

Using Scripture to Understand Scripture

Teaching Objective

The four standard works testify of each other and work as one to declare the saving truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Themes

1. The scriptures always work together.
2. Clustering scriptures together is important to improve understanding.
3. Scriptures interpret scriptures.
4. Scriptures have a similar phraseology.

Teaching Ideas

1. The scriptures always work together.

- Have students suggest several passages of scripture that are repeated in more than one of the standard works. (For biblical examples, students could refer to the topic “quotations” in the Bible Dictionary, where a list is given of where New Testament writers were clearly influenced by Old Testament scriptures.) Discuss and give examples of how prophets in all ages have quoted from each other and used examples from each other.
- Share the major ideas of the following quotations taken from the writings of Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Whatever the combination of individuals—Enoch, Moses, Nephi, Alma, Paul, Moroni, or Joseph—the link between them is clear. Each separate strand of prophetic utterance, though interwoven into a pattern of divine design, can be followed back to a single source, a loving Father whose central and grand declared purpose is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. (Moses 1:39.) All that Divinity does is, in fact, focused solely upon that which is ‘for the benefit of the world.’ (2 Nephi 26:24.) Has not the Psalmist said, ‘We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand’? (Psalm 95:7.) God has no distracting hobbies. While one’s eye is to be single to His glory, we must remember that His glory is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (*Plain and Precious Things*, 27).

“One of the striking findings for the student of the scriptures is the frequency with which the same truth, the same idea, the same insight, the same concept appears (and often with exactly the same

words) in various books of the scripture. This is true not only with major doctrines, but also with very minor things that witness to the fact that the doctrines and truths that reappear come from the same Source. No wonder the prophets are consistent with each other.

“That they so abundantly agree with each other is no small point in attesting to the divinity of the various books of the scriptures. Where the prophets deal with the same subject, they are consistent. . . .

“The scriptures form a seamless structure of truths, even though the truths were given in different places and different dispensations” (*Things As They Really Are*, 84–85).

- Give some examples of scriptures that seem to be original, but are actually quotations from former scriptures. Help students understand that God is the author of all scripture and that His prophets stand together as witnesses of a common message. A few examples are cited below:

1. D&C 133:48—Isaiah 63:2
2. D&C 89:20—Isaiah 40:31
3. Hebrews 1:5—Psalm 2:7
4. Hebrews 1:7—Psalm 104:4
5. Hebrews 1:8–9—Psalm 45:6–7
6. D&C 58:45—Deuteronomy 33:17

- Show that in many cases one prophet will point out the fulfillment of a prophecy made by another prophet.

Prophecy	Record of Fulfillment
Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22–23
Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14–15
Isaiah 9:1–2	Matthew 4:13–16
Isaiah 53:12	Mark 15:28
Isaiah 61:1	Luke 4:16–21
Psalm 41:9	John 13:18–30
Psalm 22:18	John 19:24

2. Clustering scriptures together is important to improve understanding.

- Use the following statement by Elder Neal A. Maxwell to teach students what it means to cluster the scriptures together:

“Cluster your scriptures together so that the Old Testament scripture on a particular topic is related by you to a scripture in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the New Testament, and to the utterances of living prophets. The scriptures of the Church need

each other, just as the members of the Church do. And they help each other, just as members of the Church do.

“Sometimes I fear that we teach the scriptures in isolation from each other, when in fact, if you will make multiple use of them and follow this clustering method, you will not only make the teaching moment more significant but you will also be witnessing to the congruency and relevance of all the scriptures. You will find, as one would expect, a powerful conceptual consistency that flows throughout all the scriptures, sometimes even verbatim language, because they come from the same source” (“The Old Testament: Relevancy Within Antiquity,” in *A Symposium on the Old Testament*, 8–9).

- The following charts give examples of clustering the scriptures. These are not meant to be all-inclusive, but they serve to show the knowledge that can come from using all the standard works to explore a doctrinal topic. As you read these references with your students, have them cross-reference them.

Christ’s Suffering during the Atonement

Luke 22:44	He sweat great drops of blood.
D&C 19:16–19	Jesus Christ suffered these things for all. This suffering caused Him to tremble because of pain, to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.
D&C 18:11	Christ suffered death in the flesh; He suffered the pains of all men.
Mosiah 3:7	He suffered more than man can suffer. Blood came from every pore.
Isaiah 53:5	He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

The Law of Moses and Christ

Galatians 3:24	The law was a schoolmaster to bring people to Christ.
2 Nephi 11:4	The law of Moses was given to prove the truth of the coming of Christ.
2 Nephi 25:24–26	The law of Moses was given to help men believe in Christ.
Jacob 4:4–5	The law of Moses pointed to Christ.
Alma 25:16	The law of Moses served to strengthen faith in Christ.
Alma 34:14	The whole meaning of the law was to point to the sacrifice of the Son of God.

3. Scriptures interpret scriptures.

- Often the interpretation of a passage of scripture is given somewhere else in the scriptures. For example, read with students Matthew 13:3–9, where Jesus relates the parable of the sower. Have them find the interpretation of the parable that is given later on in the same chapter (see vv. 19–23). You may want to refer students to the accounts of the same parable found in Mark 4 and Luke 8:1–18. Have them refer to the footnotes (especially JST helps) for more information. Note that slight variations are found in the three accounts.
- Modern scriptures often give keys that unlock the meaning of difficult biblical passages. Have class members study the scriptures in the following chart, which serve as examples of how latter-day scriptures expand our understanding of various biblical scriptures:

Unlock the Bible

Genesis 2:7	D&C 88:15	Definition of soul
Isaiah 11:1–5, 10	D&C 113:1–6	Stem, rod, and root are identified
Isaiah 52:7–10	Mosiah 15:13–18	Publishers of peace are identified
Matthew 13:24–30	D&C 86:1–7	Further clarification of the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the tares
Revelation	D&C 77	Answers questions concerning the book of Revelation

4. Scriptures have a similar phraseology.

- Ask students how being familiar with scriptural phraseology could help them understand a passage of scripture. Help students see that there are numerous scripture passages that reflect phrases of other passages. Many of them are tied together with footnotes, but many are not. When trying to understand a particular phrase, it could be helpful to use the Topical Guide or index to find the same phrase or a closely related one in another place. Comparing two statements in their context can lead to greater understanding of the original passage. Latter-day scriptures are often especially helpful in shedding light on biblical passages. For example, have the students refer to Isaiah 24:5 and then Doctrine and Covenants 1:12–15. Refer them also to Isaiah 24:20 and Doctrine and Covenants 88:87–96.

- Refer students to examples of New Testament language found in the Book of Mormon by referring to the following chart. Note that the Book of Mormon opens wide the door of our understanding of these New Testament passages.

New Testament Language Found in the Book of Mormon		
John 10:14–16	Other sheep	3 Nephi 15:16–24
Romans 11:16–24	The olive tree	Jacob 5
Revelation 3:12	New Jerusalem	Ether 13
John 1:29	The Lamb of God	1 Nephi 13:40
Matthew 5	The Beatitudes	3 Nephi 12

Supplementary Study Sources

None suggested.

Suggested Student Study

- How do 2 Nephi 29:6–14 and Mormon 7:8–9 illustrate the way that the scriptures work together?
- Select a subject from the Topical Guide. Then cluster several scriptures together to help you understand the selected topic. Try to use all four standard works.