

Lesson
16

Hold to the Rod

Purpose To increase class members' appreciation for the scriptures and their desire to study and apply them.

- Preparation**
1. Prayerfully study 1 Nephi 8; 15:23–24; 19:23; 2 Nephi 4:15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 18:34–36; 68:3–4.
 2. Write on a separate card each of the five situations described in the lesson on page 89 (or five similar situations more applicable to members of your class). Include on each card the description of the situation and the question that follows it, but do not include the scripture references that follow the question.
 3. Familiarize yourself with the following scriptures that may be used in the situation activity: Exodus 20:15; Psalms 31:1; 37:8; Matthew 6:33; Luke 15:11–32; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Nephi 3:7; 2 Nephi 2:27; 9:18; Mosiah 13:20; Alma 27:27; Doctrine and Covenants 4:2; 10:5; 88:119; Articles of Faith 1:13.
 4. Prepare for each class member a copy of a calendar grid like the one at the end of the lesson (page 92).
 5. Materials needed:
 - a. A pen or pencil for each class member.
 - b. The picture Lehi's Dream of the Tree of Life (picture 6 in the picture section of the manual; 62620).
 - c. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.

Note to the teacher When we read the scriptures, it is as though we are hearing the Lord speak directly to us (see D&C 18:35–36). Help class members understand that sincere scripture study not only gives us the key to understanding eternal principles but also gives us strength to meet today's challenges by providing inspiration and answers to our problems. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: "Because we believe that scripture reading can help us receive revelation, we are encouraged to read the scriptures again and again. By this means, we obtain access to what our Heavenly Father would have us know and do in our personal lives today. That is one reason Latter-day Saints believe in daily scripture study" ("Scripture Reading and Revelation," Ensign, Jan. 1995, 8).

Suggested Lesson Development "My Soul Delighteth in the Scriptures"

Quotation Have a class member read the following statement by President Harold B. Lee, eleventh President of the Church:

"If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seeking

for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an ‘iron rod’ as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 351).

Scripture discussion

- What could be the “iron rod” to which President Lee referred?

Acknowledge all answers, and then explain that President Lee referred to the iron rod that the prophet Lehi saw in a dream. Display the picture of Lehi’s dream and briefly summarize 1 Nephi 8. Then have class members read 1 Nephi 15:23–24.

- In what ways can the word of God be compared to an iron rod?
- Where can we find the word of God?

List class members’ responses on the chalkboard. If they name only the standard works, have them read Doctrine and Covenants 1:38, and add “teachings of latter-day prophets” to the list. Explain that the scriptures (including the teachings of latter-day prophets, which are considered scripture) contain the word of God to his people (see also D&C 18:34–36; 68:3–4).

Story and discussion

Have a class member read the following story told by President Spencer W. Kimball about some Latter-day Saints who went to war:

“Some of our men were taken prisoner and kept in nearly total isolation. Permitted no access to the scriptures, they later told how they hungered for the words of truth, more than for food, more than for freedom itself. What they would have given for a mere fragment of the Bible or Book of Mormon that lay so idly on our shelves! They learned by hard experience something of Nephi’s feelings when he said:

“‘For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.

“‘Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard.’ (2 Nephi 4:15–16)” (“How Rare a Possession—the Scriptures!” *Ensign*, Sept. 1976, 4).

- Why were the scriptures so important to these men?

Ask class members to consider the answers to the next questions silently:

- How important are the scriptures to you? Do you “delight” in the scriptures?

“I Did Liken All Scriptures unto Us”

Scripture discussion

- Why is it important to read and study the scriptures? (Answers may include because they testify of Christ; because God has commanded us to do so; because they teach us the gospel; because they can help us gain or increase our testimony; because they can help us find solutions to our problems.)

Remind class members of the previous lesson on personal revelation. Explain that we can receive personal revelation through reading and studying the scriptures. The scriptures contain counsel from the Lord that applies to us as well as to the people who first received and recorded that counsel.

Have class members read and mark 1 Nephi 19:23. Have one class member read the verse aloud.

- What does it mean to “liken all scriptures” unto ourselves?

Story and discussion

Read or tell the following story:

Jessi Ramsey was the only teenage girl in the tiny branch of the Church in Sand Point, Alaska. She often felt alone and wondered if she really believed the gospel. She said, “For a while, I’d read the Book of Mormon and never seemed to get anywhere. Satan seemed to be doing all he could to keep me from gaining a testimony.”

Then she had a particularly bad day at school. She had forgotten her lunch, argued with a friend, and been hit by a hockey puck. When she came home, she went to her room to cry.

She explained: “As my tears ceased, I noticed I had left my triple combination on my desk. As I walked over to put it away, it fell open to a page marked by a card. The verses marked in ink caught my eye. I read in Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–11: ‘Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.’

“Suddenly I realized that Christ loved me and I wanted to know him better. I had expected my testimony to be handed to me. I assumed it would be easy. I know now that I have to search, ponder, and pray. . . . If I have faith, my Savior will help me. . . .

“That night I decided to start reading the Book of Mormon again. This time, I was committed to finishing it” (Jessi Ramsey, “No Girl Is an Island,” *New Era*, Mar. 1994, 9).

- How did Jessi “liken [the] scriptures unto [herself]”? How did this help her?
- When have you felt that a scripture you read specifically applied to you? How have the scriptures helped you make a decision or solve a problem?

Give class members a few moments to think about these questions before answering. You may want to share an experience of your own.

Scripture activity

Point out that in the previous story, Jessi found the scripture that helped her just by opening her scriptures. Usually, however, we find answers to questions and solutions to problems by studying and seeking out specific scriptures. (You may want to teach class members how to use the Topical Guide before beginning the following activity. See the first enrichment activity for more information.)

Divide the class into small groups, and give each group a card describing one of the following situations (or another situation applicable to class members). Have the members of each group search the scriptures for verses that could help the person described on their card. (There are many possibilities for each situation. Give class members time to search their scriptures on their own. However, if a group is having trouble finding verses, direct the group to the references listed with the appropriate situation.)

When each group has found at least one applicable scripture, have group members share with the rest of the class the situation on their card and the scriptures they found. Have them explain how those scriptures could help a person in the situation described.

Situation 1

Kent is the only member of the Church in his school. Most of his classmates respect and admire him for living Church standards, but a few students ridicule and harass him.

- What scriptures could help Kent deal with the ridicule and harassment he receives? (Psalm 31:1; 2 Nephi 9:18; D&C 10:5)

Situation 2

Karla has a sister who has become less active. Her parents have spent countless hours trying to love her sister back into the Church. Lately Karla has been tempted to stop going to church so she can get some of the attention her sister is receiving.

- What scriptures might help Karla control these negative thoughts? (Psalm 37:8; Luke 15:11–32; Mosiah 13:20)

Situation 3

During the last few weeks, Heather has had many responsibilities and pressures. She doesn't seem to have enough time in each day to accomplish everything she needs to do. She finally made a decision not to take on any new responsibilities. Now her bishop has called her to be president of her Beehive class.

- What scriptures might be helpful to Heather? (Matthew 6:33; 1 Nephi 3:7; D&C 4:2; 88:119)

Situation 4

Clark's friends are planning a party. Part of the entertainment at the party will be a videotape that does not meet the standards of the Church or Clark's family.

- What scriptures might help Clark make a decision about this party? (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Nephi 2:27)

Situation 5

Jamie and a friend went shopping. After they left the store, the friend showed Jamie several pencils she had taken. She told Jamie that it was easy to hide them when the store clerk wasn't looking and that because the pencils were inexpensive, she was not hurting anyone by taking them. She dared Jamie to take something next time they went into the store.

- What scriptures might help Jamie decide what to do? (Exodus 20:15; Alma 27:27; Articles of Faith 1:13)

“Study My Word”

Chalkboard discussion

- Why is it important to study the scriptures every day, not just when we need a specific answer or solution?
- Why do we sometimes have difficulty studying the scriptures every day?

List class members’ answers in a column on the chalkboard.

- What can we do to make scripture study easier and more meaningful for us?

List class members’ responses in a second column on the chalkboard and briefly discuss each one. Accept all answers, but focus on those that correspond with the difficulties listed in the first column. For example, if we have difficulty studying the scriptures because we are too sleepy, we can find another time of day to read.

Calendar activity

Give each class member a pen or pencil and a copy of the calendar grid. Have class members fill in the dates on the calendar, beginning with today.

Encourage class members to read something in the scriptures—even a single verse—every day for one month. Tell them to keep track of their reading by coloring or placing a check mark in the box for each day they read the scriptures. Have them decide right now when and where they will read and write this information on the back of the calendar.

Testimony

Bear testimony of the importance of the scriptures, both to the Church as a whole and to us personally. You may want to share a personal experience in which the scriptures helped you.

Encourage class members to study the scriptures daily and to turn to them for answers to personal questions or solutions to problems.

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Teach class members how to use the study aids in the LDS scriptures, such as footnotes, the Topical Guide, and the Bible Dictionary. (Learning to use the Topical Guide can be especially helpful for youth just learning to study the scriptures.) To help you prepare, you may want to watch “How to Use the LDS Scripture Study Aids,” an eleven-minute segment of *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276). This segment is too long to use in class, but it can help you prepare to teach class members how to use these study aids.
2. Bring to class several pictures cut from a magazine or newspaper. Show the pictures to class members and have them find scriptures that could serve as captions to the pictures. You could do this by giving a different picture to each class member and having class members work on their own, or you could show the same picture to all class members and have them find an appropriate scripture together.

Some examples of pictures and scriptures that could accompany them include:

- a. a candle or light bulb—Matthew 5:14 (“Ye are the light of the world”)
 - b. the stars at night—Moses 1:33 (“And worlds without number have I created”)
 - c. a farmyard—3 Nephi 15:24 (“Ye are my sheep”) or 3 Nephi 10:4 (“I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings”)
 - d. a meadow scene—Psalm 23:2 (“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures”)
 - e. a baby—Matthew 18:3 (“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”)
3. Blindfold a class member and ask him or her to walk in a straight line across the room (be sure to move chairs and other obstacles out of the way). Then have two class members improvise an “iron rod” by stretching a rope or string across the room and holding it taut. Ask the blindfolded class member to again walk in a straight line across the room, this time holding on to the rope or string. Let the class member take the blindfold off, and have him or her tell the class which walk across the room was easier—the one with the “iron rod” or the one without. (If the class member found it was easy to cross the room without the rope or string, ask how far he or she could walk in a straight line without it.)

Explain that going through life without the scriptures would be like trying to walk a straight line without the rope to guide you. The scriptures help us stay on the path of righteousness.

4. With class members, sing or read the words to “The Iron Rod” (*Hymns*, no. 274).
5. If *Family Home Evening Video Supplement* (53276) is available, show “Using the Scriptures,” an eight-minute segment. Ask class members to note, as they watch the segment, reasons these Church leaders give for studying the scriptures (you may want to give class members paper and pencils to write down the reasons they hear). After the video, discuss these reasons.

