

SCRIPTURE POWER



When two Tahitian teens gave the scriptures a chance, their lives changed.

By Adam C. Olson
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Rooma didn't really want to study the scriptures. Vaitiare didn't really want to go to seminary. And they didn't have to. But when they chose to, their lives changed.

Why Not?

Why would a teen choose to spend two hours every Thursday night studying the scriptures with his mom? A year ago Rooma Teroatea of Tahiti probably would have wondered the same thing.

Now he might ask why a teen would choose *not* to.

During three years of seminary, Rooma had

never really paid attention when his teachers assigned scriptures to read for the next lesson. "I didn't want to read them," he says. "The scriptures really didn't jump out at me."

But he wondered why Church leaders in his ward and stake always used the scriptures in their talks and lessons. He watched his leaders. He noticed how easy it was for his stake president to quote from the scriptures.

So when the Faaah Tahiti Stake divided the seminary students into teams to hold scripture mastery competitions throughout his last year of seminary, Rooma decided to give the scriptures a chance.

That's when his weekly study sessions with his mother began. Each Thursday night they studied together for the class competition the next day, learning where important verses are and even memorizing many of them.

And that's when things began to change for Rooma. His scripture study strengthened his relationship with his mom. He started to see the parallels between what the scriptures teach and what is happening in the world today. As he prayed about what he was reading, he realized it was of God.

It also helped him lead his team to victory in the stake scripture mastery championship.

Rooma recognizes in the blessings he's received a lesson he learned in his studying. "In Mosiah 2:24

King Benjamin taught that when we choose to do what the Lord asks, we are blessed immediately," says Rooma. One of the greatest blessings he has received is that "after studying the scriptures this year, I know that the Book of Mormon is true."

Don't Tell Me What to Do

At the beginning of the school year, Vaitiare Pito wasn't even a member of the Church. So how did a new member who had never been to seminary before help her team win the Faaa stake scripture mastery championship?

"I wasn't worried about not having a lot of experience," she says. "I learned many of those verses during the missionary lessons."



STUDY DILIGENTLY

"Crash courses are not nearly so effective as the day-to-day reading and application of the scriptures in our lives. Become acquainted with the lessons the scriptures teach. . . . Study them as though they were speaking to you, for such is the truth. . . .

". . . If you will study the scriptures diligently, your power to avoid temptation and to receive direction of the Holy Ghost in all you do will be increased."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Be Your Best Self," *Ensign*, May 2009, 68.

When Rooma Terooatea (below) and his seminary classmates traveled to neighboring Moorea (left) to test their scripture knowledge, the outcome didn't matter—Rooma was already a winner.





Once Vaitiare Pito of Tahiti decided to study the scriptures, she began recognizing the blessings.

Most of Vaitiare's family joined the Church after her father died unexpectedly and the ward mission leader brought the missionaries to Vaitiare's home. They talked about family unity and being together forever. "It really brought a change to our family," she says.

However, it didn't necessarily change the 17-year-old's independent streak. "After I was baptized, everyone told me I should go to seminary," she says. "I don't like being told what to do, so it took me a while to go."

Eventually she decided for herself to go and found she enjoyed it. She was assigned to be part of the same scripture mastery team as Rooma.

At first she didn't make an effort to read the scripture assignments.

But when she decided she would, she soon recognized a number of blessings.

"The scriptures have been a great help," she says. "I have learned from the scriptures many things," including the importance of prayer and that Heavenly Father will answer those prayers.

She also learned that when she decides to commit to something, like going to seminary or reading the scriptures, keeping the commitment is easier than if she does it because she has to or is "supposed" to.

Now that the school year is over, Vaitiare is grateful she chose to go to seminary and study the scriptures: "I know when we read the scriptures, we are blessed." **NE**