



SCRIPTURE doodles

I always seemed to get distracted when I was reading the scriptures. It was time for something to change.

By Jennifer C. Edwards

Sometimes when I'm reading scriptures, my brain likes to skip away to someplace else. It isn't that I don't want to read—it's just that when I try, my mind wants to wander.

For example, when I read in 1 Nephi about Lehi dwelling in a tent, my mind wanders away to Young Women camp. Then that reminds me of when Boy Scout camp was accidentally scheduled at the same place and at the same time, and how they had to load the boys back up and move them. Then *that* reminds me of when I moved to another town, the car ride there, that hitchhiker we bought food for on the way, and so on and so on.

The next thing I know, I've read a full page but don't remember anything. So I move on to read about Lehi's dream, and it begins all over again.

ILLUSTRATION BY LONI HARRIS



Try it out!
Color in the doodles.

I have read the first pages of 1 Nephi, Genesis, Matthew, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price so many times, but I would usually forget what I read and just check it off my to-do list and then distract myself from doing it again for a while. My heart *does* have good intentions, but it can be hard to jump in and truly feast on the scriptures. I've always wondered if I would ever be able to, you know . . . do it. But then I found a way. My way. A way that actually works—for *me*.

My Doodling Plan

I am a doodler and have been for a long time. I basically doodle whenever I have a pen and paper in front of me. I'm not a great artist; I just simply like to doodle. Repeated swirls, silly fonts, lines, patterns, zigzags, stick figures, circles—I love to do it, and I do it everywhere. It helps me concentrate and relax.

OK, so what's this got to do with scripture study?
Here is what I did.

I bought a big black art notebook and a thin black marker, and I found a quiet place where I could spread out my supplies and read out loud.

Once I was all set up, I opened my notebook and created a title page that said, "Doodling through the Scriptures," which I decorated with different fonts and squiggly lines. After I finished that, I opened the Book of Mormon to the first page of 1 Nephi, with the opening lines that I've read dozens of times:

"I, Nephi, having been born . . ." I worked hard to concentrate and keep reading.



As I read, I paid attention to words that would jump out or pictures that were in my head. I took the time to draw what stuck out to me. Sometimes, it was a border around the entire page using Nephi's name. Or I would put several different pictures and words in circles. Or I would write down one verse I particularly loved or even just one word.

This method allowed me to be free and play with the words. No one was timing me, grading me, or judging my drawings. I just tried to have fun, relax, and concentrate.

But wait, didn't it take *forever* to get through the Book of Mormon this way?

Well, yes. Some days, I wouldn't even get through a page. But it was worth the time.

What I Learned

As I read and doodled, I found things that relate to me personally. For example, why didn't Laman and Lemuel just turn around and go back to Jerusalem and quit whining? (I doodled this with stick figures looking mad and pointing at Nephi, who looked happy.) While drawing this, I thought about this question. Laman and Lemuel came along but were crabby.

I thought about when my parents ask me to do things

I don't want to do. I go along, but I sure

make everyone else miserable along the way. I thought, "Do I sometimes act like Laman and Lemuel?" I wrote that question and my answer on the page, along with more doodles.

While I sat and pondered and read, I had feelings of calm, warmth, and safety come over me repeatedly, and I knew the book was inspired and true. And now, I have this art journal that I can use as a reference forever to help me remember that I received this witness that the Book of Mormon is true.

Taking the time to make lines, scrolls, or boxes around words and stick figures while reading would stop me in the moment and allow me to think, ask questions, and feel closer to the people in the scriptures. My mind would still wander, but it usually wandered to think about the messages, the people, or the Spirit that I felt while I quietly doodled.

I discovered how to make my study meaningful, and now I can't wait for scripture study each day. For the first time in my life, the scriptures feel personal. Who knew that doodling could help me receive a testimony that the scriptures are true! **NE**

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