *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Class Member Study Guide* (1999), Introduction, 3.
3. See David A. Bednar, “A Reservoir of Living Water” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007), www.ldsces.org.
4. Explanatory Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
5. For other examples of specific personal revelation, see D&C 7–9; 11–12; 14–17.
6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Teaching and Learning in the Church,” *Liahona*, June 2007, 73; *Ensign*, June 2007, 105. The broadcast is available in several languages at www.lds.org. Click on “Gospel Library,” “Additional Addresses,” then “Worldwide Leadership Training: Teaching and Learning.”
7. See Joseph Smith—History 1:73–74. After being baptized, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were “filled with the Holy Ghost.” Their minds were then “enlightened, [and they] began to have the scriptures laid open to [their] understandings.”

Doctrine and Covenants
and Church History
Class Member Study Guide



STUDYING THE STUDY GUIDE

As we use the *Class Member Study Guide* in our studies before coming to Sunday School, it will help us be better prepared to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77). The study guide contains a variety of study resources:

- An introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants.
- The weekly scripture reading assignments and scripture study chains.
- A brief Church history chronology.
- Maps showing the location of important places in Church history.
- Faith-promoting questions to encourage gospel discussions.
- A copy of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”