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TEACHING OUR CHILDREN FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Children have an amazing capacity to understand the principles of the gospel.



COLOR CODING SCRIPTURE STORIES

When I was a ward Primary president, I felt concerned that the children didn't know which book of scripture the stories I retold came from. For instance, they could often recognize a picture depicting Noah, but they didn't know his story is found in the Old Testament. So I started to adhere the pictures to colored poster board. I used yellow for Book of Mormon stories and different colors for the other books. From then on, the children could easily identify the story and the book of scripture.

Linda Jardine, Utah, USA

Recently I met with a group of people from another faith who were very impressed with the willingness of Church members to share our time and talents helping others. They wanted to know how we teach our children to become like this.

I explained that the family is central to our Heavenly Father's plan and that parents have the primary responsibility for teaching and training their children. Leaders and teachers simply support the efforts of the parents.

The goal in all our teaching, I told them, is to do what the Prophet Joseph Smith said he did when asked how he led the Church: "I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves."¹

"And what are those principles?" the group asked. "Where do you find them?"

"In the words of Christ," I responded.

Feasting on the Words of Christ

Nephi encourages us to "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

The word of God is found in the scriptures. If we would empower our children spiritually, we will teach them from the scriptures and help them learn to feast from those sacred pages themselves.

Children have an amazing capacity to understand the principles of the gospel. Those who read the scriptures in their early years usually make an internal commitment to follow the principles taught in them. This is why children need to have their own set of scriptures. They need to learn directly from the scriptures what their Father in Heaven wants them to know and do.



Teaching Children from the Scriptures

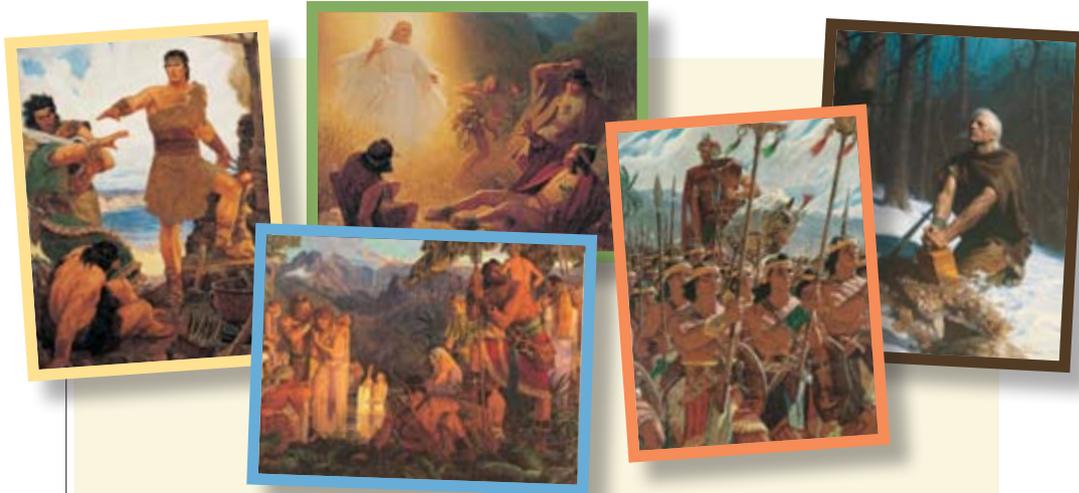
There are a number of good ways to teach children from the scriptures. I've found this pattern to be particularly effective after reading a scripture:

1. Clearly identify the doctrine.
2. Help the children understand the doctrine.
3. Help them apply the doctrine to their lives.
4. Encourage them to pray for a witness of the Spirit that what they are learning is true.

Let's use Moroni 10:4 as an example. Let's say a mother is giving a family home evening lesson. She begins by asking the family members to open



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SCRIPTURE WALL

ABCs and 1-2-3s. My children have loved to learn since they were very little. Because of this, I've always tried to facilitate their education at home. I have hung posters and sight words, read books galore, and looked for every opportunity to teach. Then one day I realized I wasn't giving the same attention to their gospel instruction.

Since the walls of my home were already put to good use for education, I simply decided to use them more. One wall in the children's play area seemed the perfect spot to display gospel art—their own drawings or Church-approved visuals. I mounted the pictures on colored construction paper before putting them on the wall. Underneath each one, I included a simple, age-appropriate synopsis of the story. Our "scripture wall," as my children call it, quickly became a favorite spot in the house. I chose 14 key stories from the Book of Mormon and displayed them chronologically. This has made it easier for my children to grasp key events and concepts as they ask questions, and we discuss what is taking place in the pictures. I knew our scripture wall had made an impact when I overheard my son accurately explaining one of the pictures to a playmate.

As parents, we spend much time helping our children learn what they need to know to be successful in school. More important, we should remember to help our children learn and grow in the gospel.

Kathleen Parrish Smith, Utah, USA

To implement this idea, you could remove pictures from Church magazines or print them from www.gospelart.lds.org. You might also consider ordering the new Gospel Art Book (item no. 06048), which contains 137 pictures. The book and other gospel art are available at LDS distribution centers or online at www.ldscatalog.com. Residents of the United States and Canada can also call Distribution Services at 1-800-537-5971.



their copies of the Book of Mormon and read the verse: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."

Next she takes the family through the four steps outlined above.

Identify the Doctrine. She asks:

"What is Heavenly Father asking us to do in this verse? And what is the blessing He promises us if we do what He asks?" The family discusses the questions and determines that Heavenly Father wants us to read the scriptures and then pray in faith, with a sincere intent to know the truth of what we have read. Heavenly Father promises to answer our prayer by giving us a witness of the truth through the Holy Ghost.

Understand the Doctrine. Next the mother shares the story of Joseph Smith, who upon reading in the Bible that he could "ask of God" (James 1:5), prayed about which church to join. He had faith that his prayer would be answered. As he prayed, the Father and the Son appeared to him. She reminds the family that, of

course, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ do not appear to everyone who prays, but Heavenly Father will answer sincere prayers in ways He considers best.

Apply the Doctrine. A child asks, “Does this mean Heavenly Father will answer my prayers?” The mother responds, “Yes. Moroni 10:4 indicates that through study and prayer we can know the truth of all things.” The family then decides how to put Moroni’s promise to the test.

Ask for a Witness. The mother bears her testimony and shares how she knows this scripture is true. She closes the lesson by assuring the family that as they do what Moroni says—studying a gospel principle with a desire to know if it is true—they will gain a sweet assurance of the truth through the witness of the Spirit.

Children Taught of the Lord

As we teach our children to love the scriptures and learn from them, we will place in their hearts and hands a wonderful source of strength and guidance for the rest of their lives. We will find fulfilled the promise given in 3 Nephi 22:13: “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” ■

NOTE

1. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 284.

DAILY SCRIPTURE THOUGHTS WITH PRESCHOOLERS

As a mother of young children, I began praying daily to know what my children needed to learn. The answer has frequently been that the most important things to teach are basic gospel truths and the ability to work. Every morning my husband and I share a spiritual thought and our testimonies with our young children. With about 30 minutes of preparation each Sunday, we’re able to gather a week’s worth of materials. Gospel art pictures, Primary songs, *Old Testament Stories*, and ideas from Church magazines are especially helpful.

- **Gospel Art.** Since teaching with pictures is so effective, I’ve found it helpful to print copies of them from gospelart.lds.org. That way we can hand an image to our youngsters, and they can look at it and touch it while we talk about what we see.
- **Primary Songs.** Sometimes we try to learn a new Primary song together, especially the action and wiggle songs.
- **Old Testament Stories.** We read just one page a day. Before reading, we usually have a visual aid or object lesson to reinforce stories we have already discussed. For instance, I added red food coloring to water one day and asked them if they remembered a time in the scriptures when the Lord turned water red.
- **Church Magazines.** Sometimes we share a message through a gospel-related activity. For instance, we once printed some copies of a picture that showed children giving treats to the elderly. Together, we discussed the importance of loving and serving “grandmas and grandpas.” Our then one-year-old scribbled a few marks on the picture while our preschooler looked for the hidden objects it contained.

Sharing a spiritual thought takes only a few moments, but the impact lasts much longer. Our preschooler would sometimes grab the magazine and surprise me with a recap of some of the stories and gospel principles we’d learned. As our children have grown older, we have continued our morning breakfast devotionals—even on busy mornings, when we often share a short message while they finish breakfast.

I am grateful for the many high-quality materials the Church provides to help us keep our children close to the Spirit. As we prepare each week, we welcome the personal revelation received to teach our children. And we draw closer to Heavenly Father as we seek the best ways to draw our children closer to Him.

Alejandra Adams, Virginia, USA

